Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) Ends

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Our School Council is writing to you regarding the state government ceasing the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) from 2015.

This allowance was provided directly to families who were the holders of a valid Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card and was designed to help with schooling costs. If parents elected to pass on this allowance to White Hills PS, we directed it towards the cost of Special Events (ie. excursions/incursions such as swimming, gym, visiting performers, etc.)

The current state government has decided to no longer provide the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) directly to families in its current form. It is instead allocating funds directly to qualifying schools from 2015 onwards.

The Department of Education uses a School Family Occupation Index (SFO) to categorise schools and only those schools with an SFO above the state median of 0.5135 will qualify for any additional funding in 2015.

White Hills Primary School has an SFO of 0.6217 and will therefore qualify to receive some additional funding in 2015. (Please note that funds directed to qualifying schools in 2015 will not be the same amount as the previous EMA funding.)

Bendigo Government School Principals are concerned by this policy decision and the impact it will have upon families and have endeavoured to take a unified approach to this issue.

What does this mean for you?
From 2015, White Hills Primary School Council will continue to support families who are the holders of a current and valid Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card as of the first day of term 1.

This support will involve covering the cost (in full) of Special Events for 2015 – swimming program, Life Education Van, school visiting performers and the Jets Gymnastics program.

School Council WILL NOT cover the cost of major excursions or school camps. This is consistent with what we have done in previous years. Please note that any families who are the holders of a Health Care or Pensioner Concession Card who enrol in the school on or after 1st March, will not receive this funding support from School Council in 2015.

School Council is working hard to minimise the financial burden of educational costs on our families.

What about the ‘School Kids Bonus’?
At this stage the federal government’s ‘School Kids Bonus’ will come to an end in July 2016. Those families receiving Family Tax Benefit Part A can receive up to $410 per primary-age child (paid in 2 instalments January/July). School Council recommends families put this payment aside to cover expenses at the beginning of the school year such as book packs, uniforms and other requisites.

Should you require further information, please contact the school or a school councillor.

Yours sincerely,

Damien Jenkyn
Principal

Andrew Stewart
School Council President