

Media Release

Boarding school association applauds Government reforms to ABSTUDY to better support students who study away from home

Boarding Australia, an association whose purpose is to advocate and provide national leadership in the provision of high quality boarding and educational experiences for Indigenous students, has been advocating for ABSTUDY reforms for over 30 years.

Boarding Australia President and Manager of Wiltja Boarding, Anthony Bennet says, "We welcome these changes because they reflect what boarding staff have been concerned about for a long time."

While the \$38.1 million investment to improve support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students study away from home is much welcomed news, the association recognises further changes are still required.

Boarding Australia's own research indicates that boarding providers with high numbers of Indigenous students are in a worse financial position than three years ago, largely due to a combination of ABSTUDY processes being overly complicated and funding inadequate to cover the high cost of Indigenous boarding.

Boarding Australia Chief Executive Officer, Greg Franks, says "Whilst we applaud the changes to ABSTUDY, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding is patently under resourced. Remote and rural Indigenous students have highly complex needs and costs are high. We hope there will be further funding reform to give certainty to providers of Indigenous boarding."

For 20 years Boarding Australia has presented annual training forums across Australia to provide a source of quality information, advice and resources related to boarding providers and the care of young people, particularly those from remote areas and Indigenous students.

The association held a symposium earlier in the year with principals, heads of boarding, policy makers, educators and researchers to address the findings and recommendations of recently released reports relating to institutional responses to child sexual abuse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and studying away from home.

The symposium highlighted, among a number of themes, the need for policy development, transparency in funding provisions and training and workforce development in schools and for pre-service teachers in universities.

Mr Bennett says, "The changes to ABSTUDY will have some immediate effect, however, we have to continue advocating for change or the educational gap for Indigenous students will never close."

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