



# NEWS

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## Pre-school kids should get a free ride

The Executive Council of NSW Farmers' Association has voted to seek funding for transport and insurance for pre-school students, at its meeting in Parkes today.

NSW Farmers' Association Rural Affairs Chairman Alan Brown says the Association doesn't want to see young children isolated due to the tyranny of distance and the cost of traveling that distance.

"Funding must be made available to allow pre-school children in isolated areas to travel on existing school bus routes at no charge, to allow them the same access to pre-schooling as young children in city areas," Mr Brown said.

"This is an important issue because there is a lot of research that shows strong correlations between positive school results and children who have attended pre schooling education, so we really don't want to see country kids missing out," he said.

The NSW Government School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS), which provides subsidised transport for eligible students, does not currently include pre-schoolers.

"To be eligible for the subsidy, children must be at least 4 years and 6 months, which excludes most pre-school kids," Mr Brown said.

Pre-school transport across the State varies from town to town however some parents are paying up to \$100 a term extra for travel on the school bus to pre-school.

"When you are already paying \$560 a term for pre-school fees, an extra \$100 may make parents have to reconsider their options and forgo the valuable learning experience for their child," Mr Brown said.

"Many are telling us that it is becoming a very expensive exercise that they just can't afford, which people are very disappointed about given the safety and simplicity of the school bus..

"Changes must be made to allow pre-school children the same opportunities afforded children in larger centres," Mr Brown concluded

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