



PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION REPORT

Kym Ross – Portfolio Leader, March 2024

At the preceding State Conference, the Midwest Branch presented a motion concerning the complex issue of support for students with a disability residing in boarding house facilities. The motion aimed to ensure a student's needs are addressed effectively through the implementation of reasonable adjustments and accommodations, and a request for funding to support these students.

DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

Communication has been sent to numerous stakeholders, including the Minister for Education, Minister for Disability Services, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA), Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) and ICPA State and Federal Councils, emphasising that while the issue has been recognised, a consistent solution has yet to be implemented.

Minister for Education, Hon. Dr. Tony Buti, conveyed that according to information provided by the Department of Education, every student with a diagnosed disability who has applied to board in a Western Australian government-run residential college has been accepted. In each case, the residential college has effectively accommodated the student and their needs using the resources available.

Residential colleges maintain the practice of evaluating the requirements of each student on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that students with disabilities, for whom boarding is suitable, are offered placement. This process involves collaborating with parents to ensure that appropriate support is provided for every student.

Hon. Don Punch MLA, Minister for Regional Development; Disability Services; Fisheries; Seniors and Ageing; Volunteering reaffirmed that existing funding arrangements that provide specific support for students with disability in boarding are spread across the Commonwealth and State Governments, along with some philanthropic support from not-for-profit organisations.

He concurred that for students residing in educational boarding facilities to achieve the best outcomes, they should have access to the same services and facilities as the broader community, recognising the pivotal role education plays in shaping the lives and futures of young individuals.

Assurance was given that the State Government is committed to working with the Commonwealth Government and the National Disability Insurance Scheme to ensure systems complement one another to achieve important outcomes for all Western Australians with disability.

In recognising the issue raised, the letter noted that this falls under the responsibility of the Hon. Dr Tony Buti MLA, Minister for Education.

Chris Massey, Executive Director of AISWA indicated schools are obligated to implement The Disability Standards for Education (DSE 2005) that seeks to ensure that students with a disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students.

AISWA Inclusive Education Consultants assist member independent schools in implementing these standards as well as supporting, consulting and training staff in addressing the needs of all students with disability including boarding students.



Their role also includes supporting schools in submitting information for both State Government funding (Special Education Supplementary Per Capita) and Federal Government funding (National Consistent Collection of Data – NCCD on school students with disability). Each school has the responsibility and flexibility to disseminate these funds to support the unique and specific needs of every student with a disability.

AISWA has representatives that work with various agencies and is a voice on behalf of independent schools to advocate for students and staff in many areas including disability. They continue to provide input on behalf of their schools to ensure voices are heard and needs are understood.

Dr Debra Sayce, Executive Director of CEWA provided comprehensive information and support. Boarding schools that are under the governance of CEWA for boarding operations include Clontarf Aboriginal College and La Salle College. The following schools provide residential options through externally governed Residential Colleges (Department of Education) and Rotary Residential College:

- Aranmore Catholic College, Leederville
- Nagle Catholic College, Geraldton
- St Mary's College, Broome
- St Joseph's College, Albany
- St Joseph's College, Northam

According to CEWA school data, there are a number of boarding/residential students with a disability across four of the schools listed above. These students are identified with a disability via the Australian Government's Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with a Disability (NCCD). One of these students is also identified via the State Government's Student with a Disability-School Support Program (SWD-SSP), CEWA's equivalent to Schools Plus. The funding from NCCD and SWD-SSP is required to only be used for the purpose of school education.

CEWA boarding schools have also identified the lack of funding specifically for boarding and the need for further wrap-around services in the boarding/residential environment.

Support for students with disability in boarding is provided by the respective boarding/residential college on a needs basis through:

- Collaboration with school staff to communicate needs and support requirements.
- Allied health services – boarding staff support students and families to attend appointments or have services visit the school/boarding i.e. General Practitioner, Ear Nose and Throat (ENT), Hearing;
- Sensory rooms – self-regulation and de-escalation practices.
- Trauma Informed professional learning – Mental Health First Aid (MHFA), Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF) Training, Berry Street Education Model (BSEM);
- School Psychologist/Social Workers/Youth Workers that work across school and boarding.
- Inclusive social activities within boarding and with other boarding schools.
- Inclusive design with accessible toilets and bathrooms, ramp access and lifts.

