

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS'
ASSOCIATION

NORTHERN TERRITORY
STATE COUNCIL INCORPORATED



POLICY
STATEMENTS

ALLOWANCES

AIM: ICPA seeks to achieve equality of access to education and educational opportunities between 'geographically isolated and 'non geographically isolated' students by way of government funded allowances to subsidise the costs incurred in gaining access to educational facilities.

Children who are geographically isolated from a school gain access to schooling through..

- Distance Education (correspondence, school of the air, etc)
- travel over comparatively long distances and/or non 'all weather' roads,
- boarding facilities at schools, hostels, private board and second home.

ICPA believes that allowances should be made to subsidise the 'access costs' relative to each of the afore mentioned methods at primary, secondary and post-secondary levels.

The costs associated with transporting isolated students between their homes and schools are great. There is a need for a variety of travel allowances suited to the particular need of the student to help defray the cost of travelling to and from school or place of board.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The assessment of daily or weekly conveyance allowances for students being transported privately at regular intervals be based on annual kilometres travelled; and payment be on a per family basis.
2. The provision of either financial assistance or free return passage on appropriate forms of transport (bus, train or plane) between the student's home and his or her place of board (school, hostel, or private) at the beginning and end of each term.
3. The provision, for NT primary and secondary students, of either financial assistance or free return passage on appropriate forms of transport (bus, train or plane) between the student's home and his or her place of board in the middle of each school term.
4. The provision of either financial assistance or free return passage on appropriate forms of transport (bus, train or plane) between the student's home to the nearest point of departure from the Northern Territory for students attending interstate schools.
5. The provision of a Functions Allowance for primary and secondary correspondence students to enable attendance at specified school functions.
6. The provision of assistance towards costs associated with the delivery of materials required for correspondence schooling.
7. The provision of assistance towards costs associated with the establishment and maintenance of a correspondence classroom in remote locations.
8. Strategies to be developed to alleviate transport problems in regions affected by climatic conditions, or where transport is difficult because of rough terrain, impassable roads, or lack of regular public transport services, i.e. the use of light aircraft.
9. There should be reciprocal student travel allowances between adjoining States.
10. The provision of a basic, non means tested allowance to assist with boarding costs, whether the student is boarding at a school, in a hostel, in a private home, or in a second home.
11. The provision of an allowance to increase access to well supervised educational opportunities within the Northern Territory for all isolated primary & secondary school aged students.
12. Allowances should be linked to the Consumer Price Index.

ACROSS THE BORDER EDUCATION

AIM: To make possible the same educational rights for children receiving correspondence lessons from a State other than that in which they are domiciled.

We are quite aware that there must be some limit to the 'acceptability' (geographic or otherwise) of the family who wishes to educate their children across the border, however, contingencies must be made to the children whose education is plausibly received across a State border

OBJECTIVES:

1. To ensure that children across the border receive teacher visits.
2. To liaise with Education Departments on their concepts of Across the Border Education and to establish mutually acceptable guidelines.
3. To discuss with families the problems incurred in obtaining Across the Border Education.
4. To try to obtain uniformity between States to the whole situation of Across the Border Education.

BOARDING FACILITIES

AIM: Access to a boarding facility within the Northern Territory for all geographically isolated children who must board away from home for appropriate primary and/or secondary education:

OBJECTIVES:

1. That, institutions providing boarding facilities give special priority to the provision of pastoral care and access to appropriate in-service training for relevant staff. (See attachment A)
2. Boarding schools and hostels will be of an acceptable standard according to Government standards with particular attention paid to creating a 'homely' environment. (See attachment B)
3. Government and non-government boarding facilities that cater for isolated children, be eligible for equitable recurrent funding.
4. Counsellors be available to boarding students, particularly those living away from home for the first time.
5. Career advisors be available to boarding students. (See attachments A & B)
6. That the appropriate boarding staff, liaises with the relevant schools in relation to the particular needs of boarding students.
7. Where possible, preferential consideration be given to geographically isolated students when boarding places are being allocated.
8. Provision of suitable accommodation and services in boarding facilities for children with special needs.
9. That boarding facilities be aware of the inherent problems associated with compulsory exeat.
10. That provision be made by the Government for 'short- term' emergency financial assistance to all facilities that provide and cater for isolated students.
11. Access to Special Needs teachers for boarding facilities.
12. Supervision during Prep and homework times is essential, with individual tutoring accessible to students who require such.

