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Student Financial Assistance Guideline

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1 Purpose

This Guideline applies to Government and Non-Government (Independent) schools, including eSchool, special schools, senior secondary schools (colleges) and schools with flexible learning enrolments.

Financial allowance and assistance schemes are offered by the Tasmanian and Australian Governments to assist families with the costs associated with schooling. This Guideline outlines the types of financial assistance available to families who may not have the capacity to pay levies and other schooling-related costs.

2 Guideline

2.1 Student Assistance Scheme

The Student Assistance Scheme (STAS) assists low-income families with the cost of levies for students enrolled in a school, from kindergarten through to Year 12.

STAS is provided indirectly through school and college resourcing rather than payment direct to families.

2.1.1 Eligibility

Parents who are Tasmanian residents and have a current concession card as listed below can apply for assistance under STAS on behalf of dependent students:

- Services Australia – Health Care Card
- Services Australia – Low Income Health Care Card
- Services Australia – Pensioner Concession Card
- Department of Veterans' Affairs – Pensioner Concession Card.

2.1.1.1 *Home education*

STAS does not apply to students in home education.

2.1.1.2 *Grandparents caring for grandchildren*

STAS is available to grandparents who are legally responsible for their grandchild/ren. Grandparents must complete a STAS Application. Evidence of care/guardianship will be confirmed against school records.

2.1.1.3 *Students in 'Out of Home Care'*

Students in Out of Home Care are automatically approved for STAS and a STAS application does not need to be completed.

2.1.1.4 *Independent students*

Independent students are those under 18 years of age who are recognised as independent by Centrelink (meaning they are responsible for themselves). Independent students must complete a hard copy STAS application and provide a copy of a Centrelink letter confirming independent status.

2.1.1.5 Humanitarian, refugee and asylum seeker visa holders

Humanitarian, refugee, and asylum seeker visa holders, including those on relevant bridging visas, are eligible for STAS.

2.1.1.6 Financial hardship

If parents/guardians are experiencing financial hardship, but due to the timing or nature of their circumstances do not meet the eligibility requirements for STAS, the Financial Assistance Team can be contacted for support by emailing stas@decyp.tas.gov.au or calling 1800 827 055.

Alternatively, the school can be contacted directly for a confidential discussion in relation to the provision of financial assistance.

Some examples include:

- families who have been impacted by a parent/guardian developing a serious illness which resulted in an inability to work for an extended period of time
- families who have been impacted by family violence
- families where a parent/guardian becomes suddenly unemployed which results in financial hardship.

2.1.2 What do families receive if they are approved for STAS?

2.1.2.1 Tasmanian Government schools

Families with students enrolled full-time from Kindergarten to Year 12 in a Government school and who are approved for STAS are eligible for a full waiver of levies and stationery.

Students in regular, paid employment which is directly associated with their course (for example apprenticeships and traineeships) are not eligible for STAS.

International students are to seek advice from Government Education and Training International (GETI) in relation to tuition fees and levies.

2.1.2.2 Registered Non-Government (Independent) schools

Financial assistance is provided at the discretion of each school, based on STAS eligibility. Parents must discuss their financial assistance eligibility directly with the school.

2.1.2.3 Catholic sector schools

Catholic sector schools directly assess eligibility for financial assistance. Queries for assistance must be directed to the applicable school.

2.1.3 Application

The online STAS application form is available on the Department for Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) website. Paper forms are available at Government schools and Registered Non-Government (Independent) schools and Service Tasmania service centres.

For specific enquiries regarding completing an application please contact the Financial Assistance Team on 1800 827 055 or via email at stas@decyp.tas.gov.au.

2.2 Student Accommodation Allowance

The Student Accommodation Allowance (SAA) provides financial assistance to students in Years 11 and 12 who must live away from their usual Tasmanian home in order to attend a registered Government or Non-Government (Independent) school.

2.2.1 Eligibility

Students who must travel greater than 40 kilometres between their usual home in Tasmania and the closest school in Tasmania offering their chosen course of study, and are therefore required to make alternative accommodation arrangements, are eligible for the allowance. The allowance is not means tested.

Students are eligible for the SAA if their local school does not offer a complete range of subjects that will allow a student to complete their full course of chosen study. Special provisions apply for students from the Bass Strait Islands. For further information about the SAA please call 1800 827 055 or email stas@decyp.tas.gov.au.

A satisfactory attendance record is required in all enrolled subjects otherwise the available benefit may be reduced or stopped.

Students enrolled in courses associated with apprenticeships or traineeships are not eligible for the allowance.

The SAA is only payable to permanent Tasmanian residents, not to interstate or overseas students who are attending Tasmanian schools. The allowance is not available to students whilst their parents are residing interstate or overseas.

