



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 17 OCTOBER 2024

GOVERNMENT CAPITAL GRANTS A POSITIVE STEP, BUT MORE SUPPORT NEEDED FOR INDIGENOUS BOARDING SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Australia (ISA) has welcomed today's announcement by the Federal Government of capital grants funding for three Indigenous boarding schools in the Northern Territory, describing it as a significant step towards improving school infrastructure.

However, ISA emphasised the need for further long-term support to address the broader needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote communities.

The \$18 million infrastructure funding package will support Yirara College, St Philip's College, and Yipirinya School—all Independent schools known for providing vital educational and pastoral care services to Indigenous students.

ISA CEO Graham Catt said this capital funding will support the excellent work these schools are already doing, but reiterated calls for broader action to ensure Indigenous boarding students across the country receive the resources they need.

"These three Independent schools are doing critical work to support Indigenous students, providing both education and creating culturally safe environments where they can thrive," Mr. Catt said.

"While today's capital grants announcement is a welcome boost for school infrastructure, there is more to be done. What these schools and other Indigenous boarding schools across Australia need most is a long-term commitment to funding that supports students' academic, emotional, and cultural needs."

Indigenous boarding schools remain under financial pressure following the expiration of the Indigenous Boarding Providers Grant Program*. Without a long-term funding solution, these schools face challenges in delivering the full range of services necessary for student success.

Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory (AISNT), Cheryl Salter emphasised the importance of ongoing support.

"Yirara College, St Philip's, and Yipirinya are lifelines for Indigenous students, providing more than just education. These schools offer essential pastoral care and cultural support for students from some of the most remote parts of Australia. While today's announcement is a

great start, we need sustained funding solutions to ensure these students continue to have access to these vital services.”

ISA continues to call for a permanent, recurrent funding model that will secure the future of Indigenous boarding schools, ensuring they can provide not only education but also the pastoral, cultural, and mental health services essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

About Independent Schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

ISA is the national peak body representing 1,216 Independent schools, with close to 720,000 enrolled students. In 2023 there were 19,299 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in 987 Independent schools. Independent schools in remote regions are often the sole providers of education for these communities, with fifty-one schools in the Independent sector having an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment comprising more than 50 per cent of the total enrolment. The Independent school sector is also the largest provider of boarding in Australia, operating almost 75 per cent of all Australian boarding schools. In 2023 there were 139 boarding schools in the Independent school sector, enrolling 15,204 boarding students. More than fifteen per cent of boarders in Independent boarding schools are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The Independent schools sector also includes nine majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding schools.

For more information – www.isa.edu.au

**The 2023 Budget papers had \$21.6 million in 2023–24 for a one-year extension of NIAA’s Indigenous Boarding Providers Grant program to support approximately 2,300 students. There was no money in this year’s budget to continue the program.*

See ISA’s report [Supporting Their Futures: A Sustainable Model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Boarding](#)

ENDS

ISA Media Contacts: Shaun Rigby 0438 021 936 shaun.rigby@isa.edu.au or Brendan Walsh 0411 850 515 brendan.walsh@isa.edu.au