

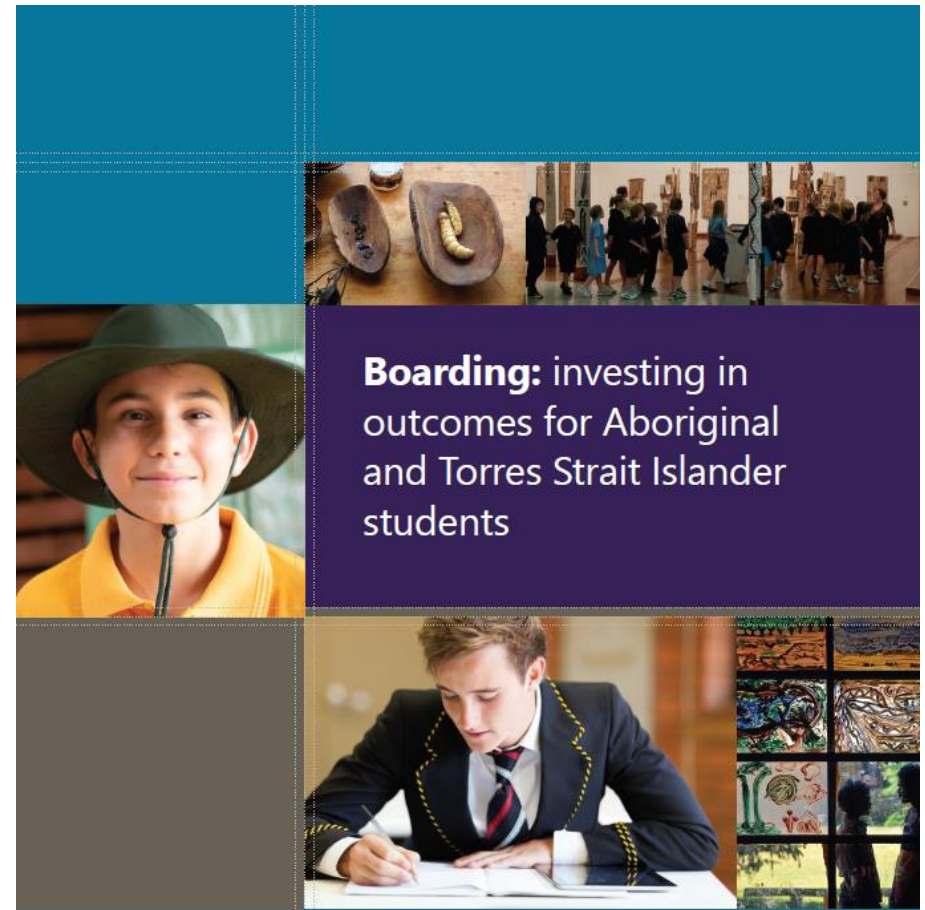
# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding

## 19 November 2019


### Presentation to Indigenous Education & Boarding Australia

#### Background

- *Study Away Review: Review of Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Secondary Students Studying Away From Home*, 2017 (PM&C)
- Attending a boarding school is a necessity for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students undertaking secondary education. This is largely due to limited secondary schooling options in many remote communities of Australia.
- Some boarding providers are part of a school structure (boarding schools) and others are standalone facilities where boarders attend nearby or associated schools.
- In the 2017 calendar year, 5,190 students received an ABSTUDY boarding related payment to attend secondary school (down from 5,267 in 2016)
- Travel is an essential component of support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding.



**Boarding:** investing in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

 **Grant Thornton**  
An instinct for growth™

An analysis of the investment in support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending boarding schools and facilities

June 2019

# Methodology

## Grant Thornton methodology for analysis

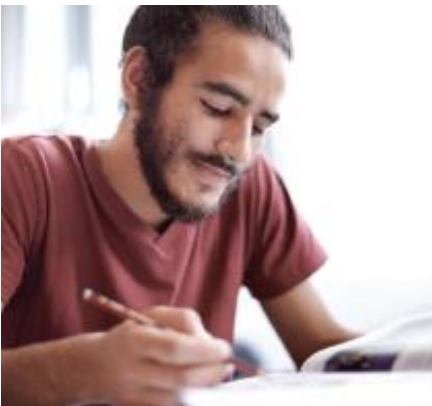
- Review of 27 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers providing boarding for 1,900 boarders. Boarding providers located in Northern Territory (7), Queensland (12), Western Australia (6) and Victoria (2)
- Data compared against 23 non-government mainstream boarding providers
- literature review of existing reviews and reports into boarding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and what works to support them
- review of three year financial and operational trend data for 2015, 2016 and 2017 from financial questionnaires provided to the Department of Education and Training (DET) by the boarding schools
- the split between tuition and boarding revenue and costs reported by boarding providers was used in the analysis of the data
- face to face consultations were conducted with senior staff of each of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers and the majority of the peak bodies. A standardised interview checklist was developed to guide the consultations
- boarding providers completed a self-assessment survey of compliance with the National Boarding Standard.

## Three phases of review

**Phase 1**—collection and analysis of data from 27 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers relating to revenue, expenditure, enrolments (retention, expulsion and exclusion) and graduations.

**Phase 2**—collection and analysis for comparative purposes of financial data from 23 mainstream boarding providers that have a small cohort of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders. .