BOARDING FACILITIES POLICY STATEMENT

ATTACHMENT -A- PASTORAL CARE

Pastoral care designates the physical, spiritual and psychological well being of students in a boarding hostel or other custodial care facilities. Pastoral care involves the whole person, and to some extent education falls into this category although it is not specifically discussed herein.

1. Physical Aspect - safety, medical, living/working/playing facilities, nutrition and leave.
2. Spiritual- morals, religion and life skills
3. Psychological- privacy, counselling and self discipline

Individual concerns re pastoral care involve many personal and detailed requirements that fall into the realm of consultation and agreement between parent and school. Individual requirements should be dealt with by the parents concerned and not infringe on the school society as a whole.

Physical

Safety: physical well-being cared for in the form of an appropriate boarding environment with suitable rules and regulations in place so that the students' whereabouts are known at all times. Adequate supervision to be provided constantly while students in residence.

Medical: access to fully qualified in-house nursing staff and medical facilities as well as outside doctors, dentists, etc.

Leave: to be based on the specific needs of students plus full weekend leave as per boarding facility policy with appropriate safeguards applying to all instances.

L/W/P: acceptable levels of supervision and safety at all living, working and playing times

Nutrition: meals must include well balanced nutritional foods with plenty of fresh fruit available. Students monitored to ensure they are eating sensibly and where there are concerns held by the staff, parents notified and consulted.

Spiritual

Morals: instil good moral standards in students with equal expectation of high moral standards in the staff. Develop a sense of integrity, initiative and personal responsibility.

Religion: suitable instruction in the faith of the school as deemed relevant and pertinent by the school and 'church'.

Access to religions other than the schools. Be aware of differences in religions and cultures and understand and accept them,

Life Skills: topics would include life skills, study skills, conflict resolution, community living and awareness with courses designed and implemented to encourage and develop these skills. Recognise the need to live in harmony with and be tolerant of others.

Psychological

Privacy: need for suitable living and study areas with provision for a degree of privacy and individuality.

Counselling: guidance and advice readily available for those students experiencing difficulties in all or any areas be they academic, spiritual or psychological. Provision of career counselling. A knowledge and understanding of the individual students family life to facilitate smooth adjustment to boarding school life. Fulfil the role of surrogate parenting.

Disciplines: acceptable levels of external discipline and provision for an environment where self discipline is encouraged and developed. A degree of self determination.

BOARDING FACILITIES POLICY STATEMENT

ATTACHMENT -B- BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS

The grounds must be large enough to accommodate areas for both casual ball games and some quiet shady place for students who wish to just sit and talk or read. It is important that buildings have a homely feeling. All grounds and buildings must comply with Government set regulations.

Grounds

Safety: All recreational areas be appropriately fenced, eg. swimming pools, sports ground and practice areas, trampolines, etc. Easily identified and accessible fire extinguishers.

Security- A lockable shed or enclosure for bicycles and outdoor sports equipment.

Atmosphere: A pleasant, soothing garden with provision for some quiet areas for students to relax in.

Playing Areas: Space to allow for small team games to be played, e.g. hand ball or volley ball. Provision of a basketball net with sufficient space to enable several students' access to the play area.

Buildings

Safety: All buildings and rooms to be equipped with smoke detectors and ceiling extinguishers with hand held extinguishers placed in easily accessible positions. A well equipped and lockable first aid kit be provided in each house parent flat.

