

# Lights Out

Vol. 16 | Issue 3 | October 2023

**Embracing First Nations Culture**  
*in a Boarding House*

**What Students want:**  
*Marketing your School to Decision Makers*



AUSTRALIAN  
BOARDING  
SCHOOLS  
ASSOCIATION

*Making Boarders' Lives Better*



Chartwells



# Contents

- 2 The role of a Boarding School Supervisor
- 4 From a Building to a Home
- 7 What Students Want: Marketing Your School to Decision-Makers
- 10 I'm BUSY! Nicely busy...
- 11 South Australia Staff Social
- 12 Embracing First Nations Culture in a Boarding House
- 14 Pop Family - a Telehealth Speech Pathology Service, Making Boarding Lives Better
- 16 The need for training
- 18 What boarding families are expecting from their school
- 20 Striking a Balance
- 22 ABSA Accredited Boarding Practitioner
- 24 Have you been at the receiving end of an emotional 'distance dump'?
- 26 Wilderness Bahadure Boarding House an outreach project
- 28 Tec - NQ kitchen garden project.
- 29 How to Get Your Boarding House Ready for Accommodation Hire
- 30 Ways to Practically Improve Literacy for Every Student in Classrooms and in Boarding Houses
- 32 Beyond Comfort: What Boarding Schools Teach Us About Adaptability
- 35 Assertiveness Top 20
- 36 Student Support Role - Wellbeing in Boarding
- 38 Transitioning to university / How living at a residential college can smooth the transition from boarding school to university
- 40 Leave Management for Off-Campus Activities with Lifestream
- 41 Welcome New Principals and New Heads of Boarding
- 42 From the Chair - Jaye Beutel

## ON THE COVER

Clare Valley artist Holly Geyer who created a collaborative art work at the Wilderness School Boarders Fashion Parade

## CONTACT US

Australian Boarding Schools Association.  
Postal: PO Box 3241, HENDRA, QLD, 4011  
Office: Unit 6, 26 Navigator Place,  
HENDRA, QLD, 4011  
P + 61 7 3205 4940  
E [absa@boarding.org.au](mailto:absa@boarding.org.au)  
[www.boarding.org.au](http://www.boarding.org.au)

## EDITOR

Richard Stokes, Chief Executive Officer,  
Australian Boarding Schools Association

## GRAPHIC DESIGN

[www.trishbiggsgraphicdesign.com.au](http://www.trishbiggsgraphicdesign.com.au)  
+61 403 471 903

## PRINTING

Professional Print Services  
[sales@professionalprintservices.com.au](mailto:sales@professionalprintservices.com.au)

# The role of a Boarding School Supervisor

In the intricately woven fabric of boarding school life, the role of a boarding school supervisor stands out as a crucial thread. These individuals are more than mere overseers; they act as guardians, mentors, and sometimes even as surrogate parents.

For many boarders, they become the pillars of support during the transitional period of boarding school life. It is thus essential to address an emerging concern in some schools - the need for boarding school supervisors to remain active and engaged during their duty hours, rather than diverting their attention to personal tasks.

## THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A SUPERVISOR

At its core, the responsibility of a boarding school supervisor is the well-being, safety, and development of the boarders under their care. From ensuring that boarders follow their schedules and maintain discipline to being there as a confidante during moments of homesickness or academic pressure, a supervisor's role is multifaceted.

However, when supervisors engage in personal tasks during their duty hours, it can lead to lapses in oversight. Whether it's completing personal assignments, indulging in entertainment, or even something seemingly harmless like scrolling through social media, such distractions can compromise the primary duty at hand.

## POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS OF DIVIDED ATTENTION

- Safety Concerns: Active supervision ensures that potential hazards, whether they be physical, emotional, or psychological, are addressed promptly. A distracted supervisor might overlook signs of distress, bullying, or any other issue that could escalate if not addressed in time.
- Discipline Lapses: Consistency is crucial in maintaining discipline. When supervisors are not fully present, students might take liberties with rules, leading to a gradual erosion of the established order and potentially fostering an environment



ILLUSTRATION BY STORYSET

where rules are seen as flexible.

- **Missed Teachable Moments:** Boarding school life is full of teachable moments - instances where life lessons can be imparted. A supervisor engrossed in personal tasks may miss out on these spontaneous opportunities to guide and mentor.
- **Relationship Building:** Active engagement with boarders fosters trust. When supervisors remain present, both physically and mentally, they can build stronger relationships with students. These relationships often act as the bedrock for effective mentorship.

### CHANGING THE PARADIGM: SHIFTING PRIORITIES

It is understandable that everyone, including supervisors, need personal time. The rigours of overseeing a group of energetic young minds can be taxing. However, the key is to distinguish personal time from duty hours. Here are a few strategies that can assist in ensuring supervisors remain active and engaged:

- **Scheduled Breaks:** Just as there are designated times for meals, study, and recreation for students, supervisors too should have clear, scheduled

breaks. This not only gives them a designated period for personal tasks but also ensures they return refreshed.

- **Professional Development:** Continuous training programs that emphasise the importance of active supervision and its implications can be beneficial. Role-playing scenarios can help supervisors understand the potential risks of inattention. The free ABSA 'Active Duty' Course is a clear reminder of the things to remember in this area.
- **Technological Aids:** The use of technology, such as walkie-talkies or surveillance cameras, can be a boon. They can serve as additional eyes and ears, but they should supplement human oversight, not replace it.
- **Feedback Mechanism:** Encourage students to voice their concerns. If they feel neglected or believe that their supervisors aren't as active as they should be, there should be a safe and anonymous avenue for them to communicate this.
- **Personal Workspace:** If possible, boarding schools can designate a specific area for supervisors to complete personal tasks during their breaks. This physical demarcation can serve as a reminder of their primary responsibilities when they are in the students' space.

### IN CONCLUSION

Boarding schools are much more than institutions of academic learning. They mould characters, build resilience, and foster community values. At the heart of this transformative experience are the supervisors, whose guidance can leave a lasting impact on a student's life.

Being present, in every sense of the word, is not just an obligation; it's a privilege. Every interaction, every nod of approval, every word of advice, and even every disciplinary action plays a part in shaping young lives. Let's honour this responsibility by ensuring that when the lights are on in our boarding schools, our attention is undivided and unwavering. ■



**AUTHOR:**  
Richard Stokes  
Chief Executive  
Officer  
Australian  
Boarding  
Schools  
Association

# From a Building to a Home



“Home is not where you live, but where they understand you”.