**Phase 3**—comparison of data from phases 1 and 2.



# The boarding schools



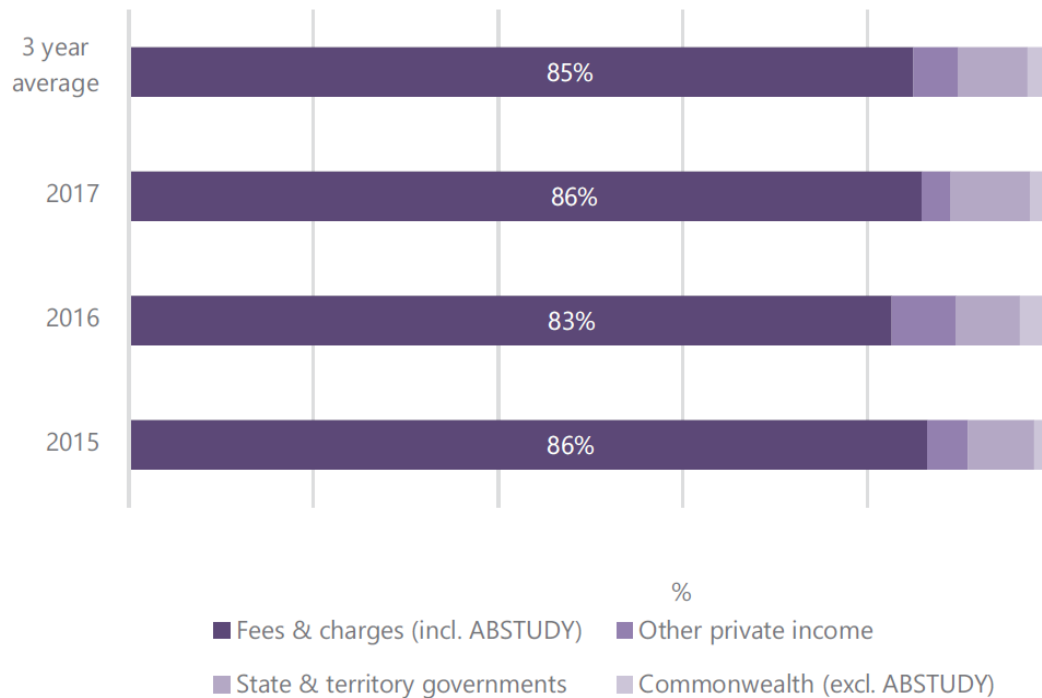
## 4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers

The following Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers were identified by PM&C for inclusion in the analysis:<sup>39</sup>

	Name of boarding facility	Location
1.	AFL Cape York House	Cairns, Queensland
2.	Cape York Girl Academy	Wangetti (Cairns), Queensland
3.	Coolgardie Christian Aboriginal Parent-Directed School	Coolgardie, Western Australia
4.	Clontarf Aboriginal College	Waterford (Perth), Western Australia
5.	Djarragun College	Gordonvale, Queensland
6.	Edmund Rice College	Bindoon (Perth), Western Australia
7.	Haileybury Rendall School	Darwin, Northern Territory
8.	Holy Spirit College	Cooktown, Queensland
9.	La Salle College	Middle Swan (Perth), Western Australia
10.	Marrara Christian College	Darwin, Northern Territory
11.	Melbourne Indigenous Transition School	Richmond, Victoria
12.	Mount St Bernard College	Herberton, Queensland
13.	Nhulunbuy Boarding School	Nhulunbuy, Northern Territory
14.	Northern Territory Christian College <sup>40</sup>	Darwin, Northern Territory
15.	NRL Cowboys House	Gulliver (Townsville), Queensland
16.	Peace Lutheran College	Kamerunga (Cairns), Queensland
17.	St Brendan's College	Yeppoon, Queensland
18.	St John's College	Darwin, Northern Territory
19.	St Patrick's College	Townsville, Queensland
20.	St Philip's College	Alice Springs, Northern Territory
21.	St Teresa's Agricultural College	Abergowrie (Ingham), Queensland
22.	Tec-NQ (senior years only)	Townsville, Queensland
23.	Tiwi College	Pickataramoor (Tiwi Islands), Northern Territory
24.	Torres Strait Kaziw Meta Inc.	Thursday Island, Queensland
25.	Wongutha Christian Aboriginal Parent-Directed School	Gibson (Esperance), Western Australia
26.	Worawa Aboriginal College	Healesville (Melbourne), Victoria
27.	Yiramalay / Wesley Studio School	Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia
28.	Yirara College	Alice Springs, Northern Territory

# Sources of boarding income

GRAPH 1: SOURCES OF BOARDING INCOME<sup>5</sup> FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING PROVIDERS



## Main sources of income for boarding schools (tuition & boarding)

- Commonwealth recurrent school funding
- Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS)—Children and Schooling Program
- state and territory funding
- donations, scholarships and other private income
- scholarships
- ABSTUDY (paid on behalf of eligible students)
- ABSTUDY fares allowance (for travel costs where the reimbursement is selected)
- private fees and parental contributions
- underpinning funding from associated bodies and other parties
- Commonwealth Block Grant Authorities (capital funding).

# Findings

## The shortfall

- There is no specific recurrent Commonwealth funding specifically for boarding operations.
- Commonwealth recurrent school funding is provided to schools to meet the ‘in-school educational costs of schools’ and some schools use this funding to contribute to costs associated with supporting boarding students more broadly.
- The three year average cost of boarding from 2015—2017 exceeded revenue by \$6,248 per boarder.
- Across the three-year average of 1,918 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders attending the 27 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers, this represents a total revenue shortfall of \$11,983,664 per annum.

