



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

## **Distance Education Research Geographically Isolated Families**

**November 2015**

**Contact:**

**(Mrs) Jane Morton  
Federal Secretary  
ICPA (Aust)  
505 Ryeford-Pratten Road, MS 422  
CLIFTON QLD 4361  
[FedSecretary@icpa.com.au](mailto:FedSecretary@icpa.com.au)  
Phone: 07 4695 8513**

**Contact:**

**(Mrs) Wendy Hick  
Federal President  
ICPA (Aust)  
Thorntonia Station  
CAMOOWEAL QLD 4828  
[FedPresident@icpa.com.au](mailto:FedPresident@icpa.com.au)  
Phone: 07 4995 3266**

[www.icpa.com.au](http://www.icpa.com.au)



## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Survey Results</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b> .....	<b>16</b>

## **Executive Summary**

The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia (ICPA Aust), has been lobbying for a Distance Education Teaching Allowance (DETA) for a number of years to assist our members who have no other option than to teach their children via distance education schooling.

For many young people living in remote regions, the only access to education is to study by distance education at home. While distance education services are well structured and distance education centres ably staffed, it is clear that distance education provision is founded on the assumption that all children have ready access to a person able to teach the program in the geographically isolated classroom. This person is the distance education tutor, who must be available and able to provide the practical, day-to-day supervision and support required for the effective delivery of a distance education program.

Presently the Distance Education Allowance component of the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC)<sup>1</sup> assists with both the set up and ongoing costs relating to the geographically isolated schoolroom, as well as enabling access to school activities conducted away from the home schoolroom. Due consideration must be given to the encumbrance on families in geographically isolated areas for whom distance education is the only means to educate children. The vital role of distance education tutors should be recognised through the payment of an allowance, of \$6000 per family per annum, which acknowledges the essential work tutors perform in filling a role that government cannot, due to its financial enormity and workforce shortages in remote areas of Australia.

### **Purpose**

The survey was commissioned by ICPA Aust as a means to determine and examine the key factors that impact rural and remote families who do not have daily access to face to face schooling. The aim of the survey was to provide sound anecdotal evidence from members about the need for financial assistance for families who must provide a tutor to educate their children via distance education. The statistical data and comments collected in the survey support what ICPA has been saying and strengthen our lobby for the DETA.

### **Rationale**

Remote and isolated locations in Australia provide the greatest challenges for improving provision of educational options and pathways for children and families.

While many schemes and programs have been introduced over recent years to address the needs of disadvantaged children within a community, the needs of those living beyond a community must also be addressed. In order to efficiently and effectively meet the needs of these isolated children inequity issues must be understood and addressed. These children are not considered vulnerable or impacted by extreme levels of poverty. Rather, due to isolation

---

#### **<sup>1</sup> Definitions**

<sup>1</sup>AIC DE Allowance - Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC) helps the families of students who are unable to attend an appropriate state school on a daily basis, mainly because of geographic isolation. AIC - Distance Education, is for families with students who are enrolled in an approved distance education course or who are undertaking other approved education while living at home. For more information, go to [humanservices.gov.au/isolatedchildren](http://humanservices.gov.au/isolatedchildren)

from services, their families are expected to cover the high out-of-pocket costs associated with gaining an education not experienced by urban families.

## **Methodology**

The method of data collection was through a survey formulated by ICPA. The survey was distributed electronically in early September 2015. Distribution was via email, containing a hyperlink to the online survey, to all ICPA members. The initiative was promoted through Federal and State/Territory ICPA networks.

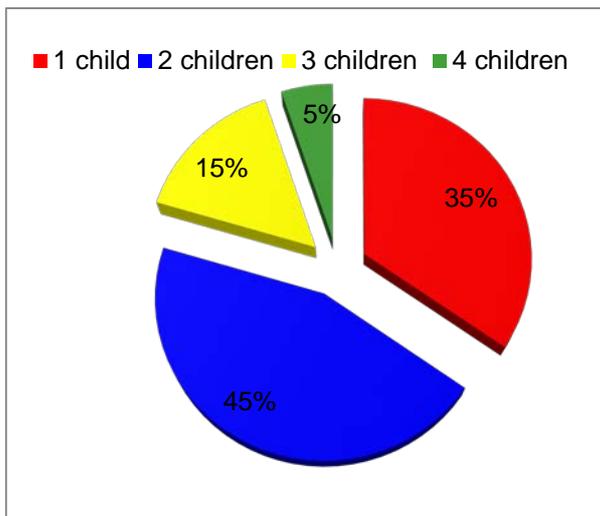
A polar (Yes/No) question was used to qualify members for initial participation; from there a further set of polar questions guided members to several open questions regarding the types of challenges and key factors that impacted on families required to fill the role of distance education tutor. Individual responses outlining the specific factors stated by members as limiting their ability to participate in the workforce due to having to fill the role of the tutor are included in full, in Appendix 1.