Christian Morgenstern

## THE POWER OF A RUG!

It is true that simple décor items like rugs, flowers, pillows, and artwork create the sense of a home. A few years ago we partnered with our Visual Arts Department at school to display artworks from Boarding Alumni across the walls. Not only did this create a sense of aspiration for our current budding artists, but it told a story, connected them to previous year levels and made the home personal. Alongside this, we have created a memory wall and a family photo wall that connects students with their families at home and celebrates the community that is boarding.

Envoplan (2023), in their advice for designing a Boarding House, highlight the importance of using tactile textiles and soft furnishings to create that homely feel. To embrace this, when our students moved in at the start of the Year 12 journey, I gave them a challenge to create a space for themselves in their room that represented them, was welcoming to others and provided a functional and effective study space. We made it into a competition and invited their teachers from the day school to judge their spaces. The students dived into this challenge with room themes, pillows, rugs and more! Now their rooms are spaces of retreat and sanctuary for them after a long day of studying, or a difficult day.

## THE POWER OF A HELLO!

Something a lot of boarders miss is coming home to their parents and telling them how their day was. Although technology can allow for a great amount of

We often use the expression that Boarding is a home away from home, which begs the question, what is the magic that turns those empty rooms and corridors into a home?

In my career I have worked across three boarding schools in two separate countries – as a Gap Assistant, Boarding Supervisor and now as Head of House. In the diversity of those experiences, it was clear to me that, at the heart of what makes a boarding house a home is the relationships we build that ensure the students feel seen, supported, and loved. It is the ability of staff to bridge the gaps between roles of teacher and carer, (discipline and compassion) that ensures our students feel safe, seen and welcomed.

When I asked the students this question, to reflect on what made boarding a ‘home’

they shared the following:

“Feeling heard and like have a voice”,

“Sacred space of the kitchen”

“The sense of routine and the sisterhood”

“Real relationships with staff and others”

“A sense of freedom but with constant support”.

Year 12 Boarding Students, 2023,  
Kincoppal Rose Bay



connectedness back home, this is not the same as coming home and sitting on the couch and having a chat about your day. I learnt early on in my boarding career that presence in the House, being predictable in your movements and being accessible is important in building that sense of safety and support for boarders. The favourite part of my day is every morning and every afternoon. I sit on the same couch in the same position and just simply wish them a good day, trying to remember something happening that day or something to achieve that day, and I am back there again as soon as they open that door of an afternoon. Not only do I get a sense of the type of day they had but they know where I will always be.

### THE POWER OF FOOD!

Many say the kitchen is the heart of the home. Our kitchen is a place where, each night, we gather, laugh, and share a meal. We use meals to celebrate our milestones when there have been peak moments of stress with exams or just when we need to spend time with each other. From pizza to charcuterie boards to baking challenges, that kitchen bench is a place where each person feels accepted.

### THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIPS!

This hangs above the wall in the kitchen of our boarding house. It reminds us that everything we do in our place, our sacred space, our boarding home comes from a place of love. This love is present in the respect demonstrated to each other and in the relationships, staff cultivate with their students.



Sue Roffey (2012) argues that positive relationships are central to staff and student wellbeing. Building the social capital of our boarding houses through trust, mutual responsibility and reciprocity supports students feeling of safety and wellbeing (Roffey, 2012). As a school that utilises the Positive Psychology framework, we are called at all levels to develop purposeful relationships with students and staff. Evidence demonstrates that when a relationship between staff and students is developed appropriately it promotes a sense of security enhancing their ability to develop core skills such as resilience and responding positively to adverse situations (Zheng, 2022). Utilising

a strength-based approach to discipline and relationships empowers the individual and acknowledges the diversity of students and their own experience.

In our boarding house the development of relationships begins in our foyer. As the students enter the home there is a display with all the faces, nicknames, and unique qualities, above it is a quote from the founder linked to our school "Come as you are, for you are truly loved". To continue to support the individual I have developed in my daily routine the conscious effort to see each student and check in on their day and ask them a new question each day. Further, twice a term



I set formal meetings to set goals, learn about their hobbies, interests, and work outside of school. The power of knowing the personal narrative of a student has a profound effect on a boarder's sense of belonging. Relationships are at the core of what we do, and it is through focusing our attention on developing authentic and

trustworthy affiliations with students that we can ensure our boarding houses are truly that safe haven, a 'home' that our students need at the end of a school day or school week.

### THE POWER OF STUDENT VOICE!

Dr Russ Quaglia, from Qualia Institute, states that when students experience authentic opportunities to have a voice, they are three times more likely to experience self worth, five times more likely to be engaged in the school community, five times more likely to feel they have purpose. Cultivating student voice does not mean giving in to all demands, rather it is to purposely provide opportunities and the chance to be in partnership with you in decision making. A unique opportunity for voice we introduced this year that has shifted the engagement in students was ending each House Meeting with a "student voice time" this provides an open forum in a safe space to speak with house staff. The shift in accountability and ownership of behaviours and goals of the house have been significant. ■

#### References

- Pattoni, L. (2012) Strengths-based approaches for working with individuals in Insights 16. Accessed on Strengths-based approaches for working with individuals | Iriss
- Zheng, F. (2022) Fostering Students Well-being: The mediating role of Teacher Interpersonal Behaviours and Student – Teacher relationships In Conceptual Analysis Article Front. Psychol Volume 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.796728>
- Quaglia, R (2019) The Power of Student voice: Listen, Learn, Lead (Secondary) presented at Education State Leadership Conference. Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership.
- Envoplan (2021) 10 Design Considerations When Creating The Perfect School Boarding House. 10 design considerations when creating the perfect school boarding house - Envoplan

#### AUTHOR:

Danielle Fairthorne  
Head of Seldon House  
Kincoppal Rose Bay School

# BOARDING SCHOOL SURVEY

PROVIDING  
BOARDERS/FAMILIES  
WITH A  
VOICE



Is your school meeting the national minimum standard?

**\$660**  
per survey incl GST

To ensure boarding school parents and students are gaining the most from their experience, ABSA offers schools two separate anonymous boarding surveys, one for parents/caregivers and the other for boarders.

If you would like to participate in this survey please contact [absa@boarding.org.au](mailto:absa@boarding.org.au)



#### Australian Boarding Schools Association

P + 61 7 3205 4940 F + 61 7 3205 6567 E [absa@boarding.org.au](mailto:absa@boarding.org.au)  
Office: Unit 6, 26 Navigator Place, HENDRA, QLD, 4011  
Postal: PO Box 3241, HENDRA, QLD, 4011

[www.boarding.org.au](http://www.boarding.org.au)



# What Students Want: *Marketing Your School to Decision-Makers*

Generation Alpha - the ones who'll actually be entering the classrooms and hallways - are having more influence in choosing schools and play a bigger role in determining where they enrol.