TABLE 1: AVERAGE ANNUAL REVENUE, COST AND LOSS PER BOARDER 2015 — 2017 AT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING PROVIDERS

\$	2015	2016	2017	3 year average
Average revenue per boarder	15,559	16,776	17,703	16,679
Average cost per boarder	20,629	23,296	24,858	22,927
Average surplus / (loss) per boarder	(5,070)	(6,520)	(7,155)	(6,248)

TABLE 2: AVERAGE ANNUAL REVENUE AND COST PER BOARDER 2015 — 2017 AT MAINSTREAM BOARDING PROVIDERS

\$	2015	2016	2017	Average
Average revenue per boarder	17,170	17,228	17,828	17,409
Average cost per boarder	18,941	19,637	19,566	19,381
Average surplus / (loss) per boarder	(1,771)	(2,409)	(1,738)	(1,972)





# Findings

## ABSTUDY

- ABSTUDY has for 50 years enabled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attend boarding and access quality secondary schooling opportunities.
- It is not direct Commonwealth funding to boarding providers and is paid to boarding providers on behalf of eligible students as a contribution towards the costs of tuition and boarding.
- ABSTUDY fares allowances enable eligible students to travel to and from boarding.
- The maximum possible annual ABSTUDY payment to a boarding facility as at 1 January 2019 was \$26,903.21 per student (excluding ABSTUDY travel allowances). This includes up to \$16,065.21 a year for boarding fees (including living allowance, rent assistance and remote area allowance) and up to \$10,838 for tuition fees (school fees allowance).
- ABSTUDY provided secondary schooling payments in 2017-18 of \$152.68 million to 18,984 students and these are projected to be \$159 million in 2019-20

TABLE 6: MAXIMUM ABSTUDY ENTITLEMENTS FOR AWAY FROM HOME SECONDARY STUDENTS AS AT 1 JANUARY 2019

ABSTUDY payments (\$)	1 January 2019
Maximum annual amount of ABSTUDY for an eligible secondary school student approved to live away from home to attend school	26,903.21
Includes the following payments for tuition and board, paid directly to provider	
Living Allowance* (means-tested)	12,050.21
<i>Maximum for students up to 21 y/o (\$455.20 per fortnight)</i>	<i>11,867.71</i>
<i>plus Energy Supplement</i>	<i>182.50</i>
School Fees Allowance (boarding rate)	10,838.00
<i>Non-means-tested component</i>	<i>8,422.00</i>
<i>Means tested component</i>	<i>2,416.00</i>
Rent Assistance (means-tested)	3,540.50
Remote Area Allowance	474.50



# Findings

## ABSTUDY continued

- Payments from ABSTUDY are uncertain and unpredictable as they are determined on enrolments.
- Some boarding providers are heavily reliant on ABSTUDY payments to meet boarding costs. Successful operators have diversified their revenue and source income from IAS, philanthropics, donations and state/territory government underpinning funding.
- The boarding component of ABSTUDY is not sufficient to meet the costs of boarding. Boarding providers heavily reliant on ABSTUDY payments are using Commonwealth recurrent tuition funding to supplement the cost of boarding.

TABLE 8: RELIANCE ON ABSTUDY, SELECTED ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING PROVIDERS, 2017

	Boarding provider 1 (Qld)	Boarding provider 2 (Qld)	Boarding provider 3 (Vic)	Boarding provider 4 (WA)
Total revenue (\$)	10,769,564	12,642,854	4,214,825	3,728,459
Total tuition revenue from all sources (\$)	9,762,161	10,279,762	3,294,492	2,927,871
<i>ABSTUDY tuition revenue (% of total tuition revenue) (\$)</i>	<i>778,957 (8%)</i>	<i>2,367,872 (23%)</i>	<i>580,666 (18%)</i>	<i>403,918 (14%)</i>
Total boarding revenue from all sources (\$)	1,007,404	2,363,092	920,333	800,588
<i>ABSTUDY boarding revenue (\$)</i>	<i>914,427 (91%)</i>	<i>2,275,014 (96%)</i>	<i>835,593 (91%)</i>	<i>784,075 (96%)</i>
% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	98%	100%	100%	100%
ICSEA score	689	649	N/A	603 <sup>102</sup>
Average ABSTUDY payment per Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarder (\$)	22,578.45	23,809.67	21,788.60	16,971.33



# Findings

## ABSTUDY continued

- A number of recent reviews of ABSTUDY including *Barriers and Bureaucracy, Bridges and Brokers* (CAEPR, 2017) and *The power of education: From surviving to thriving—Educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students*, (HoRSCIA, 2017).
- Findings of the reviews include:
  - Criticism of complexity of ABSTUDY
  - Quantum of ABSTUDY payments not sufficient to meet the costs of boarding
  - ABSTUDY is a welfare measure but should be administered as an educational measure
  - The means testing of ABSTUDY is complex and could be replaced with an Indigeneity/remoteness test or aligned with the Commonwealth's needs based Schooling Resource Standard funding for tuition (Gonski)
- Grant Thornton review received significant feedback and comments regarding ABSTUDY. Major issue for most boarding providers.
- Changes in the administration of ABSTUDY in recent years and the 2018 budget measure (safe travel plans, greater flexibility for travel, combination of U16 supplement with living allowance) widely welcomed by the sector.

**"The school gets additional funding under Gonski to meet the needs of disadvantaged or high needs students while they are at school, but the boarding house doesn't receive any additional funding to support that student. The student is only at school for seven hours. They are with the boarding house for the remaining 17 hours per day plus weekends. Their needs don't change when they walk from the school to the boarding house."**





# Findings

## Structural change occurring in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding

- There is a transition occurring in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding sector away from the traditional long established large boarding providers to a new model of boarding.
- New providers emerging that cater for smaller numbers of boarders, usually from a common background or home geographical region.
- A number of new smaller boarding providers or campuses of existing facilities have also opened in remote and very remote locations to reduce the incidence of homesickness and cultural and community disconnect.
- Costs are generally higher, but these new smaller providers are attracting new sources of income from the private sector and government to address revenue shortfalls.
- Early evidence suggests that these smaller providers are delivering better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- Prior to 2000 the structural change went the other way—most of the original network of smaller remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding residences had closed over time and boarders had ‘migrated to larger regional boarding schools’. As a result, the Northern Territory Government was ‘focussing its future funding on larger boarding schools’ (IEBA, 2014).