The offer to participate in the survey was made to the 2,275 member families of ICPA, of which approximately 1500 receive the Assistance for Isolated Children Distance Education allowance, with 13.8% of those members completing the survey.

## **Findings**

The survey responses draw attention to the issue of financial costs to families undertaking schooling via distance education. While AIC DE allowances are paid to families to assist with the out of pocket costs associated with this mode of education, the financial impact on families who must provide a full time tutor is not recognised. Responses have highlighted key concerns that underpin the need for financial assistance in the form of a Distance Education Teaching Allowance, which would be received in addition to the AIC Distance Education allowance for geographically isolated families in receipt of the AIC DE allowance.

## Number of children per family receiving Assistance for Isolated Children Distance Education Allowance.

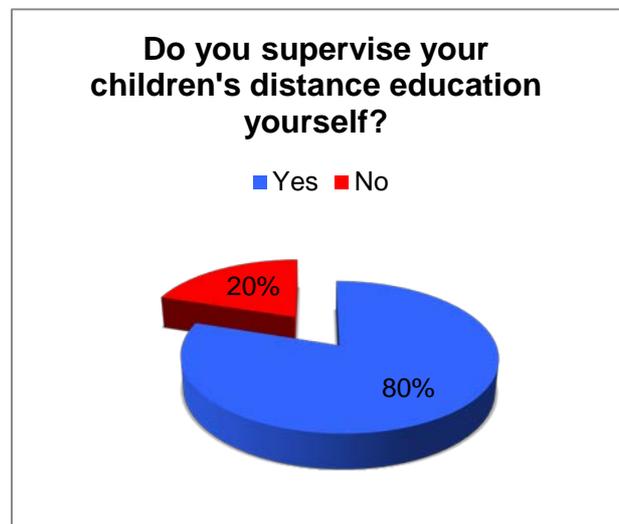


Presently the Distance Education Allowance within the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme (AIC) assists with both the set up and ongoing costs related to the schoolroom, as well as enabling access to school activities conducted away from the home schoolroom. It does not recognise the vital role the distance education tutor plays.

As indicated by the graph almost half of the respondents receive AIC DE allowance for 2 children at any one time. However as many as 20% of these families are responsible for 3 or 4 children in the classroom.

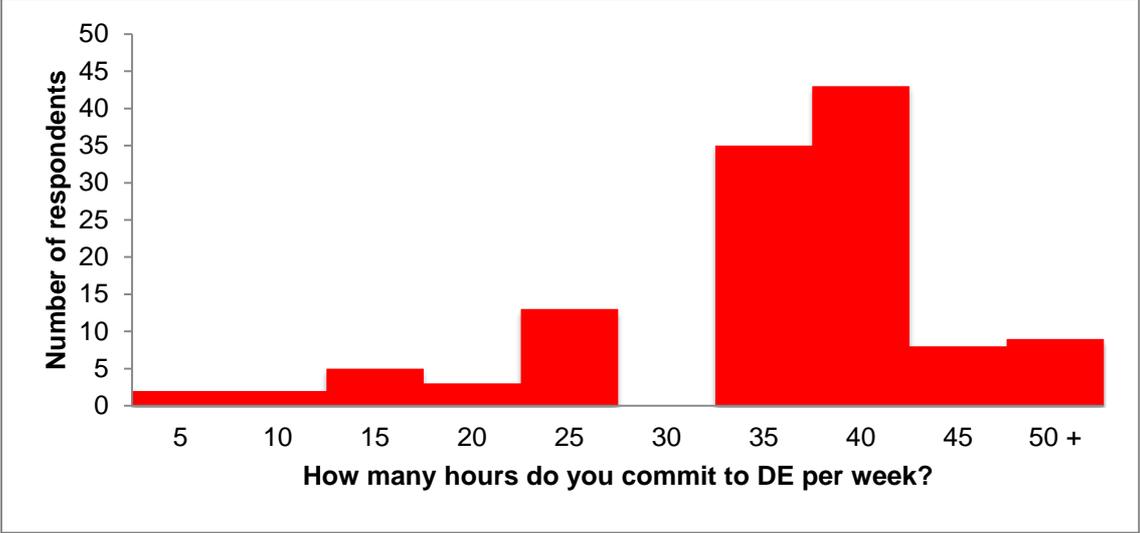
## Number of mothers filling the role of distance education tutor to their children.