CEWA acknowledges the necessity for dedicated funding to support students with disabilities in boarding/residential colleges, aiming to enhance ongoing support and facilitate access to essential services. CEWA also values the efforts of ICPA (WA) in advocating for additional funding.

The Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) was approached to gather insights into this motion and to comprehend how similar issues are addressed in other facilities nationwide. Additionally, ABSA was queried regarding its stance on and provision of specialized training for boarding staff to assist students with disabilities.

ABSA has limited information on this matter, and to their knowledge, there is no government support available for independent boarding facilities to facilitate alterations to accommodate students with disabilities. While many member schools endeavour to support students with disabilities, ABSA lacks information on how this is



addressed nationally. They have not received any requests from their member schools for specific training in this area thus far but would be open to providing it if there is expressed interest.

A request for information was made to each ICPA State Council and the Federal portfolio leader seeking information on how boarding facilities nationwide address this issue, with a unanimous agreement among all parties that *'it is a grey area where no one wants direct responsibility for boarding students with a disability'*. There is a scarcity or absence of information regarding how these students are adequately accommodated and this issue must continue to be pursued.

During the examination of this motion, it was noted that the Disability Standards for Education 2005 referenced is federal legislation. As a result, the Midwest Branch was advised that this motion should be presented at the Federal Conference.

BOARDING SCHOOLS

Boarding schools are a critical component of educational provision in Australia. They are located in metropolitan, regional and remote areas right across the country, are large and small, single-sex and co-educational and care for a diversity of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to international boarders.

For many families having children board away from home is the only practical and sometimes preferred way to access learning, social opportunities and preparation for employment.

Boarding structures, offerings and options are varied and strive to respond to the diverse needs of families and students. Students can board full-time, on a daily or weekly basis or as required depending on individual circumstances and availability of places. This range of options provides flexibility and diversity of experience and culture.

Boarding schools provide an important educational choice for students and families.

The independent school sector is the largest provider of boarding in Australia, operating almost 75 per cent of all Australian boarding schools. In 2021 there were 140 boarding schools in the independent school sector, housing 14,147 students. Sixteen per cent of boarders in independent boarding schools are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Independent Schools Australia estimates that a further 13 per cent are international students and it is estimated that nationally across all sectors 71 per cent of all boarding students are from rural locations.

Boarder numbers in independent schools have remained relatively constant since 2011 despite increased access to virtual schooling and on-line education. The impacts of COVID restrictions have seen the onset of a steeper decline in student numbers from 2019 to 2020.

The economic and social benefits of boarding schools to the Australian economy and community are considerable. Independent boarding schools are estimated to have contributed to approximately \$1.9 billion in GDP in 2019-20.

Nationally, enrolment growth at all independent schools between 2011 and 2020 was 17.3 per cent or an additional 115,190 enrolments. This growth includes an additional 172 schools. Over the same period, enrolments in independent schools with boarding facilities increased by 8,301 (5.9%), the number of boarding facilities increased by 15 (10.7%) while the boarding population decreased by 1,086 (-6.9%).

