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Regional Western Australia – home to Australia’s most affordable regional education

The forecast cost of a private education over 13 years in regional Western Australia has fallen \$41,441 in the past year, according to exclusive research released today.

The ASG Planning for Education Index discovered for a child born in 2018, regional Western Australia (\$277,694¹) is one of the nation’s most affordable areas for a private education. It’s \$69,878 below the national regional average (\$347,572). This is \$103,490 cheaper than regional Victoria, Australia’s most expensive area for a private education.

The index discovered a similar result for parents considering a faith-based² school for their children, with regional Western Australia forecast to be the most affordable.

The forecast cost of a faith-based education in regional Western Australia fell by \$5,202 compared to last year to \$142,320 according to ASG’s research. This is \$34,234 below the national regional average (\$176,554) and \$55,692 cheaper than regional Queensland (\$198,012), which boasts Australia’s most expensive regional faith-based education.

The ASG Planning for Education Index also discovered the forecast cost of a government education in regional Western Australia (\$44,280) remained steady, dropping \$503 in the past year, making it the most affordable area in the country.

Like the cost of a private and faith-based education, the cost of government schooling in regional Western Australia is well below the national regional average (\$50,641) and \$8,089 cheaper than regional New South Wales (\$52,369), home to Australia’s most expensive government education according to ASG’s index.

The fall in the forecast cost of education has been heavily influenced by slower price rises within secondary education.

Despite the fall in the forecast cost of education across private, faith-based and government schools in regional Western Australia, the overall cost of education has skyrocketed 58 per cent in the past decade. This has dwarfed the 34 per cent rise in wage growth in the same period.

School fees continue to be a major education expense, but many parents fail to appreciate the additional expenses associated with funding a child’s education. This includes extracurricular activities, computers, travel expenses, uniforms, school excursions and camps.

Based on more than 13,500 responses, the ASG Planning for Education Index forecasts regional Western Australian parents who plan to educate a child in the regional private school system over 13 years could pay \$37,287 for other non-fee education costs. This is

¹ These figures have been rounded and are provided as a guide only. ASG cannot guarantee that they will represent the actual costs of education for a particular child.

² A faith-based education includes religious schools e.g. Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church, Buddhist, Islamic or Hindu.

slightly more than parents with children at faith-based schools (\$36,812) and government schools (\$29,891).

ASG member and mother of three, Gwen Harper says she has to actively budget so she can send her two eldest children, Zanthia (Year 2) and Atheena (5 years old) to a Catholic primary school and give them educational opportunities she struggled for.

"I purchased their uniforms second hand to save on costs, and from the first week of January, I set up a direct debit to pay off school fees and extracurricular activities across the year. It costs approximately \$3,000 per year for both of the girls, and for me it's quite a bit, but when you break it up it's only about \$70 a week.

"We don't go out much and we don't have a lot of play money, but putting their education first is a real priority, so they can do better than what we did. I've just completed my Events Management Diploma and it's taken me 10 years to get here. My mum wishes that she had ASG for us, so I want to give our children pathways and options we didn't have the luxury of having".

ASG's COO Bruce Hawkins says despite the forecast fall, the cost of education has risen at more than double the rate of inflation over the past 10 years, and outstripped the growth in wages over the same period.

"The cost of education in regional Australia has soared by 58 per cent compared to the average growth rate in wages of 34 per cent. This means that education costs are demanding a far greater share of the family wallet than in the past, placing more burden on the average family, already challenged by the rising cost of living.

"The research reveals a child's education is one of the most significant investments a family could make. If you have three children, the cost of education at a regional Western Australia private school could cost more than \$830,000. That's significantly more than the purchase price of the average family home.

"The Index also debunks the myth, a government education is a free education, with the latest figures showing regional Western Australia families could spend on average \$44,280 per child on a so-called, free education.

"ASG advocates parents use a disciplined approach by putting a few dollars aside each week, so they can financially afford to meet their children's educational goals and aspirations," says Mr Hawkins.

Independent statistician and Managing Director of foreseexchange, Charlie Nelson says it's unlikely parents will feel the fall in the forecast cost of education.

"Households are in the midst of a double whammy. Wages are stubbornly growing by less than two per cent a year, while essentials like electricity and motor fuel are rising faster than inflation.

"With less discretionary money to spend, it's going to be very hard to pay for the costs of education, which means parents who have saved will be in a better position in the long run."

For more information about ASG call 131 ASG (131 274) or visit www.asg.com.au

Summary of total forecast education costs for a child born in 2018

	Location	Public	Faith-based	Private
National	Metropolitan	\$66,320	\$240,679	\$475,342
	Regional	\$50,641	\$176,554	\$347,572
Australian Capital Territory	Metropolitan	\$50,145	\$234,975	\$424,844
New South Wales	Metropolitan	\$71,614	\$251,143	\$547,414
	Regional	\$52,369	\$173,304	\$357,530
Queensland	Metropolitan	\$58,352	\$251,866	\$368,573
	Regional	\$50,757	\$198,012	\$366,298
South Australia	Metropolitan	\$60,722	\$246,702	\$374,147
	Regional	\$47,316	\$188,745	\$251,705
Tasmania	Metropolitan	\$41,738	\$188,742	\$431,473
	Regional	\$50,687	\$176,035	\$359,961
Victoria	Metropolitan	\$75,263	\$223,318	\$536,683
	Regional	\$51,899	\$163,583	\$381,184
Western Australia	Metropolitan	\$54,766	\$235,017	\$401,191
	Regional	\$44,280	\$142,320	\$277,694

A very small number of responses were received from the Northern Territory in the most recent survey. As such, the provision of cost estimates for the Northern Territory in isolation would be highly unreliable and therefore have not been included. It is recommended that those in the Northern Territory refer to the national figures or the figures for adjoining states as a basis for planning. These estimated costs are provided as a guide only and ASG cannot guarantee that they will represent the actual costs of education for a particular child.

Estimated average costs to educate a child born in 2008 and 2018 across regional Australia

	2008	2018	%
Government	\$42,625	\$50,641	19
Faith-based	\$118,116	\$176,554	49
Private	\$219,865	\$347,572	58

Editor's notes

ASG conducts the ASG Planning for Education Index annually, asking parents to estimate education costs, which cover preschool, primary and secondary schools in Australia. Cost estimates are based on 13,500 responses collected by ASG.

ASG offers a range of education scholarship plans, which provide families with a tax effective means of saving for future education costs. ASG also offers families with a payment service that takes the financial pressure off parents, families and guardians. It allows them to pay school fees, and other education related expenses as billed by the school in manageable instalments over the year.

ASG is a member owned organisation, helping to create educational opportunities for children. ASG has been helping families and their children for more than 40 years. During this time, more than 540,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.8 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments returned to members. For more information visit: www.asg.com.au

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