The survey responses indicate that the mother is the tutor in 80% of families. Tasks required of the distance education tutor include setting up a classroom, planning and timetabling, keeping students engaged in the curriculum, dealing with disciplinary issues, ensuring students link in via the internet or telephone for their formal instructions and a variety of extra-curricular activities, receiving and returning completed lessons to distance education centres, marking school work before it is returned, as well as dealing with family commitments. For many of these women they are also involved in the everyday running of a business in a remote area.



**Total hours per week committed to role of distance education tutor.**

The results to this question were no surprise to ICPA, with most families indicating that they spend between 35 and 40 hours per week preparing and delivering lessons.

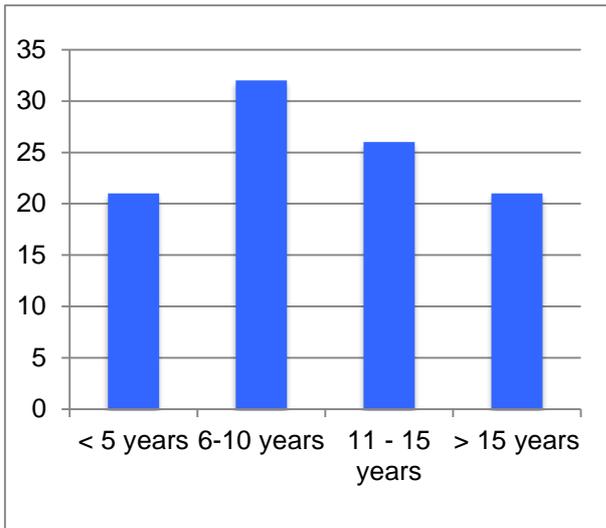


Distance education tutors spend similar time to a teacher in a mainstream school preparing daily lessons and teaching their students, with no remuneration or recognition for the work they do. The delivery of distance education is not possible without the commitment of distance education tutors, who are accountable for the face-to-face delivery of educational support, supervision and educational evaluation of their students.

**The following comments were received from mothers doing DE with their children:**

- The amount of hours spent in the classroom and often stressful timelines and technology issues needs recognition; this is a real occupation and I think some form of payment would help home tutors feel their job is worthwhile.
- I have added an extra hour onto each school day (8 hrs.) to allow for school day preparation and finish up. The hours spent just working with my children is 7. DE teaching is just as intensive and time consuming as it would be for a teacher in a normal school.

**Number of years, families have been required to commit to teaching the distance education program in their home due to geographic isolation.**



Nearly 60 % of those families surveyed have spent between 6 and 15 years teaching their children. The most common number of years spent teaching is nine. This figure alone indicates that for 40 weeks a year, over 9 years, averaging 35 hours a week, a distance education tutor would devote 12,600 hours of unpaid, unrecognised time educating their children.

**Comments:**

- I have supervised my children for 21 years.
- Educating children in the bush is difficult, takes a lot of time to teach the curriculum and is hard to be able to afford a governess. I have taught my own children Distance Ed for 8 years, hard to find a qualified /experienced governess or afford one. Unfortunately teaching my own children means I am also unable to contribute to our valuable family beef grazing business and work when it is already hard to find staff for that business due to operating in an isolated area.
- This is my fourteenth year of tutoring my children through School of the Air. We are down to our youngest at home, in year 5.

**Filling the role of distance education tutor means that a person cannot take part in paid employment or fill a role in their business.**



The entire cost of providing the tutor falls on the family and for the parent (usually the mother) who undertakes the role of distance education tutor, it impacts severely on their capacity to earn an income or to participate fully in the rural business. If the position of tutor is unable to be filled from within the family, it is necessary to employ a tutor and subsequent provision of accommodation for anyone filling this role, a role that exists for the entire duration of a child’s schooling by distance education.

Of the 80% of parents who fill the role of tutor, a staggering 84% of respondents have indicated that the commitment to teaching their children means they cannot take part in paid employment or fill a role in their business.

### Comments:

- I am a qualified Primary School teacher. In a regular school I would be considered full time. I would receive a healthy salary, superannuation, personal development, sick pay and holiday pay. However, after all of my hours of work, I have to pay somebody to assist on the station where otherwise I would be. We cannot afford domestic help so the pressure of this current DE situation is not sustainable for our family. We love the land and the bush and give it our all. Unfortunately, without financial recognition of mothers who spend their week educating their children, families like ours face relocating to town.
- I find it really, really hard to teach my children properly when I have so much other work to do and it's not always easy to find the money to employ someone full time when you're a small property running on a shoe string budget anyway!!
- If an adult is taken out of the property work environment on a daily basis, someone else must fill this position, this person is paid, and it becomes very difficult emotionally and financially very quickly.

### Do you employ a governess (paid tutor) to supervise your children's distance education?

This graph reflects the different circumstance of families living and working in remote regions of Australia. Circumstances will differ depending on employment arrangements, the ability to access staff to fill the role of distance education tutor and the age and number of children.