2.2.2 Payment

SAA is \$1 472 for full-time students who study for the full academic year. Payments of \$736 are made twice per year to the applicant's nominated bank account.

Part-time students receive a pro-rata SAA based on the length of their course and their level of enrolment.

The allowance is limited to a maximum of two years unless special circumstances exist.

2.2.3 Application

Eligible applicants must complete a SAA application form. Application forms are available on the [DECYP website](#) or by contacting the Financial Assistance Team on 1800 827 055. An application form is required to be submitted for each school year.

For assistance in applying for the SAA please call on 1800 827 055 or email stas@decyp.tas.gov.au.

2.3 Spectacles Assistance Scheme

The Spectacles Assistance Scheme provides financial assistance towards the purchase of spectacles from participating optometrists for students from low-income families.

2.3.1 Eligibility

Students must be enrolled in a Government, registered Non-Government (Independent) school or in home education.

Parents holding a current Services Australia Health Care Card, Pensioner Concession Card or equivalent are eligible to apply.

Students in out of home care are automatically eligible for spectacles assistance. Assistance is also available to grandparents raising grandchildren for whom they are legally responsible.

Approved applicants will receive assistance with the cost of one pair of standard prescribed lenses and standard frames in any 12-month period unless special circumstance apply (for instance a prescription change).

2.3.2 Payment

Optometrists submit an invoice for the cost of spectacles and lenses directly to DECYP. If anything other than standard frames and lenses are selected the additional cost is payable by the applicant, directly to the optometrist.

2.3.3 Application

Application forms are available from optometrists participating in the scheme. Applicants are responsible for establishing this prior to the consultation. Eligible applicants can phone 1800 827 055 for details of participating optometrists.

2.4 School Uniform Exceptional Assistance Scheme

The School Uniform Exceptional Assistance Scheme provides financial assistance towards the cost of uniforms for students enrolled in a Government school and experiencing exceptional or extenuating family circumstances. School Social Workers can be contacted for more information on this scheme.

2.5 Student allowances and concessions not administered by DECYP

2.5.1 Tasmanian Government

2.5.1.1 *Department of State Growth*

Bus fares

The Department of State Growth (State Growth) offers discounted bus fares (Child Student Fares) to students who are studying full-time and are enrolled in an education facility recognised by DECYP, TasTAFE, the University of Tasmania or College of English.

Students meeting concession eligibility may also be entitled to free bus travel between their home and school.

Student fares and ticketing is detailed on State Growth's [Transport Services website](#).

Active Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government's Ticket to Play initiative provides two vouchers worth up to \$100 each towards club membership fees for children aged 5-18 years who are listed on a Services Australia Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card or are in Out of Home Care. The vouchers can be used at two different activity providers, or both can be used at one activity provider.

For more information, visit the [Ticket to Play website](#).

2.5.2 Australian Government

2.5.2.1 Services Australia

There are several types of financial assistance available from the Australian Government, which are subject to eligibility criteria.

The types of allowances available are listed on the [Services Australia website](#). For further information call Service Australia's Youth and Student Services on 13 24 90.

2.5.2.2 Department of Veterans' Affairs

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) provides financial assistance, student support services and guidance and counselling services for 5-year-old to 25-year-old eligible students. This assistance is available through the Veterans' Children Education Scheme (VCES) and the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act Education and Training Scheme (MRCAETS).

Refer to the [DVA website](#) or call 1800 838 372 for further information.

3 Related policies

- [School-specific Levies and Charges Policy template](#)

4 Related procedures

- [School Levies and Charges Procedure](#)

5 Supporting information/tools

- [Best Practice Guideline for Schools for Levies, Charges and Student Assistance](#)
- [Department of Veterans' Affairs website](#)
- [Services Australia website](#)
- [Statutory Declaration for Grandparents](#)
- [Student Accommodation Allowance application form](#)
- [Student Assistance Scheme application form](#)
- [State Growth Transport Services website](#)
- [Ticket to Play website](#)

6 Definitions

Approved course

TASC accredited courses and/or Vocational Education and Training (VET) subjects provided by an approved Tasmanian senior secondary school.

Charges

Parent payments for optional activities that are in addition to the normal educational instruction at the school.

Full-time student

A student enrolled for 600 or more contact hours.

Government school

A Tasmanian Government school under the *Education Act 2016*.

Levy

An annual parent payment that includes incidental costs and expenses incurred in providing normal educational instruction.

Non-Government school

A school, other than a Government school, that provides educational instruction at any level up to and including the final year of secondary education.

Parent

A parent or legal guardian or anyone with care and control of a child.

Part-time student

A student must be enrolled for a minimum of 300 contact hours to be classified as a part-time student for the purposes of financial assistance.

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