

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc.

"Access to Education"



Submission

to the

Senate Standing Committees on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport

into the

**Operation, regulation and funding of air route service delivery to rural,
regional and remote communities**

from the

Federal Council

of the

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc.
ICPA (Aust)**

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The Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Australia, ICPA (Aust), welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on the operation, regulation and funding of air route service delivery to rural, regional and remote communities.

Since 1971, ICPA (Aust) has represented families living in rural and remote regions of Australia, who are passionate about the sustainability and prosperity of the industries they work in. Research indicates that the ability to access affordable and appropriate educational services plays a major factor in determining if a family will remain in rural and remote locations. The goal for our 2700-member families is to achieve equity of educational opportunity for all children living in rural and remote areas, thus ensuring they have access to a continuing and appropriate education determined by their aspirations and abilities rather than the location of their home.

Remote and isolated locations in Australia provide the greatest challenges for improving provision of education options and pathways for children and families. Improving the educational outcomes for rural and remote students requires a national approach that ensures educational delivery of a consistent high standard no matter where the education is provided. The financial cost to families educating children in rural and remote locations continues to rise and can be attributed to many leaving these areas.

Rural education is interlinked with other aspects of rural communities, such as fluctuating populations, economic influences, seasonal conditions and climate. It must be recognised that attempts to address inequities in the provision of quality education would not be effective unless broader economic and social issues are also considered. In order to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of these students, inequity issues must be understood. Some of these children are not considered vulnerable because they are not impacted by extreme levels of poverty. Rather, due to geographic isolation from services, many rural and remote families are expected to cover out of pocket costs for the education of their children from early childhood through to tertiary education, which is not experienced by urban families.

(a) Social and economic impacts of air route supply and airfare pricing;

While all Australian governments recognise the social and economic benefits of a high quality and equitable school education system, ICPA (Aust) continues to devote an enormous amount of volunteer hours holding relevant governments to account to address inequities. Much of this can be attributed to many programs not reaching locations where the programs are costly to administer and jurisdictions not providing additional funding to ensure program objectives are met.

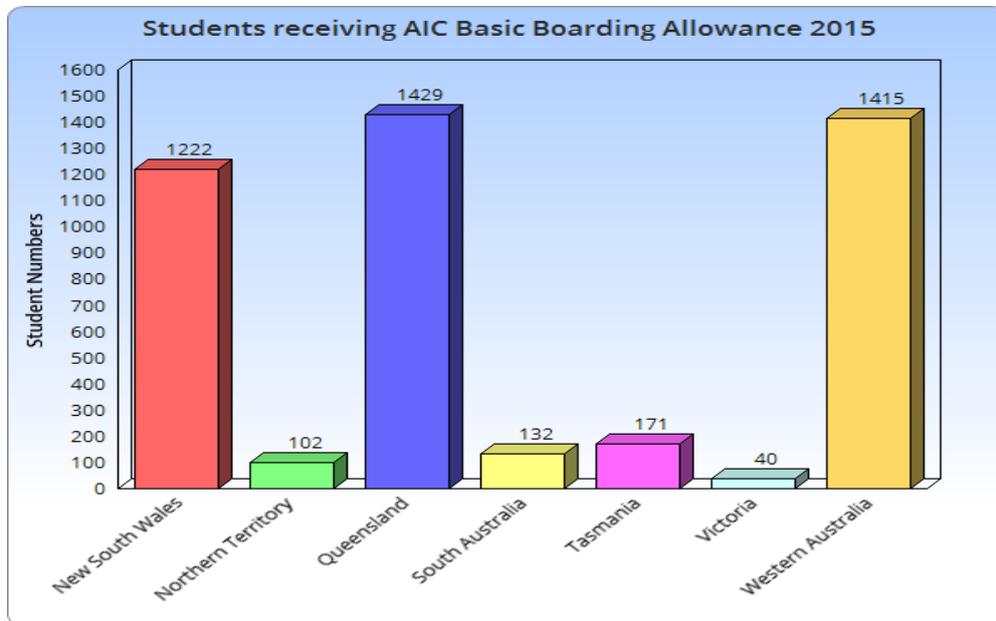
TRAVEL FOR SCHOOLING

Typically, secondary students living in rural and isolated locations who, due to distance, do not have daily access to appropriate mainstream schooling, attend boarding school. This group includes students who have studied by Distance Education as well as those who attended small rural schools in their primary years. Attending boarding schools is often the only option for our members’ children. In the majority of cases these boarding schools are a significant distance from the family home. The cost of airfares, often up to eight times a year, for trips home for the school holidays poses a real financial strain to families. This cost is amplified when families have more than one child away at school.

Additional information can be found in the research conducted by ICPA (Aust) in 2016. Boarding School Access Research for Geographically Isolated Students.