When it comes to student involvement in choosing schools, a report from Independent School Management (ISM) said 11% of responding parents indicated that their children had significant to total influence, and 28% said that their children had equal influence, with the level of influence noticeably increasing in the sixth grade onward.

This presents a unique challenge for schools: how to increase student enrolment AND appeal to an audience that's more tech-savvy, more informed, and has ideas about what their education should look like.

The answer lies in understanding what matters most to students when selecting a school and how you market your school's brand to the new decision-makers. You must show off your school's coolness, culture, and values.

How can your school respond and market to younger generations who have more say in where they enrol, and how can your school catch the attention of not just the parents but also the students?

## UNDERSTANDING THE CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

In years past, school selection was once a decision made primarily by parents. However, this trend is shifting rapidly. Various factors, such as easier access to

information, a stronger emphasis on personal preferences, and a cultural shift toward youth empowerment, have led to this development.

Students born between 2013 - 2025 are members of Generation Alpha, and as most members have millennial parents, they're sometimes called "mini millennials."

From early childhood, Generation Alpha will have been the first generation to experience remote classrooms, tablet computers, and streaming services as a part of normal, daily life and education — sometimes, they're even referred to as the "Generation Covid." They'll be raised in a world affected by artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing tools like ChatGPT.

Moreover, student choice is increasingly impacting school enrolment, with empowered students often acting as the deciding vote when families are considering multiple schooling options.

## THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE: WHAT DO CHILDREN VALUE IN A SCHOOL?

In one survey of parents who had considered multiple schools for their child, 79% indicated that the quality of teachers, principals, or other school staff was very important. "Rigorous academics?" "Hands-on learning?" A strong academic

program and faculty might be important factors to parents, but for your school's marketing and enrolment strategy, it's essential to understand what students are looking for when choosing a school.

Students want to belong, to feel part of a supportive and inspiring community that shares their values and passions. Moreover, as digital natives, today's students value technology and innovation. They appreciate schools committed to modernizing education and preparing them for the future.

Another survey conducted by ISM analyzed students' experiences and what they valued when choosing a school. The research identified six key factors that are the most important for students when selecting a school.

- **Culture and community spirit are vital.** Students want an environment where they feel comfortable, accepted, and part of a larger community.
- **Students want a place to push their boundaries.** This includes the ability to explore learning opportunities beyond the classroom, such as through performing arts groups or sports teams.
- **Academics are still important.** Students are keen to deepen their knowledge, challenge themselves, and equip themselves for future educational pursuits.
- **Students value personalised attention** that acknowledges their unique learning needs and the stress they may experience. They appreciate teachers who recognise their individual learning styles and are sensitive to the pressures they face.
- **Students appreciate fairness and a structured environment.** They want



a clear understanding of daily expectations, thriving in an environment that is organised and predictable.

- **The relationship between students and teachers is critical.** Students wish for educators who are genuinely interested in their development and success, offering support throughout their educational journey.

## HOW YOUR SCHOOL CAN RESPOND

Your school needs to adapt its marketing strategies to appeal not just to parents, but also to influential young students. Schools are responsible for fostering an environment where students feel heard, valued, and empowered, and there's no better way to demonstrate this than through an intentional, student-centric approach to your marketing and engagement.

After all, your school's greatest advocates are its satisfied students and future alumni, and in this age of empowerment, their influence can't be ignored.

## Review your school's unique selling propositions

One way to do this is by emphasising your school's unique selling propositions (USPs). This could be the unique boarding program, innovative teaching methods, thrilling student-life activities, or inspiring school culture. Those USPs are important because they tap into students' interests and reflect your school's culture.

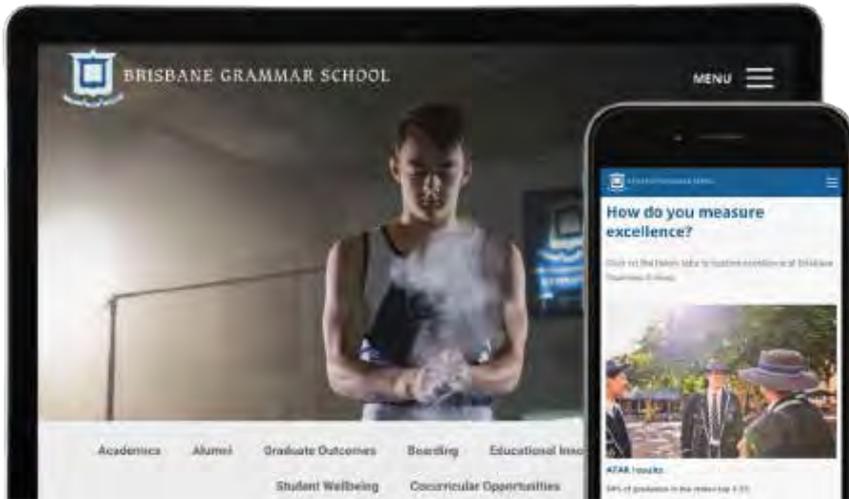
When it comes to the boarding school experience, there is no shortage of questions about what living and studying away from home is like. Frensham School has those answers with its boarding page that covers many aspects of living on campus. Resources like a well-produced video and an in-depth brochure take even deeper dives into the school's culture.

## Be where your audience is

Your schools need to be where your audience is – online. Having a dynamic and engaging school website that appeals to both parents and students is a must.

A section just for students can speak directly to them, offering a specially curated experience that can help them feel welcomed and heard.

Brisbane Grammar School's Pursuit of Excellence page tells the story of a campus community committed to the pursuit of betterment.



Testimonials, alumni profiles, programme highlights, and more detail all the ways prospective students can thrive.

Furthermore, leveraging social media platforms and having an authentic and relatable social media presence provides an effective way to reach younger generations. YouTube and TikTok top the list of social media platforms Millennials report their kids engage with, at 45 and 34 per cent, respectively. Platforms like those offer the chance to share your success stories, showcase school life, and reveal the people behind your brand.

Kinross Wolaroi School regularly focuses its social media content on the student experience, including perks like traveling abroad and giving an authentic look into student life, culture, and more.

### A specialized campus tour

Consider what facilities, experiences, and people you're introducing students to on your campus tour. Who is the main audience when a family visits your school? Could you offer a student-specific tour and a parent-specific tour?