**Tiwi College, AFL Cape York House, Holy Spirit College Melb Indigenous Transition School, Yiramalay Wesley Studio School, NRL Cowboys House, Dawurr College (Nhulunbuy), Wiltja Boarding**



# Findings

## Structural change occurring in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding continued

- The transition in the sector away from large Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers has had an impact on the large providers in terms of enrolment numbers and financial performance.
- One large well respected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding provider that has been in operation for more than 50 years, has seen its predominately Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding population decline from 177 boarders in 2012 to 74 in 2018 (a 58 per cent reduction).
- Greater competition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders with many capital city boarding schools expanding programs to encourage attendance by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**"The Independent Schools Council of Australia is warning that there may not be any large-scale Independent boarding schools for Indigenous secondary students remaining unless changes are urgently made to the structure and level of ABSTUDY funding. "**



# Findings

## Background of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders

- Boarding providers reported the need for resourcing to address:
  - health and hygiene issues
  - low levels of literacy and numeracy
  - undiagnosed and diagnosed disabilities
  - substance addictions and abuse
  - maintenance of connection with culture and community
  - trauma backgrounds and homesickness.
- More than three quarters of secondary students receiving ABSTUDY to attend a boarding facility have a home address that is classified as remote or very remote.
- Most boarding providers are not located in remote locations. Of the approximate 194 schools and facilities providing schooling opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students in 2018, only a small percentage are located in remote or very remote areas.
- ABSTUDY travel (fare allowance) is a critical component of support for boarding.





# Findings

## Background of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders continued

- Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders is a major issue for boarding providers.
- Boarding providers report devoting significant resources to addressing the health issues of students when they arrive at or return to a boarding facility after term break. These health issues are extensive and both physical and emotional.

## **Nearly all Aboriginal boarders have experienced or witnessed trauma and have health issues.**

**From September 2015 to November 2016, 181 students had a cognitive assessments due to concerns about their educational progress. The data returned for these assessments identified 68 students who required support due to intellectual disability and 112 students with social emotional disorders**

**39 per cent of current secondary enrolment have presented with substance use issues with 3 per cent having long-term and chronic substance use issues. 19 per cent of current secondary enrolments have presented with self-harming behaviours that require intervention. 21 children had court ordered Community Service Hours to be completed.**

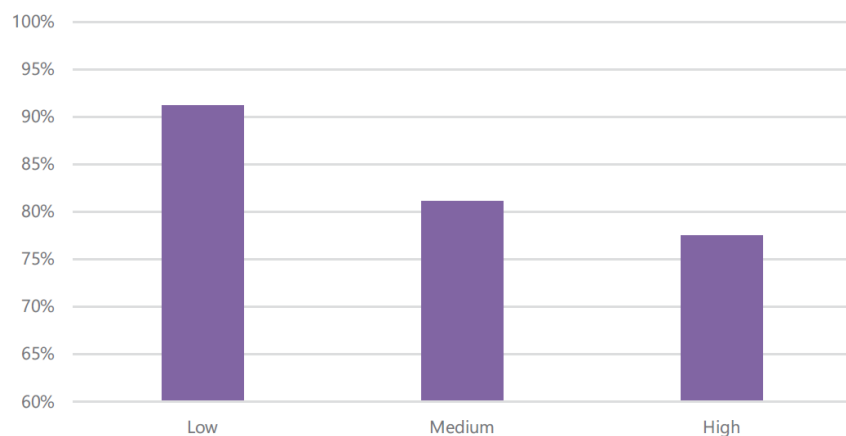


# Findings

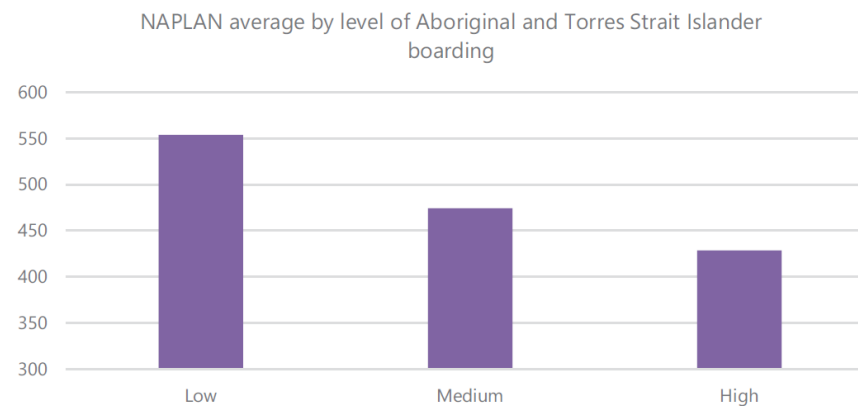
## Background of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders continued

- Background of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders impacts on educational outcomes at boarding schools.

