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**The cost of educating a child in regional Western Australia
*Public and systemic school education cheapest in regional Western Australia***

Regional Western Australia is the most affordable region in Australia to educate a child in a government or systemic¹ school according to exclusive research released today.

The ASG Planning for Education Index discovers for a child born in 2016 the forecast cost of a government education in regional Western Australia is \$43,594, \$7,326 less than the national regional average (\$50,920), and well below Australia's most expensive states, regional Victoria (\$53,245), and regional New South Wales (\$52,598).

The results of the survey reveal the estimated cost of a systemic education in regional Western Australia is Australia's most affordable at \$143,139, 17 per cent less than the national regional average (\$172,331), and significantly more affordable than regional Queensland (\$193,262) and regional South Australia (\$191,973).

The forecast cost of a private education in regional Western Australia (\$308,323) is \$20,658 less than the national regional average (\$328,981) and well below Australia's most expensive regions for a private education, regional Victoria (\$353,857) and regional New South Wales (\$349,941).

The ASG Planning for Education Index also forecasts preschool or kindergarten in regional Western Australia will cost parents between \$2,774 and \$8,330 depending on the school type.

Based on more than 12,500 responses, the index measures a range of variables including school fees, transport, uniforms, computers, school excursions and sporting trips to determine the cost of education.

Interestingly, the cost of certain variables measured as part of the ASG Planning for Education Index have not increased over the past year. For example, the costs for computers and transport costs, including the price of fuel, have declined compared to last year, while the cost of books has remained stable.

ASG member and mother of one, Kris Henwood says she wants to give her son Blair (year two) the best education possible and open the door to opportunities.

"I want to offer Blair everything I can and to have the funds available so he can continue on to whatever he chooses. He is very hands on and is amazed by science. It is quite possible that he may want to go to University. I missed out on a few extra opportunities as a child simply because my parents could not afford it. I don't want Blair to miss out on the opportunity to perform at the best of his ability.

¹ A systemic education includes religious schools e.g. Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church, Buddhist, Islamic or Hindu

"I joined ASG knowing that education only gets more expensive with the costs of uniforms, textbooks, sports and school camps. Since Blair started public school, most costs have been covered by the government's Schoolkids Bonus which sadly ends this year. Having that help meant Blair had the opportunity to participate in basketball, swimming, gymnastics, cricket and currently Little Athletics. So I am glad to be with ASG knowing I am saving for Blair's future. My husband and I are expecting another child who we will also enrol."

ASG CEO John Velegrinis says the cost of education continued to rise at more than twice the rate of inflation over the past decade.

"Regardless of whether you send your children to a government, systemic or private school, the costs of that education will clearly increase which is why we advocate that parents start planning for education as early as possible, even from the moment their child is born.

"We're very fortunate in Australia to have a variety of excellent government, systemic and private schools. If you have two or three children, the cost of a private education in regional Western Australia could be higher than the purchase price of the family home. We advocate parents use a disciplined approach by putting a little bit away each week so they financially can afford their children's educational goals and aspirations."

Independent statistician and Managing Director of foreseexchange Charlie Nelson says the current economic climate is having an effect on education.

"A sudden increase in education costs would certainly be painful in the current low income growth environment.

"With school fees increasing faster than incomes, it has never been more important for parents to financially plan for their child's future as early as possible."

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

Summary of total education costs for a child born in 2016

	Location	Public	Systemic	Private
National	Metropolitan	\$66,862	\$230,381	\$468,397
	Regional	\$50,920	\$172,331	\$328,981
Australian Capital Territory	Metropolitan	\$50,385	\$223,940	\$431,538
New South Wales	Metropolitan	\$73,063	\$240,768	\$552,351
	Regional	\$52,598	\$167,021	\$349,941
Queensland	Metropolitan	\$58,843	\$235,563	\$360,044
	Regional	\$50,478	\$193,262	\$326,762
South Australia	Metropolitan	\$57,459	\$239,053	\$365,976
	Regional	\$49,593	\$191,973	\$287,128

Tasmania	Metropolitan	\$45,114	\$196,089	\$421,309
	Regional	\$47,425	\$160,664	\$340,214
Victoria	Metropolitan	\$75,193	\$214,958	\$512,283
	Regional	\$53,245	\$154,703	\$353,857
Western Australia	Metropolitan	\$55,250	\$227,442	\$393,870
	Regional	\$43,594	\$143,139	\$308,323

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.

Further information

For comprehensive summary sheets detailing the cost of education in metropolitan and regional Australia visit: www.asg.com.au/edcosts

Editor's notes

ASG conducts the Planning for Education Index annually, asking parents to estimate education costs, which cover preschool, primary and secondary schools in Australia. This survey includes 12,500 responses relating to the number of responses acquired from a combination of the 2013 and 2015 surveys. Data from both surveys has been combined to increase the sample size and precision of the estimates. The 2015 estimates reported are an average of the data acquired in the 2015 survey and the 2013 data, adjusted for inflation using known ABS CPI increases.

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 520,000 children have been enrolled with ASG and more than \$2.3 billion in education benefits and scholarship payments returned to members. For more information visit: www.asg.com.au

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