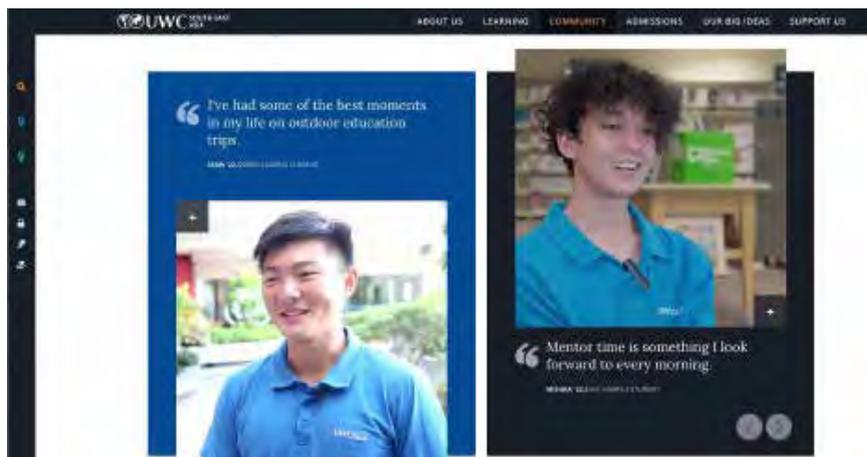
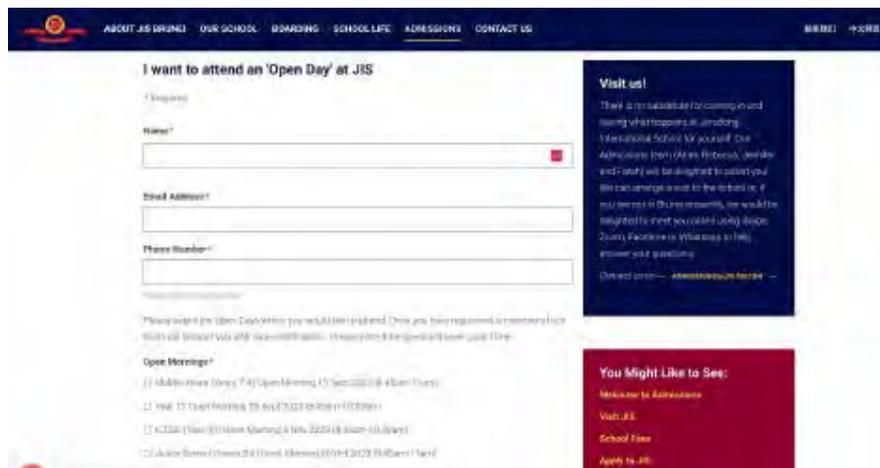
A tour for students could spend extra time in student common rooms, the dining halls, sport venues, or study areas, while a parent tour could be routed toward the school counselling offices and academic study areas.

These different experiences not only provide a firsthand look at your facilities and an opportunity to meet the teachers, but they also create an ideal setting to exchange thoughts, compare what different schools have to offer, and discuss preferences.

UWC South East Asia offers multiple tours, events, and meetings for families and students to explore its campus or meet with its Admissions team. When paired with its virtual campus tour and interactive map, it's an accessible way to present your campus to digital natives well before students experience it in person.

### Include Student Interests Early in the Inquiry Process

But perhaps most importantly, there's a need to engage students in a dialogue. This can be achieved by hosting student-focused open days or virtual tours,



creating platforms for prospective students to connect with current students, and even involving them in the development and implementation of school policies and initiatives.

Understanding a student's hobbies, passions and goals at the start of your inquiry and enrolment process can be crucial in centring the student within the enrolment decision. This knowledge can help your enrolments office match the student with the content and experience that can best foster their interests and aspirations.

An opportunity like JIS Brunei's Open Day is ideal for students to attend classes and connect with staff and current students. A short embedded form to collect registrations and prospective students are that much closer to a true campus experience.

### Remind families of their priorities

While considering different schools, young students can be influenced by various factors, ranging from the size of your sports complex to what's served for lunch. It's important to remind young teens to base their opinions on relevant factors, rather than friends' views. The best choice will always be the one that meets the needs

and abilities of the family and the student rather than a fleeting choice influenced by "Taco Tuesday."

UWC South East Asia's student page features video testimonials from its students highlighting some of their favorite meaningful aspects of their student experience, like outdoor education and the school's mentorship program.

### KEY TAKEAWAY

Students are becoming key decision-makers in school selection, driven by the desire for a supportive and engaging school culture, a technologically advanced educational environment, and the chance to have their voices heard. It's time to offer an enrolment experience that not only appeals to parents but wins over students. ■

**AUTHOR:**  
Connor Gleason  
Finalsite

# I'm BUSY!

*Nicely busy...*



“How are things?”  
“Busy!”

...that's what we always say - as if it's a good thing, (containing a little bit of boasting about how successful our business is, with a hint to the martyr in there too).

## BUT IS IT GOOD TO BE BUSY??

Imagine you could cope with 100 things a week, and you've got 150 coming in. That's over-stressed, and probably letting people down, = definitely bad.

What if you have 110 coming in. That's a little bit too busy, but just about coping. Somewhere between OK and bad, we might say?

If you only have 90 coming in that's a waste of your potential to deliver, and only 50 coming in would be boredom.

But if you have 100 coming in, that's spot on! Perfectly balanced. Nicely busy.

.....Or is it...?

I would like to suggest that being nicely busy is NOT good enough, it's NOT OK!

- Yes it's true that:
- you have no stress
- you're not letting anyone down
- you're probably enjoying the work most of the time
- you might be saying no to some things
- but that's not good enough!

Because:

You don't have any headroom. You don't have spare time, space to be creative, to relax, to start new things, to even consider

new things, to learn, to develop, and to have fun.

I would suggest that you should be at 70 or 80 coming in when you can handle 100, so you have that space for new ideas and new projects to plop into. Room for serendipity, and space to take new things on if they come along and are interesting enough.

So if you're at 100, or (heaven forbid) 110 or 150, you need the time management skills of saying no, negotiating, delegating, and being less fussy, to get your incoming work down to 80. Even if you're not TOO busy, even if you're not overwhelmed, and even if you're not failing, you could be better, and maybe it's time to say no to a bit more! ■

### AUTHOR

Chris Croft  
Chris Croft Training  
[chris@chriscrofttraining.co.uk](mailto:chris@chriscrofttraining.co.uk)

# South Australia *Staff Social*

Boarding staff from South Australia came together on the final Friday of their holidays for a staff social aimed at broadening their connections within the local boarding community.

The event saw the participation of 20 staff members from various schools across Adelaide and regional South Australia, representing institutions like PAC, Sacred Heart, Wilderness, Immanuel, and St. Joseph's Port Lincoln.

The event was a fantastic opportunity for interschool discussions and to spend some time to get to know other boarding staff over a drink and some pizza. Thank you to Renee Coventry, Phil Noble and ABSA for coordinating this event. ■



LEFT TO RIGHT: PHIL NOBLE - PAC, BRONWEN PLUCK - WILDERNESS, SOPHIE ROBERTSON - IMMANUEL, CALLUM AGNEW - IMMANUEL, AMANDA MACLACHLAN - WILDERNESS, MICHELLE DINNING - WILDERNESS.



