



MEDIA RELEASE

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DATE: FRIDAY 25 MARCH 2022

WELCOME SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS BOARDING STUDENTS

The announcement today by the Australian Government to provide \$17.3 million to extend the Indigenous Boarding Providers grants program has been greeted enthusiastically by Independent Schools Australia.

Boarding schools in remote Australia provide crucial support for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and are often the only schooling option.

“People might be surprised to know there are 40 majority Indigenous schools in the Independent sector that enrol 3,116 students and cater for some of Australia’s most remote communities. These boarding schools not only provide quality education and accommodation, but a range of other supports to children who are away from their families and communities,” said Margery Evans, CEO of Independent Schools Australia.

During 2021-22 more than 20 schools were successful in accessing the Indigenous boarding grants program and have used the funding in a whole range of ways tailored to help their particular students. Some schools have improved their student health and wellbeing programs, others have strengthened transition support or been able to expand their employment readiness initiatives and, importantly, many have extended and deepened their family engagement programs.

“We are pleased the grant will continue for another year, maintaining these programs is critical if students are to succeed,” Ms Evans emphasised.

Ms Evans acknowledged educating any child in a boarding facility away from home and family is not an easy task and is made even more complex in remote Australia where services are limited and there are few, if any educational alternatives.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in remote areas have many disadvantages to overcome. This additional resourcing will go some way to help address the challenges felt by our majority Indigenous boarding schools and students, however we must recognise the need for ongoing funding for all schools that provide boarding to large numbers of Indigenous students, if we want to make a sustained difference,” she said.

Across Australia there are 16,662 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Independent sector of which 2,188 are boarders at 122 schools.

Ms Evans is emphatic, “Keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students engaged in a meaningful, relevant education while maintaining connections to community, is critical to the health of our nation.”

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