CHART 1. INDEPENDENT SCHOOL BOARDER GROWTH, 2011 TO 2020

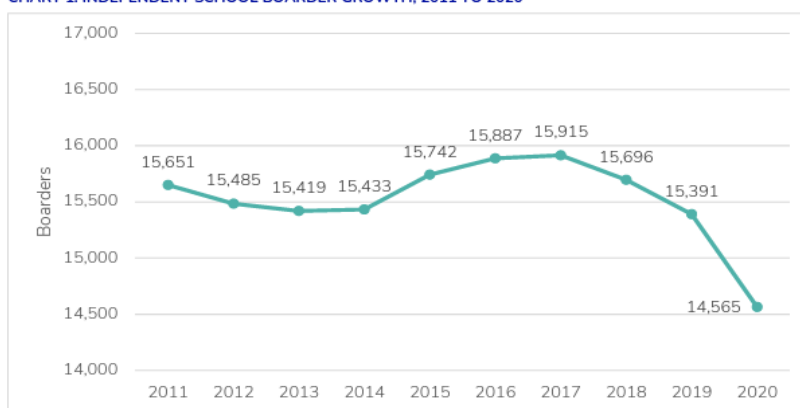


Chart 1 shows the number of boarders at Independent schools reducing between 2011 and 2013 before growing again to peak at 15,915 in 2017. Since 2017 boarder numbers have fallen to 14,565, a reduction of -6.9% since 2011.

It should be noted that between 2011 and 2019 the number of boarders only decreased by 260 (1.7%). The large fall in boarder numbers between 2019 and 2020 (-5.4%) accounts for most of the reduction in boarders between 2011 and 2020. The most likely reason for the reduction in boarder numbers, especially between 2019 and 2020, is COVID restrictions but the fall continues a downward trend seen since 2017.

3.4 INDEPENDENT BOARDING SCHOOL GROWTH BY STATE AND TERRITORY

TABLE 7. INDEPENDENT BOARDING SCHOOLS AND FACILITIES - BOARDERS AND ENROLMENTS, BY STATE, 2011 AND 2020.

| | NO. OF INDEPENDENT BOARDING FACILITIES (2020) | % OF SCHOOLS IN THE STATE WITH BOARDING FACILITIES | BOARDERS AT INDEPENDENT BOARDING FACILITIES | | | | ENROLMENTS AT INDEPENDENT BOARDING SCHOOLS | | | |
|--------------|---|--|---|---------------|---------------|--------------|--|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| | | | | | GROWTH | | | | GROWTH | |
| | | | 2011 | 2020 | NO. | % | 2011 | 2020 | NO. | % |
| NSW | 48 | 12.0% | 5,342 | 4,947 | -395 | -7.4% | 40,876 | 47,364 | 6,488 | 15.9% |
| VIC | 27 | 12.3% | 2,635 | 2,403 | -232 | -8.8% | 32,062 | 34,058 | 1,996 | 6.2% |
| QLD | 34 | 15.3% | 3,837 | 3,736 | -101 | -2.6% | 30,886 | 30,939 | 53 | 0.2% |
| SA | 10 | 9.2% | 930 | 896 | -34 | -3.7% | 10,021 | 10,274 | 253 | 2.5% |
| WA | 22 | 15.0% | 1,836 | 1,773 | -63 | -3.4% | 17,215 | 16,834 | -381 | -2.2% |
| TAS | 6 | 18.2% | 289 | 203 | -86 | -29.8% | 5,105 | 5,053 | -52 | -1.0% |
| NT | 6 | 30.0% | 632 | 463 | -169 | -26.7% | 2,382 | 2,093 | -289 | -12.1% |
| ACT | 2 | 10.5% | 150 | 144 | -6 | -4.0% | 2,928 | 3,161 | 233 | 7.9% |
| TOTAL | 155 | 13.3% | 15,651 | 14,565 | -1,086 | -6.9% | 141,475 | 149,776 | 8,301 | 5.9% |

Table 7 shows that there has been a reduction in the number of boarders in Independent boarding schools across all states and territories between 2011 and 2020 with the largest falls in Tasmania (-29.8%) and the Northern Territory (-26.7%). The Northern Territory also had the largest fall in total student enrolments at Independent boarding schools (-12.1%) with New South Wales recording the largest increase in enrolments at Independent boarding schools (15.9%).

Between 2011 and 2020 four new independent schools opened that have boarding facilities, two new schools in Western Australia and one each in Queensland and Victoria. Also, eleven new boarding facilities were established in existing independent schools, four in Queensland, two each in Victoria and Western Australia and one in New South Wales, South Australia and the Northern Territory. However, the increase in independent boarding schools and facilities in those States was not enough to offset the reduction in boarders in those States.