GRAPH 6: COMPARISON OF AVERAGE ATTENDANCE AT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING SCHOOLS AGAINST THE PROPORTION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDER ENROLMENTS



GRAPH 7: COMPARISON OF AVERAGE NAPLAN SCORES AT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING PROVIDERS AGAINST THE PROPORTION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDER ENROLMENTS





# Findings

## Support services

- Culturally appropriate support services provided by boarding providers are an important component of a successful boarding experience.
- There were some common themes underlying the investment in support services identified by Grant Thornton:
  - » without a comprehensive suite of funded support services many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will not succeed in boarding
  - » boarding providers not only deliver an education curriculum but provide students with life skills for later life
  - » boarding provides a framework for addressing the health and social and emotional well-being issues of students
  - » training staff in trauma informed care and practice is essential given the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers accommodate remote students that have experienced or witnessed trauma
  - » the support of families and communities for a student to attend boarding is essential if a student is to succeed in boarding
  - » relationship based practice—all students must be treated with respect.

**The school motto is “Because we care”. We try to implement this in everything we do. It is not just about academic results. It is more about being successful in integrating remote Aboriginal kids into mainstream/city living and equipping them for their future journey in life. We try to provide them with the tools they will need so that they can make a difference when they return to their communities.**

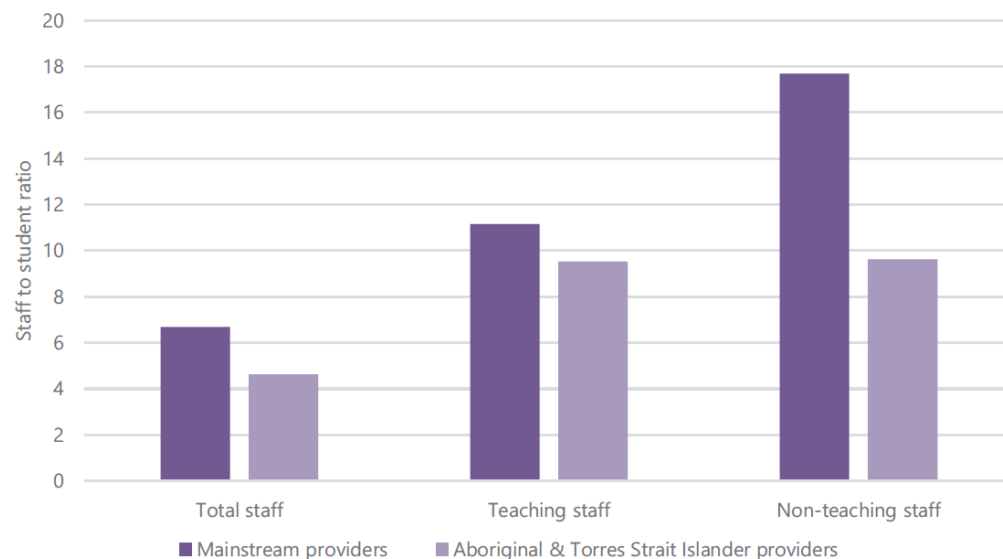


# Findings

## Support services continued

- Support services are resource intensive and largely unfunded. Services are not consistent across boarding providers. Support services add to the cost of boarding delivery and require lower staff to student ratios.
- Needs based funding for support services recommended.
- Support services in the Northern Territory and some parts of Queensland are augmented by the Transition Support Services (TSS) and Transition Support Unit (TSU).
- The strength of evidence regarding the impact and outcomes of investment in support services for boarders is sparse and largely anecdotal. There is a need for further research into the support services required by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders.

GRAPH 8: FIVE YEAR AVERAGE TOTAL STAFF, TEACHING STAFF AND NON-TEACHING STAFF TO STUDENT RATIO FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND MAINSTREAM BOARDING PROVIDERS, 2012 — 2017



**The TSU and TSS provide a 'point of connection, liaison and communication between families, students and boarding providers'**



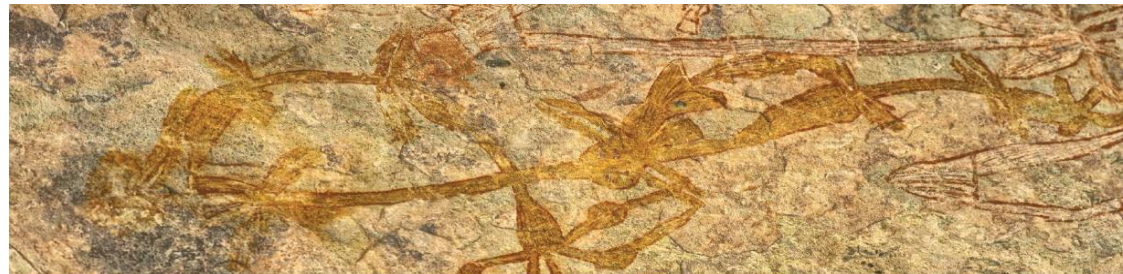
# Findings

## Boarding revenue

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers receive funding and income from a number of sources to meet the cost of boarding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

TABLE 9: TOTAL BOARDING REVENUE AND BOARDERS 2015 — 2017, ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING PROVIDERS

	2015	2016	2017	3 year average
No. of total boarders	2,174	2,193	2,155	2,174
No. of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders	1,882	1,946	1,926	1,918
Total boarding revenue (\$)	33,828,960	36,781,416	38,154,715	36,255,030