## Your Trusted Boarding School Mattress Supplier

Avante Australia recognises that quality sleep for your students is essential.

With this in mind, the Avante **Savant Range** of mattresses were designed in partnership with the Australian Boarding Schools Association and are used in boarding schools throughout Australia.



Savant Care & Savant Dreamz

Designed in partnership with ABSA



All enquiries and orders contact Michael Reddy 0498 002 233  
Brisbane and Melbourne Warehouses | P 07 3284 3133  
[commercial@avante.com.au](mailto:commercial@avante.com.au) | [www.avante.com.au](http://www.avante.com.au)



# Embracing First Nations Culture *in a Boarding House*

Boarding Houses are naturally culturally diverse places – which is something that makes living in a boarding community so special. Every day, boarders are provided with the opportunity to listen and learn about a culture different from their own and learn skills to live communally with people from all over the world.

One of my favourite things about St. Margaret's is the concerted and consistent effort our whole community makes in embracing First Nations culture. First Nations boarders account for approximately 25% of our boarding population. These students add cultural depth to our Boarding House and are integral resources as we work towards reconciliation and reaching a greater level of understanding of our First Nations peoples, practices, and experiences.

Outlined below are the key events that allow us to embrace and embed First Nations culture into our school community (and inevitably, our Boarding House) and are things that you might be able to implement in your school too.

Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that I am cognisant that we have a range of resources that have allowed the following initiatives to come to fruition and there is a whole team of school community members (far beyond just the Boarding House) who support these initiatives. In addition, most of our First Nations students are Yalari Scholars and we work closely with our Yalari School Support Officer, Sandy Boyd, who is worth her weight in gold in supporting us in building our cultural understanding. I am also thankful for the professional development opportunities and the people I have met who are far more knowledgeable than me in this space. Most importantly

though, our greatest asset is the motivated, committed, and inspiring group of First Nations boarders that spearhead our initiatives.

## **Reconciliation Week:**

Reconciliation week is marked with an assembly, where First Nations students share the story behind National Sorry Day and Mabo Day, the whole school community then engages in a collective art installation to signify the event. In recent years, this has seen students planting paper hands in the lawn outside main reception or placing their handprints on a banner.

## **Art Masterclass:**

During Reconciliation Week, National Boarding week and at our Boarding See my Difference, See my Worth Festival our First Nations students hold art masterclasses, where peers are invited to learn traditional dot painting.

## **NAIDOC Week:**

As NAIDOC week falls during our mid-year holidays, we celebrate NAIDOC week in week 2 of Term 3. In 2023 family members of First Nations boarders came to the school (a momentous event when many live in the Torres Strait, some 2,000kms + from St. Margaret's) and watched on with pride as their daughters lead assemblies, performed cultural dances plus organised

an outdoor movie night where the Boarding House viewed Rabbit Proof Fence.

## **Ghidhal and Mulu Maguydan:**

In 2019 St Margaret's launched an original publication titled Ghidhal: A collection of stories from our First Nations' people, authored by the school's First Nations students. Pronounced 'Gi-darl', the publication's namesake means 'stories' in Kala Lagaw Ya, a language from the Torres Strait (which is where many of our First Nations boarders call home). The second instalment of First Nations stories – Mulu Maguydan, was released in 2022. The project invited First Nations students to seek out a story from their Elders and share this in the form of an interview, profile, artwork, or feature article. The name Mulu Maguydan (pronounced moo-loo moog-eye-dun) means story stone in the Jandai language of Quandamooka Country. Both publications were coordinated by secondary teacher, Margot Shave. As a former journalist, Margot truly knows the impact of storytelling and saw the project as a way for students to lean into the art of storytelling and enhance their sense of belonging at St. Margaret's, while also enriching the lives of everyone in the community.

## **RAP Committee:**

Our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) committee includes a diverse range of stakeholders. From primary and secondary teachers, admin staff and members of the senior leadership team. In addition to this, half of our RAP committee are First Nations students ranging from Grade 7-12, with a senior student sitting in the role of co-chair. Our RAP committee meets once a term, with additional working group meetings as required and is responsible for implementing the RAP and organising the cultural events mentioned above.



**ABSTUDY Special Purpose Travel:**

The use of ABSTUDY for special-purpose travel for eligible students has further enhanced our cultural events and is a resource that I'd encourage all Boarding Houses to investigate. This is a relatively new resource we are harnessing, and I am thankful to Rochelle Jones, General Manager at NRL Cowboys House and Richard Stewart from the Transition Support Unit for their expertise and guidance in accessing this resource.

The activities discussed have been embedded into the cultural fabric of our school and Boarding House over the past few years and as a community, we have been chipping away to provide students with opportunities to learn about the world's longest living culture. We are proud of the cultural experience our First Nations students provide for the school community and look forward to extending this into the future. If you'd like more details about our initiatives, please do not hesitate to reach out. ■



**AUTHOR:**

Hannah Calcino  
Wellbeing Coordinator (Boarding) –  
St. Margaret's Anglican Girls' School

# Pop Family - *a Telehealth Speech Pathology Service, Making Boarders' Lives Better*

Independent boarding schools in Australia give children and their families choice, and education access irrespective of geographical isolation<sup>1</sup>. As an alternative to homeschooling and distance education models, independent boarding schools make high-quality education within reach for 71% of students who are from regional and remote Australian communities and 16% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students<sup>2</sup>. They also encourage independence and social opportunities for these students<sup>1</sup>.

For students who learn English as a second language (ESL), have a disability, and/or have learning and communication difficulties, providing these opportunities is about much more than just physical education access. Independent boarding schools recognise this and know that the way forward is about building partnerships and engaging a skilled workforce to support all boarders to achieve their full potential<sup>3</sup>.

Providing these specialised supports, however, comes with critical financial and workforce challenges. Independent boarding schools are currently not eligible for additional government payments or allowances that would enable the specialised staff training required to support the unique learning needs of boarders with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders<sup>3</sup>. This is where accessible speech pathology intervention and partnerships with independent boarding schools can help improve learning and social outcomes for boarding students, not just throughout their schooling careers but well into their futures.

Pop Online Speech Pathology's CEO and Founder, Heidi Trusler was raised in Western Queensland between Bollon and Cunnamulla. This meant that her education was accessed via radio, through distance education, followed by seven years of boarding school at Toowoomba Prep and Fairholme College. Her brother Jack, who required specialised learning and communication support beyond what these education models could provide, had to travel hours to access speech pathology intervention and was never able to access a consistent service whilst living remotely. Heidi's life experiences exposed her to the access barriers faced by boarding students in rural and remote communities and led her to a career as a speech pathologist. She ultimately founded Pop (previously known as "Spot") in 2016 to tackle the access barriers head-on. Pop's online telehealth model has since made high-quality, evidence-based speech pathology assessment and intervention accessible to all Australians, including students attending independent boarding schools.