The provision of accommodation and affording a full time wage has a significant impact on the decision to employ a distance education tutor (governess).

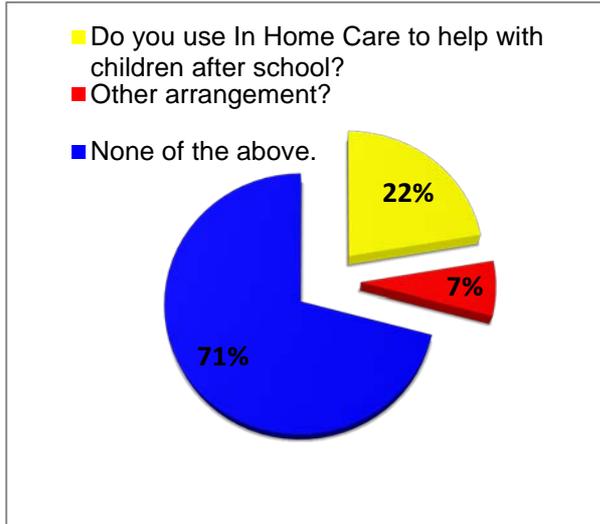


### Comments:

- I employ a lady one week per month, to supervise.
- I have filled in this form as a mother who employs a governess. I have 5 children all of whom will study via DE, hence the 15 years I will need to commit to DE schooling. Only 3 are home now. Some years I teach but this year I am not. The survey made it difficult to share these details with you. I hope that explains some of my responses.
- I employ a governess at my expense for the busy times in the year- shearing, mustering etc.
- I work and my wage is paid directly to my governess.
- I have tried to employ a governess, but have not been successful and need to deliver the program myself.
- No, but I have REVISE<sup>2</sup> tutors for 4 weeks a year.
- I work part-time and I am part-time in the classroom. My employer pays part of the cost for the governess.

<sup>2</sup> REVISE- Retired Educator Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education (WA & SA)

## Various options for support that are available and being accessed.



The In Home Care scheme provides a valuable, live-in service for families not able to access mainstream childcare services due to isolation. 22% have indicated that they use In Home Care outside of school hours.

To better support families who must educate children via distance education, the In Home Care services require greater flexibility than currently permitted under their operating guidelines when catering for school aged children. Children undertaking a distance education program remain in the care of their parents during school hours and these parents must provide a tutor to deliver the education program. Flexibility in the work

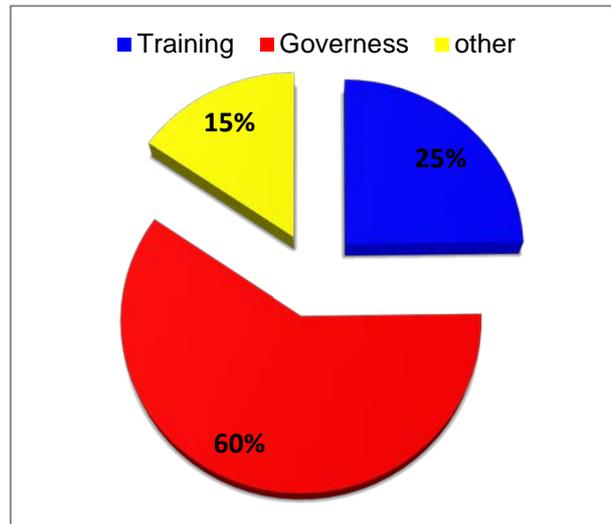
undertaken by those employed under an In Home Care service to include a distance education role would assist rural families in meeting the educational needs of their children.

Those who have a carer outside of school hours are unable to utilise that employee for any supervision of schoolwork, making it difficult to juggle the numerous tasks required in the household, schoolroom and business. This carer is a live-in position and it would seem sensible that, if they continue as the educator through the day into school time, there would be no need to have a second person to supervise the schoolwork.

## What would you consider using a Distance Education Teaching Allowance for?

For mothers who fill the role of the tutor, there is the satisfaction of playing an important part in their children's education. However, the reality is that the roles women undertake in the operation of family agricultural businesses have changed and multiplied over the years. With the responsibility of the distance education tutor position often falling on the mother, fulfilling this position further compounds her workload. This can place increased pressure on other family members and may necessitate the employment of additional staff.

**Comments may be read in their entirety in Appendix 1.**



- Employ someone to help my husband.
- Assist with setting up accommodation to employ someone to help with the things I can't do the hours I spend in the schoolroom.
- Help pay the bills because I can't work.
- Teaching my children is a full time unpaid job so a teaching allowance to support me would be very helpful. Employing someone is not a financial option for us and the hours I spend in the schoolroom limit any paid work I could be undertaking. Some acknowledgement and support of this would be nice and it would make things a lot easier.