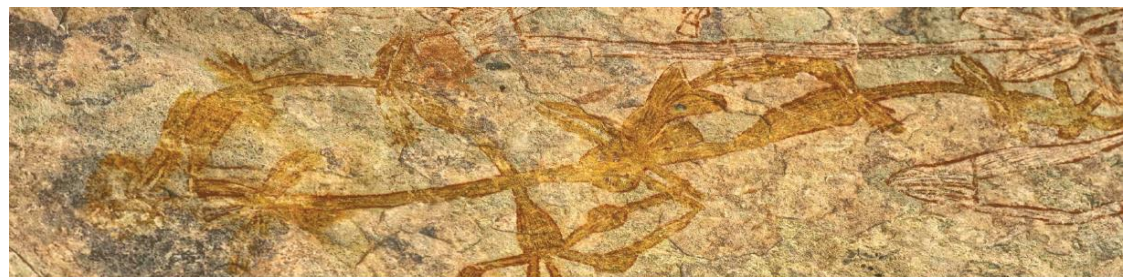
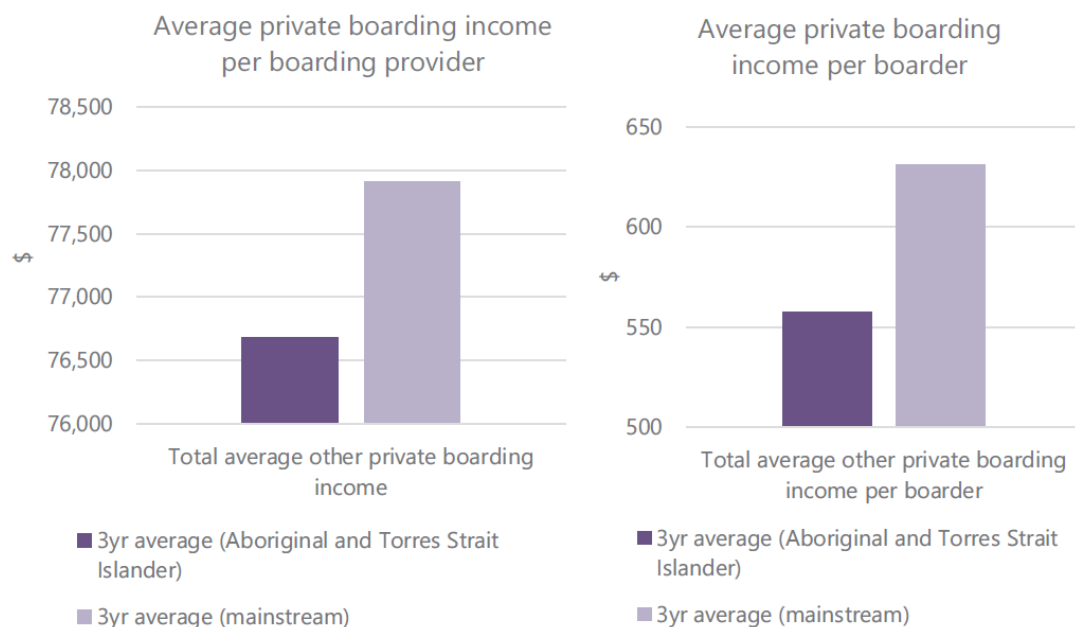


# Findings

## Boarding revenue – private income

- Private sourced income such as donations and non-ABSTUDY school fees are limited due to economic circumstances of parents.

GRAPH 17: PRIVATE RECURRENT BOARDING INCOME OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING PROVIDERS AND MAINSTREAM BOARDING PROVIDERS, THREE-YEAR AVERAGE PER SCHOOL AND BOARDER, 2015 — 2017

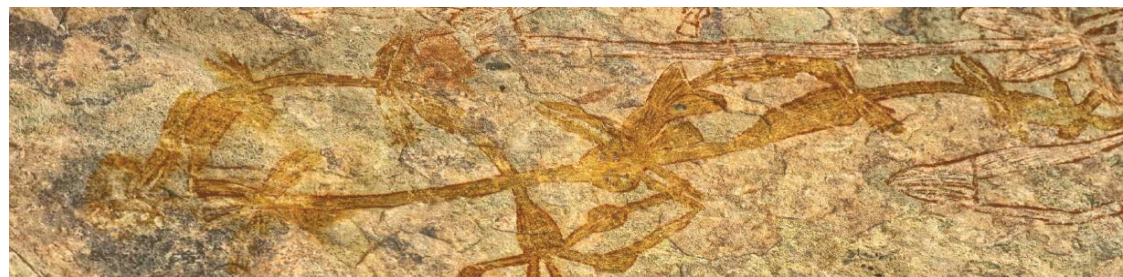
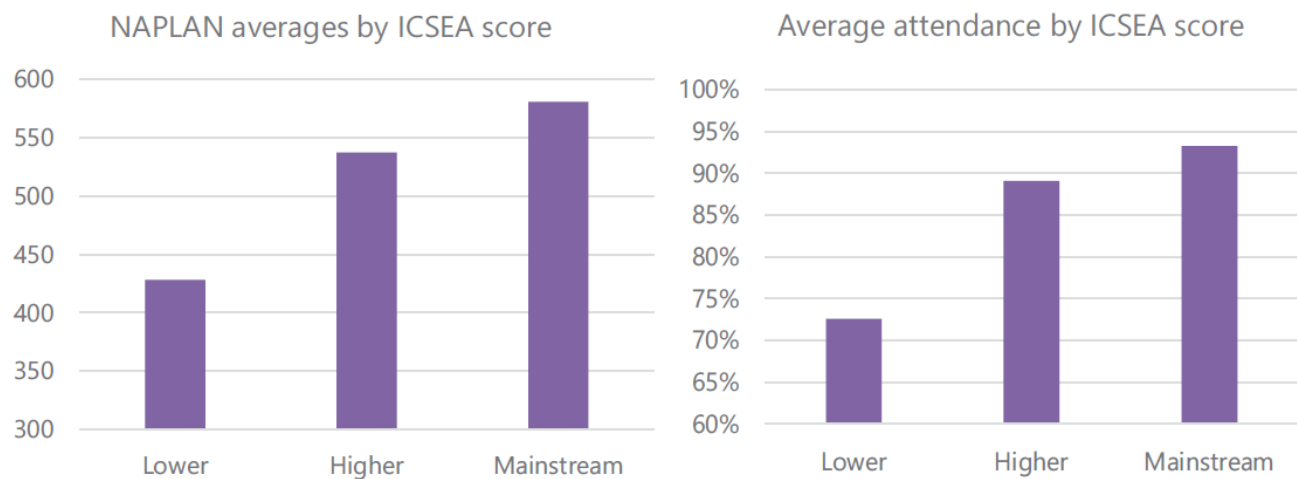


# Findings

## Boarding revenue – social-economic background of parents

- Boarding schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders generally have lower ICSEA scores and lower educational outcomes.