Through Pop's School Partnership Program, Pop speech pathologists have worked in partnership with several boarding schools and rural and remote schools, to support improved educational success for their students in and beyond the classroom. The goals targeted in speech pathology sessions increase student confidence in language and literacy skills so that students can follow classroom instruction, more independently complete spelling, reading, and writing tasks, and meaningfully participate in social opportunities with their peers. The outcomes of these partnerships highlight the critical role that speech pathologists and Telehealth can play in making boarders' lives better through consistent and targeted service delivery.

To put a spotlight on phonological awareness and literacy outcomes, Pop's School Partnership Program outcome data for 2021 demonstrated a significant improvement in nine students' blending, segmenting, phoneme manipulations, letter-sound knowledge, and word reading skills overall. Following a year of consistent weekly speech pathology services, students' average blending and segmenting skill scores on phonological awareness assessment went from 44% accuracy to 74% and 75% accuracy respectively. Average phoneme manipulation accuracy went from 2% to 48% accuracy, while letter-sound knowledge skills went from 41% to 61% accuracy. When it came to word reading accuracy, the same group of students achieved up to 90% accuracy post-intervention in comparison to 75% accuracy at baseline.



Beyond phonological awareness and literacy skills, speech pathologists play a key role in the prevention, diagnosis, and management of speech, language, fluency, and social skills difficulties in students of all ages. One of Heidi's very first Pop clients began seeing her for therapy in Grade One, as he was having difficulty learning to read. Heidi worked with him and his dedicated distance education family throughout primary school to build core literacy and language skills, and also to confirm a diagnosis of Dyslexia before high school commenced. Now in Grade Seven and attending an independent boarding school in Qld, Pop has established their school partnership program, and Heidi's targeted Speech pathology intervention remains a core element of this young man's learning journey during his schooling weeks. Heidi speaks about her client passionately when she says, "...adjusting to boarding school is tough, and can be even harder if base level school activities like reading and spelling are hard. Having the privilege of preparing for, and following this young man throughout his transition to boarding school, and seeing the confidence he has to tackle new subjects and classroom settings, despite having Dyslexia, speaks volumes for Pop's consistent telehealth speech pathology services. Speech Pathology intervention builds confidence. We need him to feel confident to speak up amongst his peers,

to ask for help from the teacher when mum is not there, and to finally finish his time at boarding school having been able to reach out and grab every opportunity that has been made available to him." These students are a small snapshot of many who have benefitted from Pop's speech pathology intervention, however their stories are a testament to its lifelong impact.

Telehealth speech pathology delivered from school has a unique opportunity to improve individual and collective lives through building core skills and confidence in how to learn. Pop achieves this through; evidence-based assessment, targeted interventions, and communication partner training all delivered within students' familiar education environments. Our service can Pop up in any school, at any time, anywhere, and provide your child with targeted and individualised support. All you need is a laptop and the internet.

Accessing speech therapy at boarding school can be done during homework time, during classes agreed to by the school, or before or after school. Boarding schools partnering with telehealth speech pathology services such as Pop, may just hold the key to minimising the educational gaps for Australia's geographically isolated children.

For more information on Pop and speech pathology services, you can visit our website at <https://popfamily.au> ■

1. Independent Schools Australia. [online] Available at: <https://isa.edu.au/our-sector/diversity/boarding-schools/>.
2. Independent Schools Australia. [online] Available at: [https://isa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ISA220712\\_BOARDING-2020-data.pdf](https://isa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ISA220712_BOARDING-2020-data.pdf).
3. Independent Boarding a National Perspective Report. (2022). [online] Independent Schools Australia. Available at: <https://isa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/ISA-Report-Independent-Boarding-a-national-perspective.pdf>.

pop.



**AUTHOR:**  
Constantina  
Evans  
B Hlth Sci MSLP  
CPSP  
Speech  
Pathologist and  
Clinical Lead  
Pop Online  
Speech  
Pathology



# The need for training

“If we hadn’t been able to show we had trained our boarding staff, we would have lost the case.”

This was said to me by a Head of a leading Sydney school. A boarding staff member had been dismissed for inappropriate behaviour. The staff member had appealed the decision and wanted financial compensation, but had lost the case.

“I’ve never been more grateful I required my boarding staff to do the *Duty of Care* course,” the Head went on to say, before paying for my seafood risotto.

The errant staff member had claimed they were the victim of inadequate training and poor direction, but the school had told the court that all boarding staff had been properly trained – as they had all completed the *Duty of Care* course. As a result, the school had been exonerated.

I’ve had these sorts of conversations with school leaders more than once. Many have thanked me for the training given by ABSA in general, and by *Duty of Care* in particular. I’d like to think that much of this appreciation was for the improvement it encouraged in professional practice, but more often than not, the seafood risotto was given because *Duty of Care* had saved the boarding school from serious legal challenge.

I would like to have more of these sorts of conversations – and it is not just because I like seafood risotto! It is because of clear evidence that far too many boarding

institutions still have staff that are not properly trained.

Having untrained staff might be excusable if there was no means to train them. However, no court in the land is likely to accept this defence given the ease by which Australia’s main training course for boarding staff can be accessed and completed.

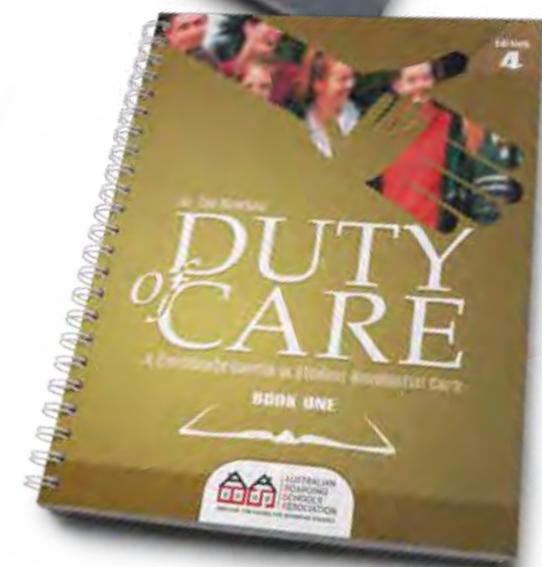
For this reason, I find myself at a loss when I hear of some boarding schools having staff that are not trained, or staff that are not refreshed regularly in their training.

It would not be a comfortable experience for a school leader to answer an inquiry from Justice Powderwig as to why the level of training given to their boarding staff was not up to the Australian Standard.