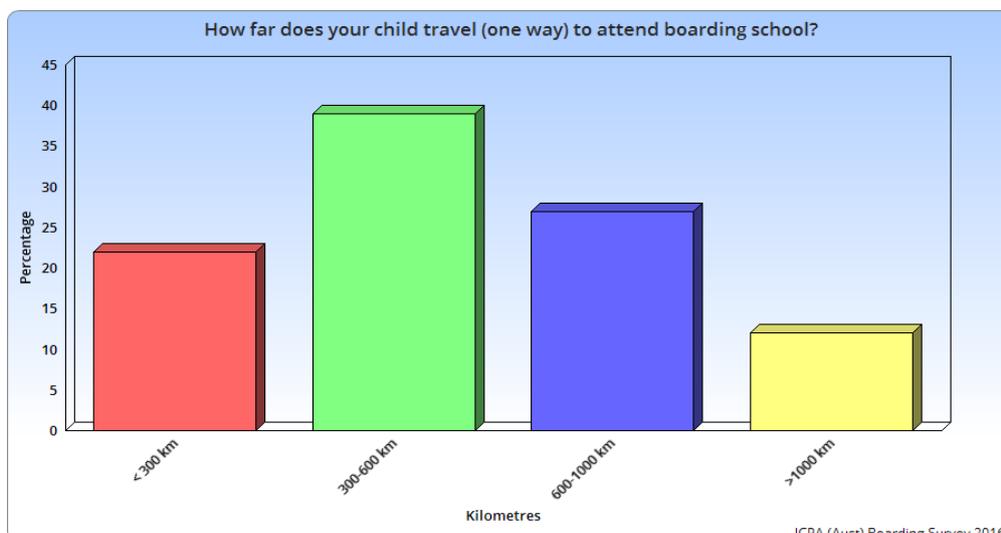
<https://www.icpa.com.au/module/latestNews/view/34/boarding-school-survey-key-findings/federal-news>.

Figures highlighted in the research suggest that in 2015 students receiving the Assistance for Isolated Children’s Basic Boarding allowance were as follows:



While student numbers amount to less than 5000 throughout Australia, not all would require air travel.

Eleven per cent of surveyed families who send their children away to board during their secondary schooling, access schools outside their home state. As many as 12% travel more than 1000kms from home to access their school. Reasons for sending children interstate include: limited boarding availability in the home state; living close to a state border which often means the closest major town that offers transport links may be in the adjoining state or family living in the town/city where the children will attend school.



For some time now ICPA (Aust) has raised concerns about the high costs associated with travelling between home and boarding school. Students returning home on breaks who are not able to access affordable flights find their only other alternative is to travel long distances (often interstate) which can take days on road and/or rail transport. This reduces the time with family considerably and many parents feel that it is not a safe option for younger students or girls.

Rural and remote families, due to distance, cannot support their children when needed whilst they are at boarding school, often having to forego events such as parent/teacher interviews, birthdays, sports, awards, music etc. More affordable airfares would provide additional opportunities for families to spend time with their children throughout the year. This is a valuable outcome for families and children already dealing with the difficulties of separation and anxiety associated with boarding away from home.

Some families are able to access airfare concession schemes in their State but that is only when and if they can obtain them. There are many factors that contribute to being unable to acquire these schemes from unreliable internet and telephone services on the day of discount sales or not living within the designated area of a regional airport being the closest/only airport to the family, just to name a few. The fare sale timeframes rarely coincide with school term/semester dates. Families forego valuable family time and are forced to leave students at school for extra days or bring them home early to take advantage of the cheaper fares, but students may miss important exams and functions at the school in order to travel at these times.

TIMING

There are rarely “inexpensive” airfares available that coincide with school holidays. As so many Australians travel during this period, it sees peak bookings and prices. However, this is the time that students who need to live away from home in order to access schooling must travel to and from school/home, so they incur the higher airfares regularly due to timing.

TRAVELLING TO ACCESS SPECIALIST ASSISTANCE

Due to vast distances, families in states including NSW, QLD, WA and NT regularly struggle with accessing necessary specialists for health, education, disability services and other support services for our children and sometimes emergencies. This can be a result of a shortage of services within regional, rural and remote communities and having to travel to urban areas to receive these services. Often, because of such tremendous distances, the most practical way to reach these essential services is by air travel. Travelling away in order to see specialists is not easy for families living in rural and remote areas. The father usually needs to remain at home in order to work while the mother or another relative travels with the child/person requiring the specialist care. Younger children cannot be left at home unattended, so often are required to travel as well. Generally, families would need more than one airfare in order to make this trip, which is very costly.

Australia has a diminishing rural population. The availability and reasonable pricing of air services is crucial for people living and working in the bush. Another factor necessary to retain families in rural and remote areas is affordable access to education and reasonably priced airfares would be one way of achieving this.