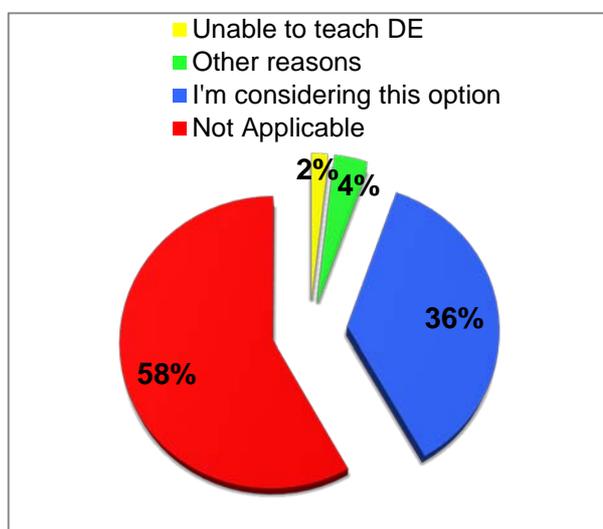
- If I could not find a governess, I would use the money to ease the financial burden for myself, as I clearly cannot resume the hours of work I had before becoming a DE tutor.
- Pay for my time in the schoolroom.
- This is my fourteenth year of tutoring my children through School of the Air. We are down to our youngest at home, in year 5. In this stage of my tutoring I would use the money to top up our family income as I am limited as to what I can do being tied to the classroom. In years past I would have used the money for continuing education to up-skill myself for teaching my two dyslexic sons; in other years I would have used it to help with the costs of employing a tutor or home help to assist with jobs around the house so that I wasn't so stressed while teaching four children in the classroom.
- Help pay for In Home Care for my younger children.
- Access speech pathology and educational professionals.
- Give me the financial flexibility to take extra days to teach my son instead of working.
- Assist with travel for VISE (Volunteers for Isolated Students' Education (Qld, NT & NSW)) tutors.

### Have you moved to town and set up a second home to access education?

One component of the AIC Scheme provides a second home allowance, which gives families the option to relocate (usually the mother and children) to access face to face schooling. Depending on the distance from home, families reunite over the weekends but for some it may only be during school holidays.

With the added pressures of the modern distance education program and the need for women to contribute financially to the family, the response to this question raises real concerns for ICPA, an organisation that advocates for educational equity. The response to this is an issue that governments should also be concerned about.

While it is important that families have this allowance available to them, the growing trend that results in families separating must be addressed.



- "I had to move into town as had 4 children in the classroom at the one time and now that I only have 2 doing distance education have moved home again."
- "I had to put my children into free education so I could earn an income, we were too broke for too long. The only free mainstream school was 140kms from home so I moved to town. The strain of living apart and commuting became too much so the children are going back into distance education next year."
- "Teaching children via DE is a challenge! I would hate to split up my family and move to town (2 hours away)...this would only increase the stress and workload for my husband, who already works approx. 80 hours a week. Support financially for a governess would enable me to help him more in our family grazing business."

## Appendix 1

### **Comments- all capitals and phrasing in the quotes are the writers' own emphasis:**

- “Being a home tutor is a MASSIVE job and needs to be recognised in some form of assistance.”
- “Due to the time that a lot of "untrained" mothers put into teaching their children I think it is only fair that they get some acknowledgment by a form of payment for doing this. So many families especially at the moment can't afford governesses so that leaves them short in the way of help for the property. We, the mothers, do 90% of the teaching so therefore I think we are entitled to some form of benefit.”
- “There should be more incentives for people who live in isolated areas and education should be high on that list.”
- “When mothers teach their children it reduces a family situation to a single income, or to having to pay a wage to another to take the place of the mother's role in the business. We are not home schooling or unschooling, we are educating kids with the only option we have - School of the Air. It is a government school and we should be paid as tutors for our time we are doing the same job as tutors in a mainstream school when they work one on one. Mainstream schools obtain funding for tutors according to the special needs of their students. Our Distance Ed students have special needs - they cannot teach themselves. They cannot complete the set curriculum activities on their own, it is mandated by the system that they have a tutor present. Just as a child with learning difficulties in an urban context has the right to funded tutor time, a child in a rural or remote context has difficulty learning (in fact CANNOT learn) without a tutor present, so they too should receive funded tutor hours. Their needs are 'special' because of their geographic location as opposed to their academic ability.”
- “I still fill many roles in our family business as I do the bookwork and cook for staff as well as teach but the point needs to be that this is very exhausting and most people in the city wouldn't be expected to do this!”
- “Not getting AIC for preschool aged children is unfair and putting extra burden on families - especially if they have only one pre-school aged child and no other school aged children.”
- “Thank you, thank you, and thank you for reinvigorating this debate. I have filled in this form as a mother who employs a governess. I have 5 children all of whom will study via DE, hence the 15 years I will need to commit to DE schooling. Only 3 are home now. Some years I teach but this year I am not. The survey made it difficult to share these details with you. I hope that explains some of my responses.”
- “The state based SDE (School of Distance Education) program is hard work. The content that these kids are expected to plough through in a day could not possibly be achieved in a school environment and some days, with small children, they just aren't coping with the pressure. The workload is enormous for the home tutor as well. Something needs to be done to the curriculum to make it more applicable and user friendly for families who have to be parent, bookkeeper, labourer, and teacher. It causes a lot of tears and heartache.”
- “I would also love to see some type of nationally accredited qualification be designed for home tutors who have been tutoring for a certain number of years to recognise the skills acquired in performing the tasks to successfully home tutor.”