GRAPH 19: EDUCATIONAL INDICATORS: NAPLAN AND ATTENDANCE—COMPARISON BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND MAINSTREAM BOARDING PROVIDERS BY ICSEA SCORE, 2015 — 2017



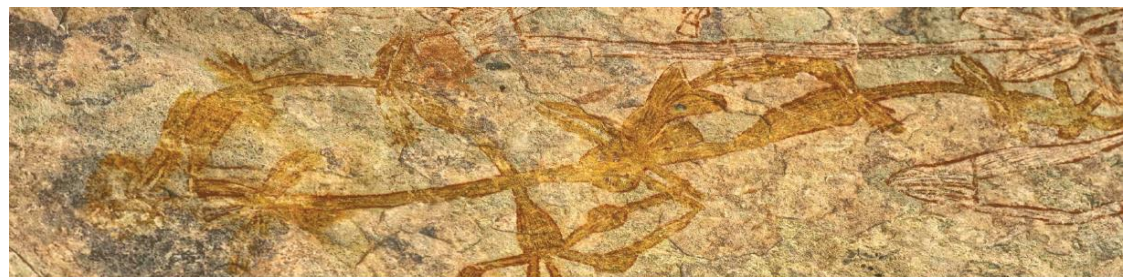


# Findings

## Boarding revenue – social-economic background of parents continued

- Boarding schools with a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders generally have higher costs of delivery

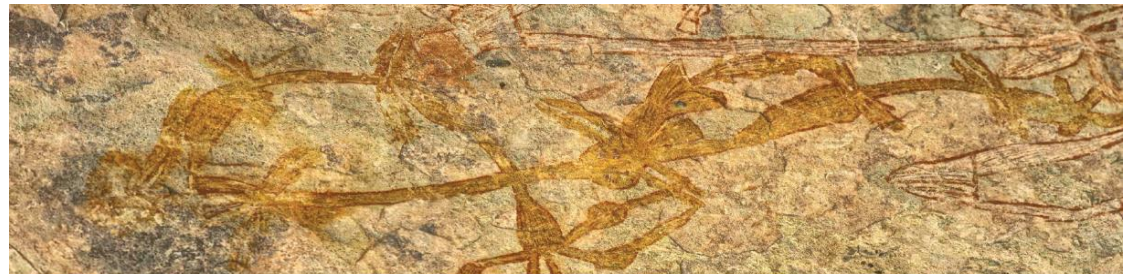
GRAPH 20: AVERAGE ANNUAL BOARDING COST PER BOARDER BY ICSEA SCORE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AND MAINSTREAM BOARDING PROVIDERS, 2015 — 2017



# Findings

## Boarding surplus/cost

GRAPH 10: AVERAGE ANNUAL REVENUE, COST AND LOSS PER BOARDER 2015 — 2017 AT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING PROVIDERS

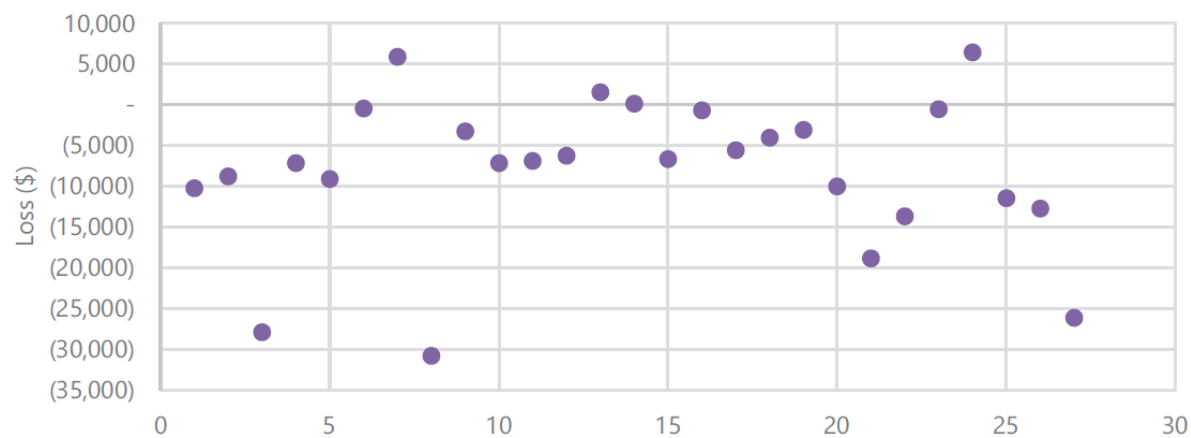


# Findings

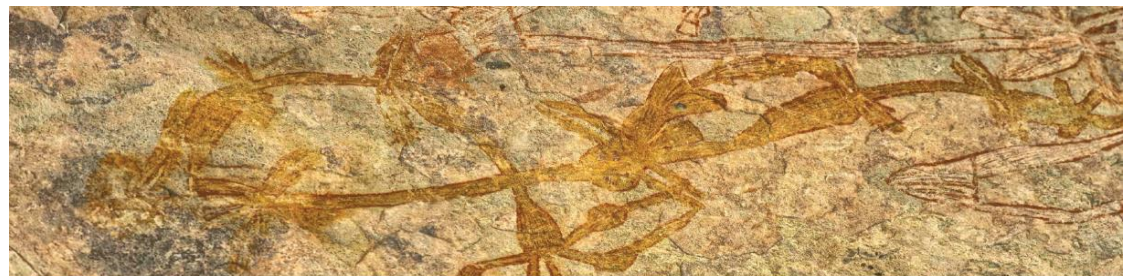
## Boarding surplus/cost

- Not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers are operating at a loss.