Recommendation

- Governments consider further subsidisation of rural/remote routes satisfying a demonstrated need rather than emphasis placed on being commercially viable e.g. the (previous) NT Government is to be commended for providing a subsidy to enable the re-establishment of the Darwin-Katherine-Tennant Creek-Alice Springs run (return) three times a week, soon to be five days a week.

Case Study 1

Our child attends school and boards in Townsville which is 7 hour's drive from our station, with no public transport available directly back to Clermont. She could fly/bus/train to Mackay, however then a 4-5-hour bus trip to Clermont and a 3-hour round trip to collect her.

Nearest flights are out of Moranbah (approx. 3 hours from here) or Emerald (also approx. 3 hours) and she would then have to fly from Moranbah/Emerald to Brisbane then back up to Townsville.

We chose to go to Townsville for school as we do Distance Education (DE) via Charters Towers, so at times it works to do boarding pick-ups and drop offs or visit our daughter when we are also doing DE events in Charters Towers.

Case Study 2

I live near Wiluna in WA and attend a college in Perth as a boarder. I and the majority of my friends rely on the student-subsidised travel scheme (four free flights a year) to safely return home and see our family more often. In fact, flying home last year was the only choice for me whenever the holidays came because I had no Perth-based guardian, and this is the case for many other boarders from out rural areas. I cannot go home to see my family without this travel scheme, as the airfare cost has risen to ridiculous prices. It is \$800 just for a return trip from Perth to Wiluna, a two-hour flight. Adding this together, it would cost \$3200 for my family just for me to come home. I am not even including the figures for my brother. There has been talk of the cutting of the Student Subsidised travel scheme as it costs too much, which is highly concerning and beyond unfair as a plane trip home can be the only choice for us boarders. The fact that the airfare prices have escalated to be so expensive within the past couple of years is also highly concerning and unnecessary. If we were to lose funding for the Student Subsidised travel scheme, the financial strain for rural families will only grow worse, applied with the decrease in our Boarding Away from Home Allowance. I am unsure how much this could be of use, but if we lose the travel scheme, families are going to suffer.

Case Study 3

I have two boys in boarding. Boarding is their only option for a chance to attend a face to face school for high school and until they went to high school they attended SOTA. Government allowances contribute to just slightly under a ¼ of their school fees and the remainder of the money has been borne by our entire family (multi generations ensuring that the boys receive an education). That's only talking fees, on top of this we've uniform, books, excursions and travel home.

Both my boys are introverts. The oldest especially and is also severely dyslexic. He finds being in a boarding environment and studying exhausting. The boarding house they live in has over 100 boarders and has one exeat per term with the exception of term 4 where there is no exeat. Exeats usually coincide with long weekends if possible. We live 1 ½ hours from the closest airport/bus. For our boys to travel on the bus they can be home in 6 ½ to 7 hours (depending on if the bus is the coastal run which happens on set days each week). If they take the plane they can be home in 2 ½ hours. For them to travel by bus is \$62 return and over \$300 return by plane. Generally, we can't afford the flight, so we've had the boys come up on the bus. This is a challenge as if it's only a normal weekend they end up spending the equivalent of a whole day in transit. They've found this too exhausting and have asked that we don't try and do that any longer.

Unfortunately, our financial circumstances have meant that we have a boy that would be better supported if he was able to get away from boarding more than once a term.

(b) Different legal, regulatory, policy and pricing frameworks and practices across the Commonwealth, States and territories;

There are several student airfare concession schemes available in Australia, such as the state-based 'Student Subsidised Travel Scheme' in WA as well as several offered by a few airlines. However, there is no consistency and some students need to travel interstate which makes them ineligible for some state schemes. Some assistance schemes currently offered by states are very helpful to families and their loss would be detrimental to children's compulsory education and would compromise families' ability to afford to transport/fly family members between home and schools.

Examples of schemes currently available to boarding school families in Australia:

- Some states offer assistance for students' travel – however there are no uniform scheme for this across all states and amounts of assistance for necessary school travel vary widely.
 1. Western Australia provides 'Students Subsidies Travel' for essential school travel <https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/aboutus/student-subsidised-travel.asp>
 2. South Australia's Remote Travel Allowance consists of \$250 per annum for students who live more than 150kms from public transport.
 3. Tasmania and Victoria do not have state allowances to assist with geographically isolated students' travel.
 4. Queensland's Remote Area Travel Allowance for rural and remote students is calculated on kilometres from school and has a maximum of \$1727 per year.
 5. New South Wales offers students the School Student Transport Scheme but it only applies to bus, train or long distance coach <https://apps.transport.nsw.gov.au/ssts/assets/documents/sSTSFactsheetEnglish.pdf>
 6. Northern Territory 'Student Travel Scheme' funds travel for some students to and from boarding school in the NT at a rate equivalent to the cheapest form of travel. Where flying is the most practical mode of transport, there can be a considerable difference between the cost of flights and reimbursements and not all rural and remote students qualify for this scheme. <https://nt.gov.au/learning/student-financial-help-and-scholarships/financial-help-for-isolated-students/student-travel-scheme>
- The current QANTAS Regional Trials for Residents in specific Western Australian regional cities and Mount Isa– while the catchment for this has been expanded, many rural families still do not qualify for this scheme as they do not live 'in the designated area' even though it is the closest/only airport available to them. As from the 14 November 2017, Qantas 'offers residents in selected communities a variable discount of up to 30% off the Qantas-controlled component (i.e. excludes government taxes, security and airport charges) of all-inclusive fares from regional airports as part of a 12-month trial'.

'Discounts will vary from between 10-30% on all Economy fares except for sale fares, starting from Qantas' everyday lead-in 'Red eDeal' fares, for purchase up to and including the day of travel. That means last-minute trips during peak travel times, which are usually more expensive, will be more accessible year-round'. <https://www.qantas.com/au/en/frequent-flyer/member-specials/discounted-fares-for-residents.html>

Local Residential Fares in regions such as Charleville and Longreach in Qld where local government has worked with state government and airlines to offer residents reduced fares (a certain number of seats per flight are reserved for residents' fares).

The concession scheme 'Bush to Boarding' is offered for boarding school students by Rex Regional Airlines in North QLD between any Gulf port and Cairns, and Brisbane to Mt Isa via Toowoomba, Charleville, Quilpie, Windorah, Birdsville, Bedourie and Boulia in Western QLD.

- Patient Assisted Travel Schemes (PATS) in WA, SA, NT and QLD and similarly named schemes in NSW and Tasmania provide financial assistance with travel and accommodation where rural and remote patients need to see medical specialists. However, this does not include educational specific needs consultations with allied health professionals.

<http://www.wacountry.health.wa.gov.au/index.php?id=pats>;

<http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+services/country+health+services/patient+assistance+transport+scheme>;

<https://nt.gov.au/wellbeing/health-subsidies-support-and-home-visits/patient-assistance-travel-scheme>; <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/services/travel/subsidies>;

COMMONWEALTH SCHEMES

Remote Air Services Subsidy Scheme (RASS)

As part of the Australian Government's Regional Aviation Access Programme (RAAP), RASS subsidises a regular weekly air transport service for the carriage of passengers and freight such as: educational materials, medicines, fresh foods and other urgent supplies to 372 communities including pastoral stations in remote and isolated parts of Australia. This provides the only mode of transport where roads are cut by rain and floods for many months in the 'wet' season and where distance is an issue. Mail is also contracted for delivery on these flights. Whilst ICPA (Aust) is very grateful for this service it has proved difficult for additional worthy properties/communities to be added to this program.

<https://infrastructure.gov.au/aviation/regional/rass.aspx>

INEQUITIES IN COMMONWEALTH STUDENT TRAVEL ALLOWANCES

Youth Allowance and ABSTUDY are two Commonwealth Government incentives which have travel components that are currently available to eligible students. See Appendices 1 and 2 below.

Some older secondary students can access a Fares Allowance within Youth Allowance <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/fares-allowance>

or ABSTUDY <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/types-travel-abstudy-fares-allowance> programs, but this does not apply to students receiving Assistance for Isolated Children

(AIC). Our members seek uniformity and equity in travel assistance to access compulsory schooling.

There is no federal travel assistance for compulsory schooling at present. As mentioned earlier, travel assistance for geographically isolated students is left to the states and is quite diverse. ICPA has raised the issue around the inequities surrounding travel subsidises between the States with the Education Council, requesting that all States provide the assistance required for students to travel to and from school. Unfortunately, the matter has not been included on the Education Council agenda for discussion. The Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC) has no provision for assisting with travel at all, despite families receiving this allowance to assist with compulsory schooling. Families with secondary students away at boarding school also face the same adversities as tertiary students and those receiving ABSTUDY but are excluded from these fare components of other allowances. Consideration should be given to these types of allowances and incentive given to bring these allowances in line with each other to show equity for all children from rural and remote Australia.

Recommendation

- State-funded travel assistance that offers uniformity and truly addresses inequity for compulsory schooling to ensure nation-wide consistency and fairness and to help retain families in rural/remote areas.