- “I am in a position where I have paid work and the company we work for pays our governess. My greatest concern is how we will pay for our children to attend boarding school. I applaud all the work going into lobbying for an increase in this funding. I am unsure how we will afford to pay for this.”
- “SA SOTA is 100% online and it's just not working. We are now travelling 1 hour each way on dirt roads to access mobile internet.”
- “I have added an extra hour onto each school day (8 hrs.) to allow for school day preparation and finish up. The hours spent just working with my children is 7. DE teaching is just as intensive and time consuming as it would be for a teacher in a normal school.”
- “Please do not limit any assistance to the employment of a governess as this option will not suit everyone for a variety of reasons.”
- “Many of the internet-based learning software e.g. Language Perfect can't be used here due to internet problems.”
- “Rural and remote communities do not have the correct internet connection speeds or download allowances to facilitate using the curriculum materials that we are provided.”
- “The amount of hours spent in the classroom and often stressful timelines and technology issues, need recognition, this is a real occupation and I think some form of payment would help home tutors feel their job is worthwhile.”
- “Quality education of rural children needs to be a priority and a tutor allowance will support this.”
- “For mothers that supervise their children in the schoolroom, it is a full time job, it takes them away from daily chores around the house that require doing and it takes me away from helping on the property so my child can get quality education. It takes many hours prep doing work to organise lessons and work that are sent out by the teacher. Supervising our children/actually teaching our children the skills for furthering education takes time. It should be recognised as it is a necessity that our children get a quality education that they are entitled to. Teaching our children daily is a full time JOB, it ensures that our days are long as the usual household chores still have to be done for a family to function effectively. What mother's do as supervisors in the schoolroom needs to be recognised. The role we play should have been recognised a long time ago.”
- “We desperately need help and/or financial recognition in our role as home tutors! Times have never been tougher, we are fighting to survive. My husband and I have to work (him on the property - no income due to wild dogs decimating our sheep station, me part time in town) to pay the bills and there is NOBODY to help us if WWOOFers (Willing Workers On Organic farms) no longer volunteer! My son will not get an education! We need immediate help, not next year, NOW!!!!”
- “If an adult is taken out of the property work environment on a daily basis, someone else must fill this position, this person is paid, but it becomes very difficult emotionally and financially very quickly.”
- “DE tutors have to be multi-skilled, more so when the child has very individual learning needs that require very specific teaching skills - there is little support for these HTs”
- “Keep up the good work and please get us the DETA”
- “We recently attended a school camp that provided both teaching for the children and training for home tutor. This camp is essential to our children's education yet with 2200 km round trip and four days it presents a considerable expense. These funds are essential to providing for a quality bush education.”
- “When our workloads as tutors is finally acknowledged in the process to educate our remote children then this will create more opportunities for families to expand in other

areas as there will finally be the financial assistance paid associated with any job. A worker is worthy of his/her pay, this will take incredible amounts of stress and pressure off families who presently are not able to cope and thus resulting in a lower mental health budget the model that is presently given for families to succeed is far less than desirable. Many families are simply packing their bags and leaving remote areas. We are skilled, resourceful and resilient, if government wants to grow the outback then look after those who love the land and want to live here otherwise we will all simply pack up and leave the outback as ghost towns and move to the cities where we can get paid for what we are worth."