In short, schools that do not get ALL their boarding staff to undertake a Certificate Course in Student Residential Care, put themselves at risk.

Boarding institutions operate 24/7. They are one of the most likely areas of a school to generate legal challenges. It is therefore difficult to defend a school leader that has not made the training of boarding staff a priority.

Sometimes, training may have been made a priority in the past, but that was many years ago, and new staff have since joined the boarding community, that have not



been trained. These sorts of lapses leave a school exposed legally.

Therefore, it is worth doing an audit, and checking whether ALL staff within a boarding institution have been trained, and that this training is not out of date.

The issue of training having the potential to get out of date is an important one to note. The Australian Standard is clear. The Standard expects the *Duty of Care* course, or an equivalent, be recompleted every five years. In other words, it is not sufficient to be trained, one must be continually trained.

Fortunately, with the availability of ABSA training workshops and webinars, the capacity for schools to access suitable training and re-training is significant.

Of some encouragement, is that this training and re-training, is affordable. In comparison with other certificate courses on offer, the cost of purchasing *Duty of Care* is very reasonable, and remember, its purchase price is tax deductible. If some still think the cost expensive, then recognise that the cost is insignificant compared with legal costs!

Quite apart from the legal imperative to have trained boarding staff, there is a moral and professional imperative. Our boarders deserve the best residential care possible, and staff need to be trained to ensure they understand what this means.

Residential Care has two elements:

## 1. RESIDENTIAL - a place to stay and live in.

Boarding residences aren't bus stops. They are not short stay waiting places. They need to be homely, a place of

comfort, rest and belonging, a place of security and safety with its own boundary within which there is a community welded together by mutual support.

## 2. CARE - providing what is necessary to nurture and support.

The care required in boarding residences is the sort of care expected of a devoted parent. Boarding staff are, in loco parentis – which is Latin for “in the place of parents.” This care needs to result in boarders being looked after:

- Intellectually
- Physically
- Emotionally
- Socially
- Morally
- Spiritually

Our boarding staff need to know their obligations in relation to providing security and safety, and how the legal world defines the standard of care necessary to be in loco parentis.

It is also worth remembering that the reputation of a boarding institution rests heavily on its staff. If they perform their duties well, it is likely their students will flourish and so will their school. This is likely to please the Director of Enrolments as well as the Board Chair!

To extract maximum performance from staff requires many things, but not least a sense by staff that they are valued and that the school wants to partner with them in their career progression. This signal can be given by a school providing the training and enabling the credentialling, of their staff.

At the time of writing, the cost of the two books that make up *Duty of Care* – A

Certificate Course in Student Residential Care, is \$100 a book, or \$200 for the complete course of two books.

These books can be ordered from ABSA:  
T: + 61 7 3205 4940  
E: absa@boarding.org.au

The *Duty of Care* course can be completed by staff in their own time, then sent to ABSA for marking. There is a fee for marking and credentialling.

It is also possible for schools to book an ABSA *Duty of Care* workshop for their boarding staff. For details of costs, contact ABSA.

The proper training of our boarding staff is enriched by many other ABSA initiatives, not least by accessing its marvelous webinar program, and its State and National conferences.

With these sorts of opportunities – there is little excuse for any school not having properly trained and properly credentialled staff. To fail in this regard, is not just legally dangerous, it signals indifference to professionalism and to the career progression of staff. ■



**AUTHOR:**  
Dr Tim Hawkes  
OAM  
Co-founder of  
ABSA, Educator,  
executive coach  
and author

# What boarding families *are expecting from their school*

Boarding schools have always operated with a distinct focus compared to day schools, centred around considerations of the extra hours only they need to address. Recent data collected from 1,535 families by Edstart highlights different priorities between boarding school families and their day school counterparts.

The data was collected as part of the Edstart School Insights Report, designed to help schools make informed decisions across finance, operations, and strategy. The 2023

report has insights into what parents are thinking when it comes to tuition fees and school choice, as well as shining a light on enrolment and retention strategies used by schools.

## WHAT PARENTS ARE LOOKING FOR WHEN CHOOSING A SCHOOL

For families with children attending boarding schools, the top factor when selecting a school is the range and quality of facilities with 63% of respondents highlighting this aspect (see Figure 1). This makes sense given that boarding school students spend a significant portion of their lives on campus, requiring facilities for accommodation, recreation, and study. In contrast, when looking at all schools nationwide, range and quality of facilities receives a lower emphasis at 49%.