(c) How airlines determine fare pricing;

Rural and remote families often have no choice but to send their children to boarding school, thus necessitating travel. Air travel is usually the most practical form of transport. Bearing in mind the essential nature of student/family travel in these circumstances, the current system of fare pricing is unacceptable for the following reasons:

- Booking in advance rarely yields any price advantage unless seats run very short. Booking too far in advance inevitably leads to fare changes due to changes in plans.
- Cancellation and rebooking fees are prohibitive and discourage early booking. E.g. to change a flight, common cancellation fee is \$40-50 then there would be a re-booking fee of \$40-90
- Specials rarely, if ever, coincide with the beginning or end of school terms.
- Boarding and many tertiary students who must by necessity travel at the beginning and end of holiday periods are paying the price for airlines' price gouging of holidaying Australians.

Coach companies and several rail programs offer special travel rates or free travel for students; however, no such scheme is offered by the airlines. Buses and trains in particular have limited schedules and often don't go "all the way out" making use of these methods for travel out to regional or more isolated areas difficult. Having young children travelling for extensive periods by either bus or train is not ideal as they can be the only child on a service and required to "fend for themselves" as the bus/train stops at places along the route, which is a great concern for parents.

Recommendations

- A national 'student concession scheme' for rural/remote secondary and tertiary students.
- Airlines retain a number of seats at 'normal' pricing up to a certain date prior to terms' start/finish for rural/remote boarding/tertiary students.

(d) The determination of airport charges for landing and security fees, aircraft type and customer demand;

Regarding travel for students and access to disability and medical services: Demand for air services in rural/remote areas will always be greater than demand for other forms of transport because of its time efficiency, comfort and safety.

Travel by road can be dangerous with wild weather, poor-conditioned roads, fatigue, wildlife and vehicle breakdowns in extremely isolated areas. Some students would have to sit on a bus for up to 25 or more hours to make the same trip via coach. Some coach companies have rules that students cannot travel unaccompanied on a route if they need to change bus services to connect to another route. With diminishing bus services, this can be problematic for children travelling very long distances to schools. Bus fares are not inexpensive, and length and timing of journeys render them a poor competitor to air travel. Likewise, trains are few and far between and schedules often incompatible with desired travel days. E.g. A student travelling from Mataranka in the NT to boarding school in Alice Springs will spend 15 hours on a bus at night arriving at boarding school with little/no sleep. Were there a flight from 'nearby' Katherine on a Sunday prior to school starting, he would be there in 4-5 hours with no fatigue. The reduced time and presence of air hostesses/stewards on larger planes, makes air travel more attractive for the safety of younger students, girls and vulnerable people.

(e) Pricing determination, subsidisation and equity of airfares;

ICPA (Aust) acknowledges there are current schemes available which we have detailed above, one being the trial that Qantas has in WA and NW Qld for the general public. Rex Airlines has the 'Bush to Boarding' scheme available between any Gulf port and Cairns in QLD as well as the Western QLD run. Rex have taken it upon themselves to seek further routes that they may consider providing student

concessions which ICPA is currently researching with our members and which will assist them further. ICPA (Aust) thanks all Air Travel companies offering these schemes as some (not all) of our families can benefit when able to access them.

Pricing determination for geographically-isolated areas is extreme considering flying internationally can be cheaper with accommodation included. We understand the numbers on seats and to have a full plane is financially more beneficial for the companies concerned but if there is consistency of schemes for these families it would benefit the airplane company, airport, employment, viability of small rural communities, families, people's health, schools and most importantly the children's education considering they are our next generation, your next generation of rural and remote families.

(f) Determination of regulated routes and distribution of residents' fares across regulated routes;

Air travel, where available, is highly depended on by those living in regional areas and further out to help overcome the distances where we live. Australia's vast distances and spread out communities may make it difficult to determine precisely which routes should be regulated and where these routes should be however, reduction in the cost and increased flight availability would assist many people living in these areas. In order for communities to be sustainable, people must want to work and live in these areas. Having affordable and frequent travel options to and from regional areas, would help encourage people to take up residence in these areas on a permanent basis.

(g) Airline competition within rural and regional routes;

Some regional routes are only serviced by one airline, so there is no competition and therefore competition resulting cheaper airfares is non-existent.

Some regional routes would not support two airlines, or even one as a commercial operation. In these cases, government subsidies of the airline such as the NT case above, may be important to support access to air travel for the rural community.

More routes are being covered by regional airlines now, where previously some of the major airlines had these routes. While these regional airlines taking up the routes when others want to drop them is very much appreciated, the regional airlines usually only fly to one main hub and do not continue on. Passengers needing to travel on to other cities must then book with another airline to continue their journey. Connecting to other airlines is very problematic, time consuming and difficult (especially for young children travelling alone, elderly people or people needing assistance) as once the flight has arrived, the passenger is no longer the responsibility of that airline nor are they the responsibility of the airline they are connecting to as they have not checked in yet.

For example: flying from Thangool to Sydney: Fly Corporate flies from Thangool to Brisbane but passengers then have to change to another airline. It can take all day to wait for the connecting flight in either direction or the connecting time is sometimes very short, and passengers need to collect bags and re-check in with the other airline.