Living Areas: Each wing to have its own recreational room large enough for students to have easy viewing access to a television and video set. Furniture to be comfortable and homely. Some space and appropriate furniture to allow for board games to be played by groups.

Work/Study Areas: Where possible private practise areas be available for students studying music. Access to a separate area where computers and associated equipment are available for both pleasure and homework requirements.

Bedrooms: Large enough to hold a wardrobe, some drawer space, a desk for homework and a hand basin to encourage good health and hygiene practices. Preferably no more than two students per room. A lock to be provided on wardrobes to enable safety of students belongings or some provision made for access to private lockable space per student.

Medical: At least one sick room per twenty students within easy access of ablution areas and close to house parent accommodations and where possible with attached small ensuite.

House Parents Flat: Each boarding wing of no more than twenty students should have at least one house parent flat. House parents flats must be large enough to comfortably house a married couple with provision made to house children if necessary. Good accommodation goes a long way towards attracting and retaining good staff. Provision made for plenty of storage space as these people often make this their permanent place of living.

COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

AIM: A reliable, modem, cost effective communication system be available to all geographically isolated students in the Northern Territory

OBJECTIVES:

1. Access to high quality communications to include, but not be limited to, computer, modem, reasonable RAM memory and printer to all geographically isolated students.
2. A joint committee of educators and parent groups to plan for:
 - (a) the use of satellite communications in education, and
 - (b) the introduction of new technology into the distance education system.
3. The continuation and extension of video production at the school level to include class lessons and support materials for students and home tutors.
4. The importance of a minimum weekly mail service, to residents in the Northern Territory for delivery & return of distance education materials, at no cost to isolated students.
5. That postage rates be uniform within Australia.
6. A daily mail service of inwards and outwards mail to distance education schools to ensure minimum delay in turn-around time of lesson materials.
7. The continuation by distance education schools of distinctive packaging for the mailing of lesson materials.
8. That provision of untimed local calls to nearest service town to ensure that isolated or border district residents gain equity of access, particularly when a student is studying via distance education.
9. The continuation and expansion of the 1800 telephone service available to isolated families and students enrolled in Schools of Distance Education.
10. The establishment of dedicated telephone lines to Distance Education Schools with hands-free telephones at the students place of residence.
11. The continuation of best quality HF radio, including 'Free to Air' access, suitable frequencies, transmitter/receiver/broadcast points.

CURRICULUM

AIM: To ensure that the geographically isolated student is provided with a quality and quantity of related curriculum material sufficient to enable an equal opportunity with urban counterparts.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The attainment of basic oracy, literacy, numeracy and computer be regarded as essential to all students, regardless of location.
2. That the development of parts of the curriculum contain an appropriate local orientation reflecting the needs and lifestyle of the geographically isolated students.
3. That the structure and presentation of courses be based upon NT Board of Studies approved curriculum material with required modification to suit the needs of individual students.
4. That children at all levels of school do not suffer difficulties or disadvantages in transferring between curricula offered for distance education and those offered for urban education.
5. That curricula offerings be such that geographically isolated students can be absorbed into Trade, Employment and Tertiary education without disadvantage.
6. That the NT Government recognise and act upon the need for availability of funds in the development, production and distribution of curriculum materials, including New Technology.

DISTANCE EDUCATION CENTRES

AIM: To ensure that all school age students living and studying in geographic isolation have access to and receive the highest standard of educational services.

OBJECTIVES:

1. That ICPA support the development and expansion of Distance Education Centres. (Herein referred to as 'the school').
2. That the schools work in co-operation with each other to ensure that maximum benefits are gained from all available correspondence materials and resources.
3. That all students and Home Tutors/Supervisors be provided with the necessary equipment., technology hardware and training needed to fulfil ail the requirements of their year level and the skills required for the use of such.
4. That Core Curriculum in all years be maintained and that a system of assessment be carried through all core subject areas.
5. Where applicable schools negotiate with interstate Distance Education Centres to purchase or broker the use of subject materials not currently available in the NT, and that where necessary these courses be properly adapted to conform with current NT Board of Studies courses.
6. That supplementary resource materials which must accompany each course be reviewed annually by School Councils and staff as courses change.
7. That the NTSCS actively pursue student access to vocational and other courses in line with the key competency areas.
8. That it be highly desirable that a teacher have at least one years experience in a classroom or have completed a Distance Education course.
9. That in-service training be available to Distance Education teachers to provide them with the necessary skills for course writing and design, and the use of radio, video, computer and other current technologies.
10. That correspondence courses which are developed within the school be overseen by teachers skilled in course writing for that particular subject area and level.
11. Teachers and Home Tutors/Supervisors be encouraged to attend related conferences and seminars and that details of such be circulated well in advance of the date.
12. That all students receive at least one full school day home visit per year with special consideration given to those students with Special Needs.
13. That at least one In-School period per year be regarded as socially and educationally essential and that the current trend of SOAs to hold annual camps, excursions and sporting activities be maintained.
14. That 1800 numbers be readily available for student, parent or supervisor assistance and tutorials.
15. That decentralisation of distance education centres be maintained.
16. That in-service training be provided for all Supervisors and that instructional videos be made to demonstrate and explain subject areas where necessary.
17. That an appropriate allowance be made available to secondary age students to fund travel to science, art and cultural activities, especially where they are applicable to subjects being studied.
18. Access to suitable technology such as: transceivers plus aerials and/or designated telephone lines with hands-free telephones be made available to all students with the provision of sufficient independent frequencies to allow adequate time for:
 - a) regular "on air" lessons
 - b) communication between Teachers, Students and Supervisors.
19. That the schools be provided with sufficient appropriate facilities, equipment and staff to meet the needs of the students.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

AIM: The provision and access of early childhood education services for all geographically isolated children in the Northern Territory.

OBJECTIVES:

1. That the S'sOA provide appropriate programs to children from the age of 4 years who live in isolated areas.
2. That the importance of the role of parents in the success of Distance Education Early Childhood programs be considered when programs are being written or reviewed.
3. That in view of the fact that parents are the prime educators of their pre-school children, programs should include parent education. Key points that parents will be made aware of:
 - a) The importance of Early Childhood Programs for the child's intellectual development, speech and language development, pre reading and pre writing skills, social development and fine motor and gross motor developments.
 - b) The importance of early detection and correction of learning difficulties.
 - c) The need for parents to develop teaching skills.
4. That appropriate learning resources, such as library books, video/audio tapes, educational toys should be available for all children during Early Childhood Programs.
5. That pre school children receive patrol visits.
6. That qualified Early Childhood teachers be employed full time at Schools of the Air.
7. That Pre-School Distance Education modules contain a series of prepared activities within Northern Territory Department of Education guidelines.
8. That a School of the Air radio will be available to these students.
9. That, regular opportunities be available through seminars and workshops for parents to meet with Early Childhood Educators.
10. That access to Intervention Programs be available on a needs basis.
11. That, maximum opportunities for social interaction be provided.
12. That, parents have the option of enrolling their children with either a Small Rural School or a School of the Air.

SMALL RURAL SCHOOLS

AIM: To ensure that Small Rural Schools are able to provide a high standard of educational services and facilities.

OBJECTIVES:

1. That teacher-education includes training in multiple class situations and practical teaching experience in small rural schools.
2. That co-operation between personnel at all levels of the Department of Education and the people living in remote communities be encouraged.
3. That a school community member or experienced small rural school teacher be included on the selection panel when interviewing teachers for a small rural school appointment
4. That the Regional Office of the Education Department provide a background briefing on the lifestyle of the school based area and a basic knowledge of school administration procedures.
5. That teachers appointed to Teacher in Charge positions in small rural schools have at least two years of previous teaching experience.
6. That health screening takes place annually and relevant specialist services be available to students attending small rural schools.
7. That the student to teacher ratio be flexible and extra staffing of a teacher or teacher's aide be appointed on a needs basis.
8. That adequate housing be available for teachers appointed to small rural schools.
9. That student specialist services be available to students attending small rural schools.
10. That, extra resources be made available to provide access to a wide range of educational opportunities for students in small rural schools.
11. That, students at small rural schools have access to all new educational technology, including current computer programmes, from a central resource bank.

