Assistant for Isolated Children Scheme: Information for Principals

Some isolated students who have already moved away from the principal family home to attend school may be eligible for the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance from Centrelink.

**General information**

The AIC scheme is a Commonwealth allowance that assists with the extra costs of educating isolated children when they cannot go to an appropriate government school.

According to the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme guidelines an appropriate government school is “A state school that offers tuition at the student’s level (i.e. the year or grade for which the student is qualified to enrol).”

**Eligibility conditions**

- The distance between the principal family home and the nearest appropriate state school is at least 56 kilometres.
- The distance between the principal family home and the nearest appropriate state school is at least 16 kilometres and the distance between the principal family home and the nearest available transport service to that school is at least 4.5 kilometres.
- The student does not have reasonable access to an appropriate state school for at least 20 school days in a year because of adverse travel conditions.
- They do not have access to a local school that offers a full range of years or grades.

Further information regarding eligibility can be found on the Australian Government Department of Human Services web page.

**Can other students qualify for the allowance?**

In certain circumstances where a family does not meet the isolation rules our department is asked to provide a statement of support in order for the family to claim the allowance.

These circumstances are described in the special needs category outlined in Section 4.3 of the AIC guidelines. There are three criteria in this section for which the department is asked to provide a statement of support. These are:

- 4.3.5.4 - Student needs to be removed from the local school environment
- 4.3.5.6 - Student needs learning support
- 4.3.5.7 – Student would suffer serious educational disadvantage at the local state school.

The Rural and Distance Education (R&DE) team in Bathurst can provide advice to departmental officers.
regarding this allowance. The R&DE team manages all applications for supporting statements from parents. Established protocols for all aspects of this process are published on the R&DE website.

### 4.3.5.4 – Student needs to be removed from the local school environment

A student is eligible for a supporting statement in this category on the following grounds:

- interpersonal problems affecting psychological, emotional or physical health (e.g. bullying, harassment)
- expulsion from school.

The department must confirm that attempts have been made to resolve the problem and that there is no other school that the student could attend within 56 kilometres.

When an application for a supporting statement is received the Rural and Distance Education team will ask the appropriate Executive Director to provide the following advice:

- the reason the student was removed from the local school (in broad terms only, e.g. interpersonal problems affecting health, expulsion)
- have attempts been made by the family and the school to resolve the problem, if so provide a timeline of intervention strategies applied to support that student
- can you confirm that there is/is not a suitable school in the district that the student can attend daily that meets the AIC eligibility conditions.

In some circumstances the parent will have removed the child on the advice of a medical specialist. If the claim is on the basis of a disability or other health-related condition, it must also be supported by medical evidence that establishes that there is a health-related problem and recommends that the student be removed from the school.

In these circumstances we will seek advice from the Executive Director for points 2 and 3.

### 4.3.5.6 – Student needs learning support

A student is eligible for a supporting statement in this category on the following grounds:

- a student can be regarded as having a special need if they require access to a program delivered by a specialist teacher or facility for learning support
- parents must provide a recent written recommendation that the student needs specialist learning support. This could be from the local Department of Education office, or from a specialist assessment service.

When an application for a supporting statement is received the Rural and Distance Education team will ask the appropriate Executive Director to provide the following advice:

- specialist learning support for the student is needed
- the student is receiving assistance of at least one and a half hours a week in a class from a specialist teacher (p. 32); and
- appropriate support cannot be provided close to the student’s home.
Where necessary, we may also seek advice from a specialist assessment service (e.g. an educational psychologist, child psychologist or health professional).

### 4.3.5.7 – Student would suffer serious educational disadvantage at the local state school

**What can you do?**

A student is eligible for a supporting statement in this category on the following grounds:

- a student must already be living away from the local community and enrolled at another school before they can apply for a supporting statement in this category. In order to determine educational disadvantage the department will seek to match the curriculum at the new school with the subjects being taught at the local school.

The AIC guidelines are clear that a student cannot be considered as suffering from serious educational disadvantage solely on the basis of either:

- a desire for the student to attend a school of choice, including a school that is classified as ‘specialist’ or ‘selective’ or a school that will ‘enhance the student’s academic prospects’
- the standard of teaching facilities
- the socio-economic, racial or ethnic mix of a school
- non-core subjects (e.g. subjects other than maths, science and English) being studied by distance education methods
- inability to continue study in the same subjects or the same system after the student’s parents have moved from one non-geographically isolated area to another
- family connections with another school
- difficulties with out-of-school care arrangements
  - or
- a desire for a family to send a child to a boarding school.

The department has worked with stakeholders to develop a transparent process for assessing applications from parents seeking a supporting statement that complies with the AIC rules.

Applications will only be considered for students in years 9 – 12 who live in areas serviced by public schools identified as isolated, remote or very remote as all students in NSW follow a core, fully resourced curriculum until the end of year 8.

When an application for a supporting statement is received the department, in consultation with the appropriate Executive Director, will examine evidence and award points in the following areas:

**Curriculum disparity**

- The subjects being undertaken at the boarding school will be matched to the subjects being taught in the nominated local school in that current school year.
Five points are allocated in years 9 and 10 for core subjects and one elective that is not taught at the local school, or each subject in years 11 and 12 for that would lead to the award of an ATAR.

**Parent statement**

Five points may be allocated by the Executive Director to a statement provided by the parent outlining the special educational needs of the student and reasons that the student would suffer serious educational disadvantage.

**Isolation**

Further points are allocated to recognise the impact of isolation according to the table on the next page.

If the points gained are greater than or equal to 15 the department will provide a supporting statement on the basis that access to a specific ‘core’ subject, or a subject to achieve a ‘core competency’ would require an unsuitable reliance on distance education.

### School Categories

#### Schools serving ‘Very Remote’ communities
(Remoteness Loading = 10 points)
- Goodooga Central School
- Ivanhoe Central School
- Wilcannia Central School

#### Schools serving ‘Remote’ communities
(Remoteness Loading = 5 points)
- Baradine Central School
- Bourke High School
- Brewarrina Central School
- Cobar High School
- Collarenebri Central School
- Coonamble High School
- Hillston Central School
- Lightning Ridge Central School
- Menindee Central School
- Mungindi Central School
- Nyngan High School
- Tottenham Central School
- Tullamore Central School
- Tullibigeal Central School
• Walgett Community College High School

Other ‘Geographically Isolated’ schools  
(Remoteness Loading = 0 points)
• Ardlethan Central School
• Ariah Park Central School
• Ashford Central School
• Balranald Central School
• Batlow Technology School
• Barraba Central School
• Binnaway Central School
• Boggabilla Central School
• Coleambally Central School
• Coolah Central School
• Emmaville Central School
• Gulargambone Central School
• Lake Cargellico Central School
• Oaklands Central School
• Tooleybuc Central School
• Trangie Central School
• Trundle Central School
• Ungarie Central School
• Warren Central School

What can you do?

A parent may contact you to decide if it is worth making an application for a supporting statement in any of the three categories.

4.3.5.4 - Needs to be removed from the local school environment
Will you be able to confirm the issue that led to the removal of the student and be able to provide a timeline of the interventions that have been used to support the child in your school?

4.3.5.6 - Student needs learning support
Help the parent to confirm that appropriate support services for their child would not be available at your school.

4.3.5.7 - Would suffer serious educational disadvantage at the local state school

Provide parents with an up to date list of the curriculum being taught in the current school year to students in stage 5 and 6.
Further Information

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Bathurst 2795
Or Email to: rde@det.nsw.edu.au
*Further information can be found at the Rural and Distance Education unit website.