With some of the regional airlines, if passengers want to travel to another point they fly to, they still have to collect their bags and re-check them in. As an example, when travelling with Fly Corporate passengers wishing to travel from Tamworth to Thangool/Biloela must collect their bags in Brisbane and then re-check in for the Thangool/Biloela flight at the check-in counter back in the main foyer of the airport. Then passengers must go back through security etc.... The check-in counters are not staffed at all times, so if passengers come in on an early flight they may need to wait several hours for

the next flight with the airline and have to wait until that company check-in staff comes “on duty” – usually only an hour before the flight departs. These issues complicate air travel from regional areas particularly for children travelling alone on the way to or from their school.

Recommendation

We encourage airlines to work together for the benefit of their customers to form partnerships and make connecting to a destination a seamless process especially where a regional airline does not fly.

(h) Consistency of aircraft supply and retrieval of passengers by airlines during aircraft maintenance and breakdown;

Delayed and cancelled flights is a consistent issue in regional areas. This is problematic when returning children to boarding school or attending a medical appointment that has been booked months in advance. Sometimes students are stranded without any means until the next flight out. This has caused children to be extremely late back to school and families to miss their long-term appointments altogether and having to re-book, sometimes waiting months for them to be re-scheduled. Families are out-of-pocket for that flight not to mention the accommodation and any additional travel incurred. It is hard for some to understand but specialists our families need to see are most often in the cities and air travel is the only means of getting there. Family members often travel alone because the cost of airfares make it unaffordable for more people to travel.

While one does appreciate an aircraft not flying if a fault is detected, some regional airlines have earned a reputation for unreliability. Why is this? Perhaps they do not have the resources to have the same rigorous maintenance and monitoring procedures as a large airline? Certainly, if there are routes or contracts involving any sort of tendering process, demonstrated reliability should be a deciding factor.

Often families living further out need to travel several hours to access the local regional airport. The roads these families travel seldom have mobile coverage and because they leave home several hours or even the day prior to their flight, when airlines send a text message to notify them of a flight delay, change or cancellation, most of these rural families have already left home and may not get the message until they are literally pulling into the airport, expecting to be travelling. Cancellations result in these families needing to find and pay for accommodation as it is usually too far for them to return home just to turn around to drive back in again the next day for the rescheduled flight.

Case Study 1

Our daughter’s flight was cancelled when Flight West went broke and she was stuck in Toowoomba (fortunately we had friends there to help, we were lucky) but they eventually had to put on a special flight for the boarding school children to get them home as the schools were all closed for the holidays. Considering the flights only stopped on that day we could not make any alternative arrangements and it is a day and a half’s travel or 1600 kms to Toowoomba from our property at the top of the Birdsville Track.

Case Study 2

One of our Branch members had a cancelled flight which was very difficult for her daughter’s return to school. She had to then drive home 200+ kms and back again the next day for her to catch that flight.

Case Study 3

Eyre Peninsula SA:

Eyre Peninsula is a very vast and isolated area of 170,500km² and therefore long distances to travel. To travel to our Capital city of Adelaide from the Eyre Peninsula is 7.5 hours travel which is 750 km each way, being a 1500km round trip to be able to access education, health, sport and recreation needs. These are similar distances by car to Melbourne just without the Kangaroos. Travel distances are massive, and the cost of flights are out of reach and forever increasing.

Eyre Peninsula's access is via personal vehicle otherwise we are serviced twice weekly (Tuesday, Thursday) (not really an easy option), with a *Stateliner bus* that leaves a **heavy** reliance on Air Services. There are three main air services over the Eyre Peninsula and they are Ceduna, Port Lincoln and Whyalla.

The costs to fly from these airports are:

Ceduna:	REX: \$521.35 \$460.85 \$226.55, \$188.05 only service carrier
Port Lincoln	REX \$435-\$159; Qantas \$284, \$270, \$199, \$171, \$147
Whyalla	REX \$433 - \$157, \$133; Qantas \$291, \$169, \$149
Melbourne	Qantas \$114-\$84

In our particular case we are at Mount Cooper, Mid to Far West Coast. The Car travel to these airports to use plane services are:

- Ceduna - 4hr round trip with a 1hr prior at airport, requirement=**5hrs**.
- Port Lincoln - 5hr round trip with a 1hr prior at airport, requirement=**6hrs**
- Whyalla - 6hr round trip with a 1hr prior at airport, requirement=**7hrs**
Remembering this is kangaroo infested travel on roads.