SPECIAL NEEDS

AIM: To maximise education options and outcomes for children with special needs, to include Gifted & Talented, and Disability students living in remote areas.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The continuing provision of Special Needs teachers, above standard staffing formula/ establishment for all Distance Education Centres.
2. Access to Special Needs teachers for small rural & remote schools and boarding facilities.
3. All Special Needs teachers be trained in the identification of and programming for children with special needs.
4. Early identification and intervention is a high priority.
5. Provision of mobile units, with a Guidance Officer and itinerant specialists to visit homes and small schools in remote areas to identify, assess and program for children with special needs and provide on-going support.
6. The provision of suitable accommodation where parents and children can stay for short periods to receive guidance and assessment and attend appropriate schools as a day student on a temporary basis.
7. Notification of and access to existing workshops/seminars held throughout the Northern Territory for parents of isolated children with special needs to meet each other, exchange problems and ideas, and receive specialist help.
8. Maintenance of regional centres to develop appropriate educational courses and prepare individual education programs to suit the needs of isolated children with special needs.
9. Co-ordination of the work of existing organisations at all levels, both Government and voluntary.
10. An equitable allocation of Commonwealth funds to the N T Education Department each year to be used specifically to assist with the provision of specialist services and facilities for isolated children with special needs.
11. Review of funding to ensure the provision of adequate financial assistance for geographically isolated families to gain access to special education and all necessary support services without undue hardship.
12. Provision of a liaison person or agency to advise isolated families on services available, and to assist with overcoming confusion caused by shared responsibilities of Education, Health, Social Security Department and Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education & Training.
13. Provision of ongoing counselling services to be offered to isolated parents and families of children with special needs.

TAXATION

AIM: The alleviation and equalisation of some of the educational costs incurred through isolation by taxation concessions or rebates.

OBJECTIVES:

1. All educational grants including allowances under the Assistance for isolated Children Scheme, remain excluded when assessing parents' income for taxation.
2. Allowances received under the Assistance for isolated Children remain as scholarships and not be included as part of the taxable income of a child.
3. Regular reviews be undertaken of the boundaries of Taxation Zones. A and B, and that the allowances be updated to the financial conditions of the time.
4. The extension of any scheme for the equalisation of income to provide people in isolated regions with the choice of setting aside funds in bountiful years for EDUCATIONAL purposes and redeemable in the year of years of necessity.
5. Match up financial disadvantage on a comparative basis with our city counterparts and propose tax deductions to remove elements of inequality.

TERTIARY

AIM: Access to tertiary education for isolated students by way of student accommodation, facilities, and external courses.

OBJECTIVES:

1. The provision of an adequate range of courses with an external option through approved Northern Territory Tertiary Education institutions.
2. The provision of on-campus or hostel accommodation suitable for isolated youth taking part in Tertiary education.
3. The continuation of the Tertiary Fares Reimbursement Scheme, including those for students who study interstate, provided the course of study is not available in the Northern Territory.
4. The continuation of the Northern Territory Government Scholarships for those undergoing full time study, either interstate or in the Northern Territory, in areas where there is a skills shortage.
5. An increase in tertiary places in the Northern Territory be made to keep pace with demand.
6. Continued support to Federal Council, who are negotiating with the Federal Government re the Youth Allowance.
7. Access to Tertiary institutions in the Northern Territory and other states byway of:
 - (a) Recognition by relevant authorities of 'the difficulties of isolated students in meeting cut-off dates for final acceptances due to the nature of mail delivery in geographically isolated areas.???
 - (b) The setting up of a Northern Territory Admissions Centre to co-ordinate admissions to Tertiary Institutions in all States and Territories.