GRAPH 13: DISTRIBUTION OF AVERAGE BOARDING SURPLUS / (LOSS) PER BOARDER AT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BOARDING PROVIDERS, 2017



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers



# Recommendations

## Recommendations

### RECOMMENDATION 1: DATA RECORDING

Improve and refine data collection by boarding providers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to assist government and boarding providers to make informed decisions about boarding, funding and policy, including but not limited to expulsion, exclusion and suspension data and the separate reporting of direct and attributable costs of boarding and support services. For consistency the data, including for standalone boarding providers, should be provided to the Department of Education and Training to develop a central repository of data regarding boarders and boarding.

### RECOMMENDATION 2: HEALTH MANAGEMENT

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attending boarding face 'barriers to achievement'. Boarding providers deliver a range of support services to address health and hygiene issues, low levels of literacy and numeracy, undiagnosed and diagnosed disabilities, substance addictions and abuse, trauma backgrounds and homesickness. These services are more intensive when a student first transitions to boarding and at the start of school terms.

Consider funding to boarding providers to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students to undertake individual health and disability assessments<sup>74</sup> at the commencement of boarding and subsequent academic years and to develop and implement individual health management and education plans.

Boarding providers should develop close working relationships with local health services and providers, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health services, in undertaking health assessments and developing individual health management plans.





# Recommendations

## Recommendations

### RECOMMENDATION 3: TRANSITION SUPPORT

Increase support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to prepare for and transition to boarding through direct funding to boarding providers for support services.

Identify Commonwealth and state funding for transition support units in Western Australia, New South Wales and South Australia based on the Transition Support Services and Transition Support Unit models in Queensland and the Northern Territory to augment the support services provided by boarding providers.

### RECOMMENDATION 4: NEEDS-BASED FUNDING

The support services required by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students vary significantly depending on the individual circumstances of students.

Provide base funding for support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students with loadings to address the disadvantage of students and boarding providers, based on the Schooling Resource Standard determinants that were introduced as part of the amendments to the *Australian Education Act 2013* that commenced on 1 January 2018.

### RECOMMENDATION 5: ABSTUDY REMITTANCE ADVICE

Reduce the administrative cost to boarding providers by providing clear, relevant and timely payment and remittance advice for ABSTUDY payments. Review the structure and timing of payments supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students to better address the needs of students and to provide greater revenue certainty for boarding providers to address those needs.





# Recommendations

## Recommendations

### RECOMMENDATION 6: FEE STRUCTURES

Provide assistance to boarding providers to improve understanding of how fee structures interact with ABSTUDY and parental contributions.

### RECOMMENDATION 7: ABSTUDY TRAVEL MANAGEMENT

Identify options for further decentralisation of ABSTUDY travel arrangements to boarding providers and transition support units to reduce costs and increase flexibility. Provide funding incentives to meet the cost of decentralised travel arrangements and administration of safe travel plans.

Improve communication to boarding providers and families where the DHS ABSTUDY travel team declines a request for a travel booking, including requested travel dates or routes.

Investigate mechanisms to permit, within the existing privacy framework, transition support units to communicate directly with the DHS ABSTUDY travel team or QBT in relation to the travel arrangements for a transition unit supported student.

### RECOMMENDATION 8: ABSTUDY TRAVEL POLICIES

Review ABSTUDY travel policy to provide greater flexibility for weekend travel, and for travel assistance where it is required to manage student suspensions and exclusions, provided it does not impact on engagement in education by students and their families. Review the rules and processes for the reimbursement of travel paid by boarding providers to provide greater certainty to boarding providers.<sup>114</sup>



# Recommendations

## Recommendations

### RECOMMENDATION 9: SCHOLARSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

Review scholarship funding arrangements to provide greater opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students to attend Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers and other providers located in regional, remote and very remote areas.

### RECOMMENDATION 10: SECTOR CHANGE

Provide advice on transitioning and restructuring to boarding providers experiencing difficulty with changing trends in boarding provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The professional networks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding providers and the composition of their boards should include a greater diversity of skills and experience relevant to financial management, boarding and cultural practices. Increase awareness of existing programs to assist not for profits in regional, remote and very remote regions to identify, recruit and train appropriately qualified directors and committee members, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



# Recommendations

## Recommendations

- There was no consistent view as to whether boarding standards should be made mandatory. Comments were received that boarding delivery needs to be flexible to meet the high needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders and a prescriptive standard may not be appropriate.

### RECOMMENDATION 11: BOARDING STANDARDS

Undertake consultations to determine whether the *Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residences* (AS 5725:2015) should be mandated for boarding providers receiving funding or ABSTUDY payments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including how the standard should be phased in and whether funding should be made available to meet the cost of compliance with voluntary or mandatory standards.

### RECOMMENDATION 12: COMMUNICATION

State, territory and Commonwealth governments to work with peak bodies to strengthen communication between government and boarding providers and also between boarding providers.



# Questions and comments