For example: 11 am flight @ Whyalla - leave home @ 7am (in winter that is dark here) OR 5pm arrival into Port Lincoln we have to leave home at 2.30pm and arrive home at 7.30pm (dark again.) Planes are cancelled in bad weather leaving people stranded and incurring extra costs whilst waiting for a rescheduled flight. People lose their seat on the plane if they are not checked in an hour prior with Qantas as we have seen this happen, regardless whether the plane is still loading on the tarmac and generally it is.

In the richly populated area of Port Lincoln the prices are edged upwards and specials are extremely hard to get anymore, and they are always sold out early. There are no subsidies for students or medical appointment travellers needing to travel to the capital cities for services. It is imperative these routes are investigated and that there is some fairness brought into play as we are all very aware of the massive burdens that these outrageous costs of travel and plane flights are adding to the car accidents for people having to drive 1500km to take students to school or patients to medical appointments (as many of our local medical services have disappeared from the country.)

It is my strong belief that social and economic impacts of air route supply and airfare pricing are creating massive limiting hardships on our youth and their education and opportunities in our community. The advancement of business and medical access for all of our community members. Isn't it time in a global world that we live in, that our community of Eyre Peninsula was noticed and had the opportunity to join with the world. Stop the limiting of basic travel due to cost and services and create an equal playing field with the world.

We are impacted with the isolating factor of distance, therefore stop creating more barriers with the inhibiting costs of our path out into the world through air flights. PLEASE GIVE OUR KIDS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN THE WORLD.

Case Study 4

I live 700km north of Adelaide with my husband on a family owned beef property. Our closest towns for transport are Roxby Downs and Coober Pedy. We have been fortunate as Roxby Downs flights are usually at \$130 one way. I met the CEO of Alliance (who fly in and out of Roxby Downs) and he said that if I ever needed the cheaper flights then to contact him, so I have never paid more than \$130 one way for the children to fly to and from boarding school. I am also very fortunate to have had a mine open up next door, so we are able to use these flights to Adelaide.

However, our other closest town is Coober Pedy which is \$394 one way which makes it very expensive when getting children home from boarding school at the end of term or for a long weekend.

My eldest daughter attended Longreach Pastoral College last year (which is approx. 1800km with 1000km of dirt road). She flew home for the term break and the flight between Longreach and Brisbane was \$500. I added the cost up and a return trip from Longreach to our station was approx. \$2000.

I believe this is a huge issue. It is very costly for us to attend sporting, boarding events, interviews for our children as you need to take into consideration meals, accommodation, fuel/flights etc. It feels like one big juggling act!

Rural and remote families usually travel long distances just to reach their regional airport, for many it is a several hours trip before they even begin their flight.

Recommendations

Families with students attending school away from home not only incur the cost of boarding but the additional expense of travel that is a considerable sum especially in circumstances where they have more than one child. These costs have a significant burden on these families as this is the only method to educate their children by sending them away to boarding schools for their compulsory secondary education.

Time at home during school holidays is extremely important to family wellbeing. The majority of our students will be educated away from the family unit from year 7 until they complete their secondary schooling. Many families are supporting more than one student at boarding school at the same time, so the financial burden of school fees plus travel costs is even higher. Implementing a scheme such as 'student concessions on air travel' would be beneficial to rural and remote families to help decrease the financial burden that they already carry to give their children the best possible compulsory education that they can possible do given the struggles they face in doing so.

Conclusion

Air travel has become an essential mode of travel for those living outside of city centres as it greatly lessens the time it takes to travel long distances, particularly for access. Regional airfares should be affordable and services adequate, consistent and reliable to better assist rural, regional and remote residents and strengthen their communities.

Appendix 1

ABSTUDY FARES ALLOWANCE

from the Australian Government Department of Human Services website

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/enablers/types-travel-abstudy-fares-allowance>

Type of travel	Secondary students	Tertiary students and secondary students not at a secondary school
orientation or special purpose travel	Yes	No
start and end of studies travel	Yes	Yes
school holiday travel	Yes	No
study of more than 1 semester travel	No	Yes
exam travel	Yes	Yes
graduation travel	No	Yes
compassionate travel	Yes	Yes
travel if you're expelled	Yes	No

Types of travel

You can only get ABSTUDY Fares Allowance for the following types of travel.

Orientation or special purpose travel

You can get help for a return trip to your place of study:

- for a boarding school interview
- if you're from a remote community and boarding away from home for the first time, or
- if you finished secondary studies last year and will do an approved tertiary course for at least 1 year

A [family member](#) can get the allowance for a return trip to your place of study if:

- you're at risk of suspension or expulsion, and
- a visit from your family member will help you stay in school

Approved travel

Between your home and place of study Yes

To somewhere other than your place of study or your home No

Someone other than you can travel Yes

Start and end of studies travel

You can get help for travel to your:

- place of study at the start of your school term, semester or trimester, and
- home at the end

Approved travel

Between your home and place of study Yes

To somewhere other than your place of study or your home No

Someone other than you can travel Yes

School holiday travel

You can get help for up to 3 return trips between your place of study and home for the school holidays every year:

You can't get help for

- travel over Easter, unless Easter is in the school holidays
- long weekends, or
- when boarding schools or hostels close

Approved travel

Between your home and place of study Yes

To somewhere other than your place of study or your home No

Someone other than you can travel Yes

Travel for study of more than 1 semester

You can get help for travel to and from your place of study if your course is longer than 1 semester. You can travel any time in the academic year.

