



2025 Boarding/Hostels/Second Home December Report

Amber Driver

The Boarding Portfolio welcomes all the kids back from boarding school for the Christmas Holiday break – make the most of each day and relish the opportunity to sleep in your own bed, enjoy many home-cooked meals. Get out to ride your horse, motorbike or jump in the harvester, grader or bore running Toyota. However you spend your holidays, I hope they include some fun, family and freedom.

No doubt there has been lots of action in the first few weeks of the holidays for parents and kids alike as they shake off another big year at boarding school and embrace the summer sun and any pets that have been missing the attention of their human buddies.

As I look back on the year that was, we have had some notable successes/traction:

- 2025 Motion S1. Services Australia have indicated that the AIC 4th Payment will most likely be brought forward to early in Term 4. This is a work in progress.
- 2025 Motion S2. Services Australia have demonstrated that they have been actively addressing and reducing the claim times for ABSTUDY.
- 2025 Motion A1, A2. A clear timeline has been provided by the office of the Minister for Education, the Wellbeing and Equity Branch, stating that the CRSP review is planned toward the end of the pilot.

The Boarding Portfolio is still deep in the trenches with advocacy regarding:

- Increase to the AIC for the Basic Boarding Allowance.
- The removal of the Fringe Benefits Tax on accommodation provided to essential boarding school staff.
- The removal of Fringe Benefits Tax on financial assistance that employers provide to employees to assist in the education of their children.
- The establishment of a Rural Hardship Education Fund during times of unforeseen and unprecedented natural disasters.

During the past few months, I have been exploring some historical data regarding access rural and remote children have to secondary schools in each State and Territory.

I am keen to interact with the members directly and hear what secondary school options are available to you locally, and what public transport options are available. The more detailed the information, the better!

For example, I live in the Barkly Shire, covering 322,713 km sq. There is only 1 town in this entire region that offers an option for secondary education Yr7-12; however, there is no boarding option attached to this secondary school. We are approximately 400km away with no school bus service in our area.

I extend my warmest Northern Territory Christmas wishes to you all... and if Santa doesn't deliver the goods, I do hope the weather is kind, your bellies are full, and you have quality time with your friends and loved ones. Merry Christmas.