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## **Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels Report**

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**Madam President, distinguished guests, fellow State Councillors, members of ICPA, ladies and gentlemen it gives me great pleasure to present the Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels Report for the 2025 conference.**

After a number of years, I am pleased to report that both the Female Boarding house at Yanco and the new boarding house at Hurlstone Agriculture High Schools have been completed and are now home to new students. Both of these have been ongoing discussions over the past years, and it is fantastic that they finally finished.

At Deputation in 2024 ICPA-NSW raised the following issues with relevant ministers.

- The establishment of a co-educational State Agricultural Secondary boarding College in Dubbo.
- Introduction of a boarding facility at one of the designated NSW Public Sports High Schools to provide rural and remote children an affordable opportunity to explore Olympic Pathways. This will enable equitable access to elite sporting opportunities.

Prior to conference last year State Council were made aware of the proposed closure at the end of Term 1 2024 of Allison House in Broken Hill. Allison House has provided accommodation for students from remote and isolated areas to access secondary education in Broken Hill for 60 years. As a result, ICPA-NSW conducted a survey relating to the educational needs of students and the requirements of families in Western NSW. This was also extended to include families that reside on the edge of state boarders. The results of this survey highlighted the distances travelled to receive an education and the lack of transportation to existing schools.

It was also imperative to note that the lack of quality education impacts on the workforce in these remote areas. Many families are faced with the decision to leave current employment or may not be willing to relocate for employment opportunities due to difficulties educating their children. We thank those families that participated in the survey and provided vital information.

I was once again fortunate to represent ICPA-NSW on the Boarding Scholarships for Isolated Students Selection Committee (BSIS). These scholarships are provided for students who do not qualify for AIC and are attending one of the State Based Agricultural Boarding Schools in NSW, these being Farrar, Hurlstone and Yanco. I would like to thank the Department of Education and the principals from these schools for providing ICPA-NSW input and a voice on the allocation of these scholarships. I will miss our meetings and would also like to thank Clint Gallagher from Farrar and Marnie Milne from Yanco for answering the numerous questions I have had regarding selection processes.

I was only able to attend the Boarding Schools Expos last year in Dubbo and briefly in Wagga. This provided me with a wonderful opportunity to connect with Heads of Boarding, Boarding Supervisors and Enrolments Managers from over 30 schools. Explaining about the distances travelled to attend school or for sport which maybe hundreds of kilometres away and the lack of education opportunities for many families was an extremely valuable conversation as well as connecting with many families and explaining allowances that may be available to them to assist covering a boarding school education.

I would like to thank Amanda Ferrari and the BSE team for the wonderful resource this provides for rural families, and I hope the virtual summit continues to grow.

Finally, as I finish my final report, I would like to thank Richard Stokes and the team at ABSA. They continue to be a valuable supporter of ICPA and all our families. They have a very full and informative program planned for the year providing training workshops, seminars and education for boarding staff throughout Australia not just NSW. Some of these include Duty of Care workshops, programs and training for Gap students, Youth Mental Health & Wellbeing, Medications Course, Teenage Addiction- taming vaping, drugs, alcohol, gambling and gaming and promoting consent and respectful relationships. These provide a crucial opportunity for Heads of Boarding, Supervisors, and staff to connect with each other, learn what other schools are implementing, what works and what doesn't and new issues that may be arising in the Boarding Environment.

We entrust our children with boarding schools, and it is reassuring to know that they themselves have this support network and education available to them. Richard, I will miss our open and frank discussions.

I am passionate about boarding and the opportunities this provides for rural and remote families, the ups and downs of family dynamics as children and parents adjust. I will miss reading the numerous newsletters from NESA, ABSA and the Council of Catholic Schools but I encourage the incoming portfolio holder to embrace the wonderful connections and relationships that the portfolio can offer.

**Myfi Kellahan**

**Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools and Hostels Portfolio Leader**