Approved travel

Between your home and place of study Yes

To somewhere other than your place of study or your home No

A travelling companion can travel with you Yes

Exam travel

You can get help for travel to and from an exam centre to do a supplementary or deferred exam.

Approved travel

Between your home and exam centre Yes

To somewhere other than your home or exam centre No

Supervisors and travelling companions can travel with you Yes

Graduation travel

You can get help for travel to and from your graduation ceremony if:

- you receive ABSTUDY for:
 - a tertiary course that was the equivalent of at least 2 years full time. For example, 4 years part time,
 - an honours degree

And during your course you receive:

- ABSTUDY Fares Allowance, or
- help to travel under the Indigenous Education Training Program

You can get help with meals or accommodation if you have to stay overnight because of your travel schedule.

Approved travel

Between your home and graduation venue Yes

To somewhere other than your graduation venue and home No

A travelling companion can travel with you Yes

You can't get help for graduation travel if you only got ABSTUDY Fares Allowance for a:

- placement
- field trip, or

- testing and assessment program

Compassionate travel

You can get help for 2 return trips to your place of study every year if:

- an immediate family member is critically sick or hurt
- you need to go home because you're sick or hurt
- a family member has died
- you're going to a family member's funeral, or
- you need to attend an event because you live in a community with:
 - Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander lore, or
 - kinship obligations

Approved travel

Between your home and graduation venue Yes

To somewhere other than your home or place of study No

Someone other than you can travel Yes

Travel if you're expelled

You get help to travel home if you're expelled from secondary school.

We can only pay for this in [specific circumstances](#) and when there's no other solution.

You need to talk to your school. They must confirm in writing that you meet these [Yes specific circumstances](#).

Approved travel

To your home only Yes

To somewhere other than your home No

A supervisor can travel with you Yes

Appendix 2

YOUTH ALLOWANCE- FARES ALLOWANCE

from the Australian Government Department of Human Services website

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/centrelink/fares-allowance>

Who can get it

You need to meet 3 criteria to get Fares Allowance.

1. You're a tertiary student living away from home to study.
2. You get:
 - [Youth Allowance](#) as a full-time student
 - [Austudy](#) as a full time or part time student, or
 - [Pensioner Education Supplement](#) as a full time or part time student.
3. You:
 - are dependent and get a [higher rate of Youth Allowance when living away from home](#)
 - are independent and living away from your partner to study
 - are a parent living away from your dependent children to study
 - were dependent and living away from home in the last study year and you're now independent due to:
 - turning 22 or
 - supporting yourself [through work](#), or
 - are studying a [distance or online course](#) and need to do compulsory travel to your institution.

Secondary students and Australian Apprentices cannot get Fares Allowance. Except a 16-year-old (at secondary or otherwise) that moves from AIC to YA can claim Fares Allowance.

Fares Allowance covers the cost of the least expensive and most available form of public transport in Australia.

If you:	You can use the allowance for:
Get Youth Allowance, Austudy or Pensioner Education Supplement as a tertiary student for less than 6 months a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 trip to your place of study from your home to start studying• 1 trip home after finishing or ending your study
Get Youth Allowance, Austudy or Pensioner Education Supplement as a tertiary student for 6 months or more a year	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 trip to your place of study from your home to start studying per year• 1 return trip between your place of study and your home during the study year. In most cases, you won't qualify for a return trip in your first year until at least 1 July. You can ask us to pre-book your journey to see when you can get your first return trip• 1 trip home after finishing or ending your study per year
Study online or by distance and have to travel for tertiary study	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 return trip between your permanent home and your place of study for each course per year

Public transport

You can use the allowance for air, ferry, coach, train, bus or a combination of these. We may also cover the cost of standard baggage fees.

We sometimes reimburse or pre-book extra baggage fees if you need to transport extra items for your study. For example, if you need to transport essential living items like kitchenware, or for a music student who needs to take their instrument between their permanent home and place of study.

Private transport

Where it's not practical to use public transport, you can travel by private transport. It might not be practical to use public transport if you need to move belongings that:

- exceed strict luggage limits, or
- are difficult to move around

You'll need to explain why you couldn't use public transport.

If it's more practical to travel by public transport and you don't, we may only pay you the equivalent amount of the cheapest public transport available.