<https://isa.edu.au/our-sector/diversity/boarding-schools/>



Boarding in a Western Australian Independent School

Independent Schools in Western Australia offer a wide-ranging educational menu that includes boarding. Over 22 AISWA member schools offer boarding facilities for their students, 17 within the metropolitan area of Perth and 5 situated in rural centres of the state.

TABLE 3 INDICATIVE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE BOARDING PLACES IN THE ABSA 'FIND A SCHOOL' LIST BY STATE AND SECTOR

| | INDEPENDENT | | CATHOLIC | | GOVERNMENT | | AUSTRALIA |
|-------|-------------|------|----------|-----|------------|-----|-----------|
| | NO. | % | NO. | % | NO. | % | NO. |
| NSW | 5,398 | 83% | 353 | 5% | 749 | 12% | 6,500 |
| VIC | 2,773 | 90% | 320 | 10% | 0 | 0% | 3,093 |
| QLD | 4,192 | 61% | 2,251 | 33% | 396 | 6% | 6,839 |
| SA | 814 | 68% | 321 | 27% | 63 | 5% | 1,198 |
| WA | 1,849 | 42% | 1,063 | 24% | 1,524 | 34% | 4,437 |
| TAS | 280 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 280 |
| NT | 414 | 69% | 107 | 18% | 77 | 13% | 598 |
| ACT | 181 | 100% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 181 |
| TOTAL | 15,901 | 69% | 4,415 | 19% | 2,809 | 12% | 23,125 |

Table 3 shows that the Independent sector has the highest number of available places at boarding facilities (15,901) and provides more than double the available places in the other two sectors combined. The states with the highest number of available boarding places are Queensland (6,839 or 30%), NSW (6,500 or 28%) and Western Australia (4,437 or 19%).

National Boarding Week

Took place from 14th – 20th May 2023, the event was advertised on social media under the theme 'digital patchworks' for the National Boarding Week social media competition.

ASIA-PACIFIC ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION (APAIE)

May 2023, it was announced that the APAIE conference will be held in Perth, on 4th – 8th March 2024. Western Australia's international education sector will be in the global spotlight in 2024; it will be eight years since the event was last held in Australia, with Melbourne hosting in 2016.

Thanks must go to StudyPerth, Business Events Perth, the Western Australian Government, Curtin University, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University, the University of Notre Dame and the University of Western Australia. Attracting more than 2,000 professionals and service providers, the highly anticipated event will bring together education leaders, policymakers and experts from around the world to discuss the latest trends and innovations in international education.

The McGowan Government committed \$75.4 million over four years to the State's international education sector, including a \$13.1 million package in the 2023-24 State Budget. International education is one of eight priority sectors identified in the WA Government's 'Diversify WA' economic development framework, recognising the importance of the sector to securing the State's long-term prosperity. (Reference: Media Statement 5th May 2023)

COMMONWEALTH REGIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Better support for boarding school students from regional Australia

The Australian Government is investing \$10.9 million in the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program. This program will offer scholarships to students from regional, rural and remote areas, to assist with boarding fees and associated costs.

Scholarships would be available for up to six years, starting in 2024 to support boarding students over the entire period of their secondary school education. A two-tier approach to scholarship support will also provide longer and additional support to families who need it the most.



- Scholarships of \$20,000 per student, per year will be available to support low-income families to meet the cost of boarding school.
- A second tier of scholarships worth \$10,000 per student, per year, will also be available to students from low to middle-income families experiencing financial hardship.

Scholarships available under the Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program will commence from the start of the 2024 school year, with up to 100 scholarship places available, or 50 places across each of the two support tiers.

The program settings will be piloted and the outcomes evaluated to inform decisions about future ongoing support, including additional scholarship places in future years if the program is successful.

<https://www.education.gov.au/commonwealth-regional-scholarship-program>