







employers offer valuable financial assistance to their employees to assist with the exorbitant expenses incurred to provide their children an equitable education in rural and remote locations, in order to retain staff. Currently this assistance is deemed a Fringe Benefit. We have also noted that in recognition of conditions in rural and remote locations, the Australian Tax Office already offers certain FBT concessions and benefits such as for employer provision of housing where there is a lack of sufficient residential accommodation in remote locations and Federal Council has requested similar concessions be made for employers in geographically isolated locations to assist employees with the costs associated with expenses incurred for their children's compulsory education.

Correspondence has been sent to the Treasurer Hon Jim Chalmers MP, along with other relevant Ministers, Members of Parliament and Senators, including the Minister for Agriculture, Senator the Hon Murray Watt on several occasions this Council year. A response received from Treasury on behalf of the Federal Treasurer in March, acknowledged that access to quality and affordable education is a high priority for regional, rural and remote students, families and communities and the difficulties faced by employers in remote and regional areas in attracting and retaining their staff and their families. While making no commitment to implementing our recommendation for the removal of Fringe Benefits Tax on employer contributions to employees' children's education expenses in a geographically isolated context, we were informed that Treasury would use our correspondence to inform advice made to Government on policy issues impacting the tax system.

#### **Funding for students with a disability in residential boarding facilities**

Federal Council have made contact on several occasions with the Minister for the NDIS & Government Services, Hon Bill Shorten MP seeking additional funding for geographically isolated students with a disability who must live away from home in a residential boarding facility to access appropriate education, so that their needs can be met, and reasonable adjustments and accommodations can be implemented in accordance with The Disability Standards for Education 2005. We highlighted that it is imperative that boarding facilities be equipped to adequately cater for geographically isolated boarding students with specific education needs. Unfortunately we have not received a response from the Minister. Federal Council was however, pleased to see the recent additional certificate course being offered to boarding staff by the Australian Boarding School Association (ABSA) - "Fostering Inclusive Environments for Boarders with Disabilities". It is heartening that the need for such learning has been recognised and is being facilitated.

Leading the Boarding/Hostels/Second Home Portfolio this year has been a privilege and I thank my fellow portfolio members, Julia, Ali and Jennifer, along with all of Council and ICPA members for their contribution to our advocacy in this area.