



MEDIA RELEASE

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NEW REPORT HIGHLIGHTS URGENT NEED FOR LONG-TERM SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Australia (ISA) has released a new report, **Supporting Their Futures: A Sustainable Model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Boarding**, which highlights the critical role of boarding schools in the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities and the urgent need for stable, long-term funding.

The report provides new data and case studies showing that many boarding schools, which educate over 2,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, are struggling to remain viable due to ongoing funding uncertainty.

CEO of ISA Graham Catt said despite repeated government reviews and the essential services these schools provide, funding clarity remains absent as schools await the outcomes of the Federal Government's Boarding Design Review.

"The future of these students depends on immediate and sustained action. These schools are more than just educational institutions—they are vital lifelines providing not only academic instruction but also cultural, emotional, and social support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who live far from home," Mr Catt said.

"The delay in releasing the Boarding Design Review's outcomes is putting their future in jeopardy."

The report calls for a long-term, stable funding model that will allow these schools to continue providing essential services. Currently, many schools face a significant shortfall of up to \$20,000 per Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding student, a gap that schools cannot fill on their own.

Case studies in the report feature schools such as Yirara College in Alice Springs and Wongutha CAPS in Western Australia, where principals emphasised the importance of fully funded boarding services for their students' success.

Principal Wesley Meurant of Yirara College said, "Standardised schooling cannot cope, accommodate or home any of our students. The remote communities know this, which is why they strongly desire to see their children come to Yirara."

Principal Brendan Franzone of Wongutha CAPS added, "Students require support from highly qualified and experienced staff that are culturally competent and trauma-informed. This support is required around the clock and can include access to medical or health and wellbeing services outside of business hours."

Mr Catt reiterated that while rescue funding may help in the short term, only a long-term commitment can provide the certainty that schools, staff, and students need.

"This is not just about keeping schools open—it's about ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from regional and remote communities have the same opportunities as their peers, and that we continue the progress made in closing the education gap."

For an online version of the report please visit the [ISA website](#).

About Independent Schools Australia:

ISA is the national peak body representing 1,216 Independent schools with over 720,000 enrolled students. In 2023, 987 Independent schools educated 19,299 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, many of whom come from remote areas. The Independent school sector is the largest provider of boarding schools in Australia, operating 75% of all Australian boarding schools.

For more information – www.isa.edu.au

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