

### BOARDING SCHOOLS/HOSTELS PORTFOLIO CONFERENCE REPORT – June 2021

Geographically isolated children are being catered to by 43 independent and church run boarding schools throughout the state.

There are three state run boarding facilities, namely Dalby State High and Spinifex Residential College in Mt. Isa and Western Cape College at Weipa.

Four boarding schools cater for indigenous children: AFL House –Cape York, Cape York Girl Academy, Djarragun College at Gordonvale and Western Cape College at Weipa.

A boarding school called Holy Spirit College located in Cooktown caters for children unable to attend mainstream education.

#### **COST OF EDUCATING A CHILD/CHILDREN**

Boarding school fees in 2021 have risen 2% while tuition has risen by 1%.

In most cases boarding is a necessity, especially considering eight shires within Queensland have no high school. Average fees for 2021 equate to \$20 371 for boarding and tuition costs \$13 461 per child and doesn't consider necessary expenses such as uniforms, text books, IT equipment etc. Many rural and remote families are struggling to meet these costs. The basic AIC allowance and LAFHAS have not increased for 2021 and remain at the 2020 rates.

The flow on effect of ongoing drought and the devastating flood events in Southern Queensland is impacting many schools and families. Schools are endeavouring to assist their families and the help offered within the school community is wide and varied. Schools are increasingly looking to the international markets to fill their boarding houses which has proven challenging in the Covid 19 affected world we now find ourselves living in.

2020 saw motions from Richmond, Clark Creek and Westmar/Inglestone Branches. Letters were written post conference, as required, with messaging being reinforced at delegations in February.

During delegations in February, meetings were held with Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ), Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) and the Department of Education's Office of Non-State Education (ONSE), with discussions focused on child safety and the training of staff and communication to parents.

The Rural and Remote branch explained that the Department of Education's Safety and Wellbeing of Students Procedure for those students residing at a state school operated residential boarding facility procedure was closely modelled on the Australian Boarding Standards (ABS). This procedure was shared with Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC). The ABS includes benchmarks for processes such as Working With Children Checks, student protection and compliance with departmental mandatory training. Additionally, school Guidance Officers are available in state school boarding facilities to support the mental health and wellbeing of boarding students.

ONSE noted that non-state boarding schools are bound by the Accreditation Act including specific aspects relating to boarding schools. At this stage, the Department has no plans to make the Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residences mandatory, as the Department believes that the processes they have in place are sufficient.

With the uncertainty around COVID-19, most Boarding Schools and Hostels are still operating under the guidelines of Qld Health. International students who returned home at the end of the year have been unable to return. Some students are studying remotely with support from their Boarding School

in Qld while others have returned to schooling in their given country until the international borders open.

This is my final Boarding Schools and Hostels Report. I have enjoyed working with the Boarding Schools and Hostels over the last five years and have made some wonderful friends and connections. Please keep up your fantastic support of ICPA Qld.

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