

### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CONFERENCE REPORT – 2020

Financial Assistance continues to be a key challenge and issue for many of our members. The disparity continues to widen between (ever increasing) costs to complete the compulsory years of education (usually in a boarding school setting) and the fiscal support given by the State Government. This was evidenced in the number of motions received at conference and the regular stream of queries the portfolio has received throughout the year.

**In 2020, boarding fees rose by 8%, tuition by 1% in contrast to an increase of LAFHAS by 2% or \$93. In the past ten years, the value of LAFHAS as a support towards tuition costs borne by families has eroded by over 4% (from 46.2% of costs to 41.9%). Another way of looking at the ever widening gap is to compare the increase in tuition fees over the past ten years: tuition has increased by 53% while LAFHAS tuition component has increased by 38.5% - a 14.5% difference in out of pocket expense for families.**

As on previous occasions, ICPA Qld wrote to Minister Grace following conference on this matter and raised the matter at delegations. ICPA also restated that eight Shires in Qld have no secondary facilities at all. We raised the issue of the inequity in funding to support all Qld students to successfully complete their compulsory learning in a method and location that best meets their needs and circumstances with the Minister and representatives of her Department. ICPA has made considerable effort to clarify the role and purpose of boarding schools for rural and remote students and the complex and compelling reasons parents/caregivers choose a particular school and highlight why cost is often not the primary determinant in choosing a school. The concepts of a broad curriculum offering to match a student's skills, interests and/or needs, access to familial support and the school's location in proximity to home and/or familial support are often more significant considerations when choosing a suitable school and this is strongly reiterated in our advocacy efforts.

The State provision of three boarding colleges (Dalby, Mt Isa and Weipa) in conjunction with P-12 offerings by several Distance Education schools is a welcome contribution towards assisting rural and remote families to educate their children. ICPA Qld acknowledges these do best meet the needs of some students and their families but reiterates they do not and, realistically, cannot meet the needs of the thousand plus rural and remote students spread across the State.

We have used available opportunities to increase the knowledge of other politicians around rural and remote students and the essential role boarding schools play in reaching desired educational, social and communal outcomes. With 2020 being an election year, an increase in LAFHAS is one of the key tenets in ICPA Qld's election platform.

While the past year has not seen the desired change in LAFHAS funding arrangements, it has not been for want of effort. Members may be rest assured this issue is still at the forefront of our advocacy and will continue to be so.

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