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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 my first Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools, and Hostels Report.

I took over the Boarding Portfolio at Moree State Conference last year from Bree Wakefield and I'm extremely grateful for the work that she has done previously, especially during the previous years with boarder closures and the little issue of the pandemic that we all experienced.

I am pleased to be able to report that the new female boarding facilities at Yanco Agricultural College is progressing and hopefully will be open mid to late this year. This had been an issue raised with ICPA for many years by our members and it will be wonderful to see this completed.

In 2023 the NSW government announced that seven sports high Schools had become Australian Olympic Pathway Schools. Last year's conference resulted in the motion being passed requesting that one of these schools have a boarding facility attached to enable our rural and remote students the same opportunities to develop their sporting pathways. ICPA raised this issue and once again the need for a girl's boarding agricultural school in regional NSW similar to Farrar at deputation in Sydney last year and will continue to raise these with the Department and Ministers.

Some of you may be aware that there has been a slight increase in the Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) allowance and the additional payment component. Although not a significant increase and with boarding costs rising considerably for many families these increases are still not proportional to the costs involved in educating a child. We thank Federal Council for their ongoing support to ensure that our members concerns are discussed at a federal level.

I was fortunate to be able to attend 3 of the 4 Boarding Schools Expos last year in Dubbo, Griffith, and Wagga. This provided me with a wonderful opportunity to connect with Heads of Boarding, Boarding Supervisors and Enrolments Managers from over 30 schools. I soon discovered that many of the schools knew of ICPA, had representatives that attended State Conference but weren't fully aware of the issues that families of rural and remote students have. 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. I had many discussions explaining the allowances that families may be able to claim and for many families these allowances can be the difference between a family being in a financial position to send a child away. It was a pleasure to speak to many ICPA families and have the opportunity to explain ICPA to many that weren't aware of our organisation. I'm looking forward to this year's Expo's and a huge thanks to Amanda and the team for the organisation required to provide rural and remote families with this fantastic resource. The virtual online Boarding School Summit is a valuable tool for families that may not be attend an Expo in person and we hope to see this continue in the future.

I am 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, and I look forward to continuing to be a part of the selection process.

Richard Stokes and the team at ABSA have continued 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, Fostering Inclusive Environments, Youth Mental Health and Well-Being, Behaviour Management and Cyber Safety. 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.

Schools have returned for the year and how wonderful is it to have orientation programs, onsite school tours, sleep overs, boarding outings for the students and most importantly parent functions resume. For myself personally this year is one of trepidation as my eldest is completing his HSC and all things associated with year 12 and the completion of his secondary schooling. I wish all families and boarding staff the best for 2024.

Myfi Kellahan  
Boarding Schools, Agricultural High Schools, and Hostels Convenor