- "Increase AIC allowance"
- "I have supervised my children for 21 years"
- "Being a DE tutor is a very hard job not just time wise but mentally. Hard to be a mother and a multi-level schoolroom teacher."
- "Any amount of subsidy would assist financially families living in remote areas."
- "I am a qualified Primary School teacher. In a regular school I would be considered full time. I would receive a healthy salary, superannuation, PD, sick pay and holiday pay. However, after all of my hours of work, I have to pay somebody to assist on the station where otherwise I would be. We cannot afford domestic help so the pressure of this current DE situation is not sustainable for our family. We love the land and the bush and give it our all. Unfortunately, without financial recognition of mother's who spend their week educating their children, families like ours face relocating to town."
- "I find it really, really hard to teach my children properly when I have so much other work to do and it's not always easy to find the money to employ someone full time when you're only a small property running on a shoe string budget anyway!!"
- "To be able to afford a tutor, would mean when my girls ask, " Mum, can you spend some time with us" I could maybe hopefully say yes. How special would that be? We have a small family run business so I am tutor, bookkeeper, and secretary, cook, cleaner, bore runner, driver to and from school functions etc."
- "I feel that because there is no allowance that people are being turned off living in the bush when they have school aged children, thus leading to the lack of skills in the agricultural industry."
- "Some isolated students go to boarding facilities sooner than is desired because of a lack of a suitable home tutor."
- "It is very costly to employ a governess so I can work in the business and earn an income. Australia needs families in the bush but our children still need a good education."
- "Trying to run your own business as a single parent and do teaching results in less than passable outcomes for the family relationships (as in mental health), the child's schooling and the business"
- "Education through distance education would not be able without DE tutors, who take on the role of an education support person. I would like to see some kind of recognition for at least 10 years of home tutoring in form of a certificate, as the work home tutors do is the same as a paid teaching aid in any other school. To have some kind of paper in the hand after all those years in the school room would help in gaining employment if the chance arrives."
- "Distance Education is very costly for families, requiring us to set up our own schoolrooms, buying resources, lack of support from student services for children with learning difficulties and the cost of finding someone to teach your children."

- “Please give us financial aid to educate our children. I have been on the In Home Care wait list since January, and have been told I will be waiting a while longer for any assistance. Even then, the criteria for In Home Care applies only to a nanny, not governessing. I have a 3 yr old that has to come to work with me, as my 6 and 5yr olds are in school with the governess. Very difficult circumstances to operate under, but as we already pay for a governess, we cannot get help with our younger child during school hours.”
- “This is a full time job! Very big job!”
- “As a mother I find it extremely difficult most days for my children to understand the difference between mother and tutor. My children see me as their mother in the classroom and act according to this. My eldest in year 7 is a typical teenager who will rebel towards me when I try to help but is extremely happy to take advice and help from others. Then I have the bevy of the family who tries everything under the sun to get out of work and I get "if you love me mum you won't make me do it". In having said this there is the other side of things my husband who can come in at any given time and ask me to do a dam run or a lick run and not to mention the yard work etc. It is extremely hard being the DE tutor, wife, mother, cook, cleaner and that extra station hand.”
- “Please help us - the costs are crippling.”
- “It is really hard for a private family run business, to afford paying a governess with the right skill set to teach your children, especially when they are reaching the higher year levels, or when there are multiple children in the schoolroom. Many people who employ governesses are doing so on a tight budget, the majority of governess have no training in teaching, and we expect that they can handle taking on this role to deliver education to our children. Often - due to lack of funding for a governess, the children are missing out key learning outcomes because the governess is not a trained teacher. If there was more funding for families to access, we could afford to employ people with appropriate qualifications and see that our children are not behind the '8 ball' when they are sent thousands of kms away to boarding school.”
- “It is exceptionally hard to fully deliver and teach the new curriculum to a multiage schoolroom.”
- “Because of the juggling of school and raising other children and the normal jobs of a mum on the land my mental health has suffered horribly not to mention my physical health that continually gets neglected so we don't fall behind in school. Any payment received at least says we recognise how hard you work good job, and would allow the occasional help.”
- “Teaching children via DE is a challenge! I would hate to split up my family and move to town (2 hours away)...this would only increase the stress and workload for my husband, who already works approx. 80 hours a week. Support financially for a governess would enable me to help him more in our family grazing business.”
- “We have 4 children in a multi age classroom and it is not possible for one teacher to teach effectively on her own.”
- “Educating children in the bush is difficult, takes a lot of time to teach the curriculum and is hard to be able to afford a governess. I have taught my own children Distance Ed for 8 years, hard to find a qualified/experienced governess or afford one. Unfortunately teaching my own children means I am also unable to contribute to our valuable family beef grazing business and work when it is already hard to find staff for that business due to it operating in an isolated area.”

- “Keep fighting! Teaching our own children is very hard (but rewarding) and needs support. LOCAL DE schools is paramount for FACE TO FACE time for students and tutors.”
- “It would be fantastic to have a non-means tested rebate for governess costs for people living on stations. It would make more jobs and the lives of our children and family more enriched.”
- “We really need a DETA, go for it!”
- “Just let them try it for ONE week, and see how difficult it is!”
- “While 35 hours supervision, at least another 5 hours a week marking, reporting on day's activities, etc.”
- “I fully believe that tutors should be recognised in the role that they undergo and receive some sort of payment. The amount of hours that is put in to educate our children is massive. My husband hasn't got any help as financially we can't afford it so it is taken a toll on not only his health but our lifestyle as well. If a wage was introduced we may be able to seek some help for him.”
- “We download all the work required for our children to complete their lessons in our own time.”
- “Distance education is a huge commitment for the family, especially if education is given top priority, as it doesn't only involve/affect the DE tutor - it affects the whole family and how our business is run. There is definitely extra stress and tension in our daily lives because of distance education.”
- “Not having the means or opportunity to employ a governess has put extreme stress on our rural grazing family which is in drought circumstances and two of the children have special needs.”
- “Distance education is my only choice for school so all the help we can get is appreciated.”
- “I live 900kms away from the nearest school.”
- “The DETA is vital - DE is a huge work load on any family - especially when it's just ourselves running the family business and trying to keep DE supervision to the standard that it needs to be.”
- “UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT IS KEY”
- “Rather than an allowance a tax deduction scheme could be an alternative.”
- “The need to educate children via DE has not really ever been acknowledged by the government. Our students are predominantly from pastoral families but we all do have children whose parents work for parks and wildlife as well as other remote job descriptions. There are also indigenous communities who are part of our school, who without SOTA support would struggle to provide any education for their kids. Extra education for tutors and recognition especially paid would be a huge boost for rural and remote tutors and kids.”
- “Teaching your own children is a very difficult!”
- “Living in SA and schooling in NSW has posed many problems for us. We do not receive any travel allowance. Employing a governess in SA is ridiculously expensive. I have brought this subject up on many different occasions with numerous Members of Parliament with no answers. The differences between states has to stop!”
- “We do have 2 younger children and we don't apply for in home care but if a governess allowance was available we would most definitely be applying for it as this would be most beneficial for our family and business.”
- “I would like to see In Home Care expanded to cover governesses.”

## **Appendix 2**

### **The Role of the Home Tutor in Distance Education.**

There are two reasons for doing distance education schooling through early childhood, primary and secondary years - necessity and choice.

Distance education is a necessity for geographically isolated students - there isn't any choice, due to the families' isolation and remoteness. This is the group of students whose parents are often members of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and who are eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children (Distance Education) allowance.

- Distance education students live long distances, (sometimes hundreds of kms) from any face to face educational school or institution. The ability to access a school, complete with adequate resourcing and appropriately trained professional staff, is not possible for these students on a daily basis.
- This is the only option for schooling if they want to remain in the family home, and this is particularly an issue for the families of primary aged students.
- Boarding schools or school term hostels are the other alternative, commonly accessed at secondary level once peer group interaction and specialist teaching become critical. The drawback of course is the separation from family and family life that this causes and the high out of pocket costs associated with sending children away.
- The distance education program is a full and complete course, covering all curriculum areas, produced and delivered by the State or Territory Education Department through a distance education centre, often a School of the Air (SOTA).
- The program is distributed to the family via mail and/or internet. Many states are moving towards delivering sessions online. The length of the online sessions varies depending on the age of the students and the arrangements within that state. Currently, most states provide a mix of online and hardcopy material.
- A Home Tutor, either a mother or a paid employee, then prepares and plans the day's lessons for their students, sets up the schoolroom for the day's activities, keeps students engaged in the curriculum, deals with discipline issues, ensures students link in via the internet or telephone for their formal instructions and more.
- The home tutor, with the assistance of the student if they are in upper primary, then packages and sends the completed work back to the distance education centre for marking, ensuring that all relevant materials are complete and included.
- Contact with the student's teacher is by mail, internet and telephone. Daily 'air lessons' online rarely go for more than one hour's duration, meaning that it is the home tutor who is left to ensure the students are on task for the remaining portion of the school day.
- Additionally, home tutors must supervise all the regular extracurricular activities associated with schooling these days, such as Student Representative Council (SRC), choir, music lessons, Scouts, clubs and so on.
- If the home tutor is the student's mother, she will also often have workers to cook for, a household to run, younger children to care for and a business to help with.
- School camps and other face to face activities are organised to bring isolated children to one point for teacher/student and teacher/home tutor contact, as well to build on social interaction between students. These activities also help ensure students have access to important sporting and cultural activities.

- School camps are also essential to help training of home tutors, as professional development sessions are often offered, as well as providing a vital opportunity for home tutors to engage with their own peers.
- A student who cannot attend a main stream school due to medical reason may also access distance education.

Home Schooling is an issue of choice:

- Children usually live within reasonable distance from schools and the decision to home school is one of choice, not necessity.
- Home schooled children frequently have the same easy access to facilities as main stream schooled children, such as libraries, shops, sport and so on.