### What were the top reasons for choosing the boarding school for your kids?

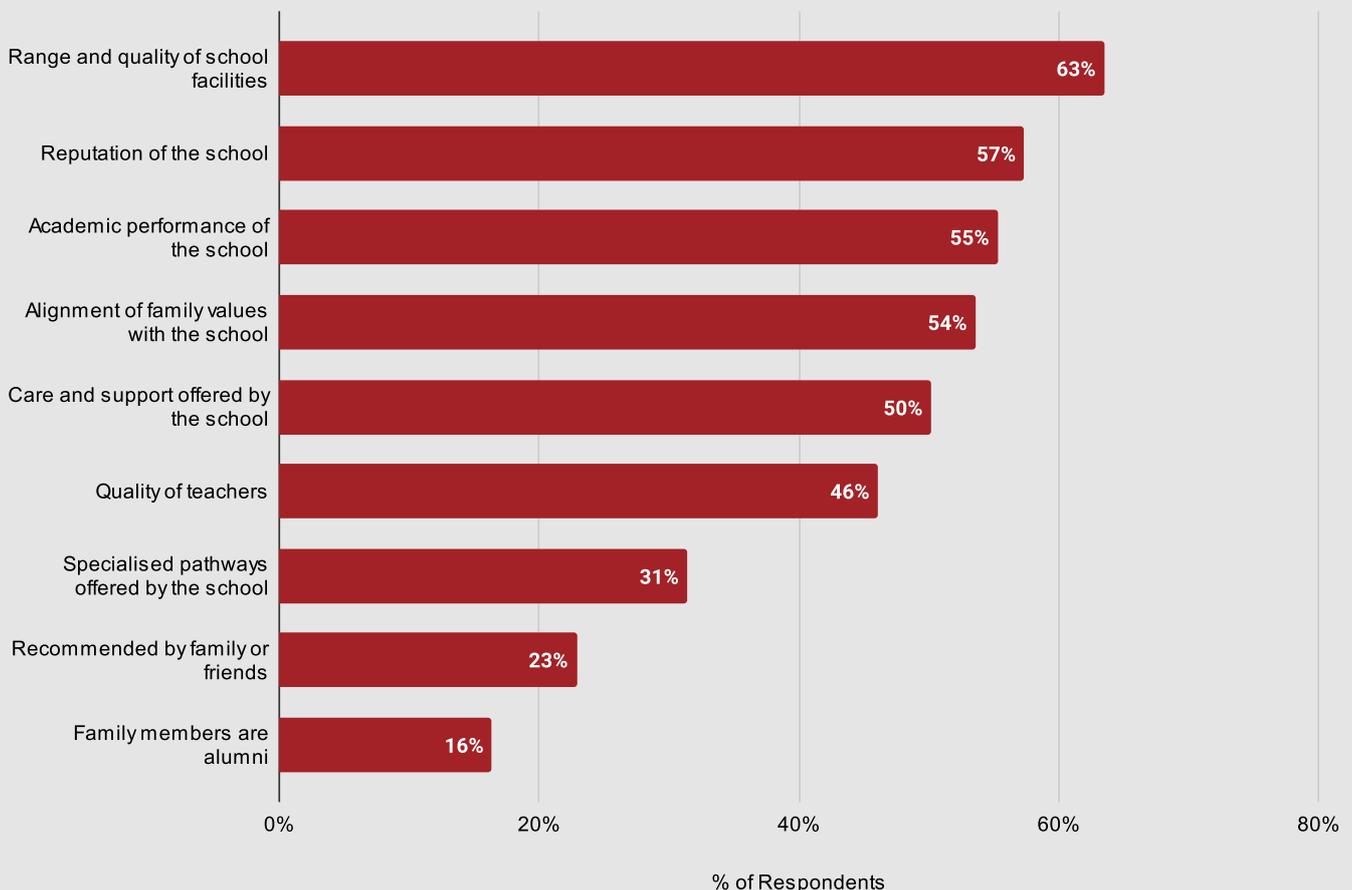


FIGURE 1: REASONS FOR CHOOSING A BOARDING SCHOOL

**Is there anything you like to see your children's school offer or provide more support on?**

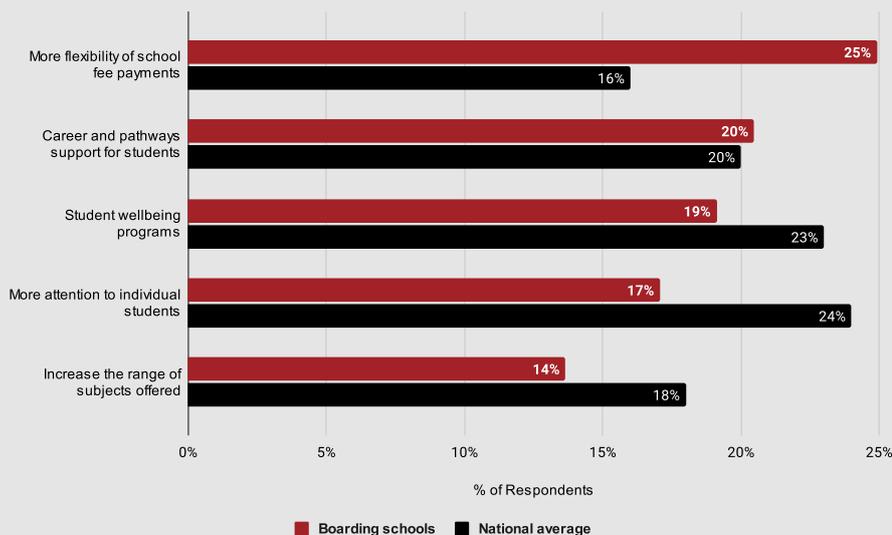


FIGURE 2: ADDITIONAL SUPPORT BOARDING FAMILIES WOULD LIKE FROM SCHOOLS

Following the range and quality of facilities, the next most important factors for boarding school families were the reputation of the school at 57% and academic performance of the school at 55%.

**AREAS WHERE PARENTS ARE LOOKING FOR MORE SUPPORT**

Among boarding school families, the biggest aspect they would like schools to provide more support for is greater flexibility in school fee payments (25%). In comparison, this concern ranks fifth among all schools nationwide, with only 16% considering it a top priority (see Figure 2).

As boarding schools have a bigger fee burden with both tuition and boarding fees, it makes sense that families want more support and flexibility with their fee payments. This is particularly the case under the current economic landscape, with high interest rates and cost of living putting families across the board under financial pressures they have not had to deal with for some time.

Career and pathways support (20%) and wellbeing support (19%) emerge as the next two most important factors for boarding school families. This highlights the trend whereby parents are increasingly concerned about factors beyond traditional academic success, with a growing focus on their children's overall wellbeing during their time at school.

**2024 EXPECTATIONS FOR SCHOOL FEE INCREASES**

Boarding school families expectations for fee increases were largely in line with the national average. 67% of boarding school families are expecting less than a 3% rise in school fees for 2024 (see Figure 3), while 66% of parents nationwide expect the same.

Of note, when we asked schools their expectations for fee increases, their responses were almost in direct contrast, with 74% of schools nationwide anticipating a raise of over 3%.

**With high levels of inflation continuing to impact costs including the cost of running a school, what do you expect to be the change in school fees in 2024?**

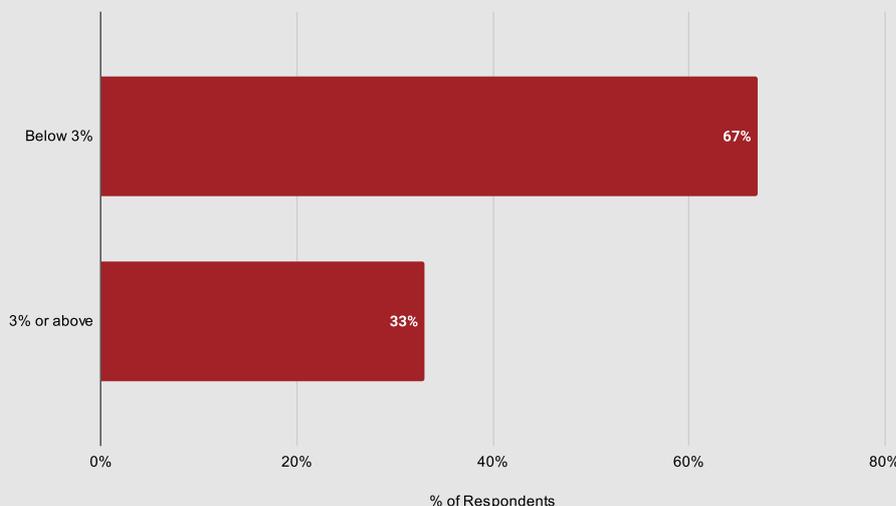


FIGURE 3: EXPECTATIONS ON 2024 SCHOOL FEES BY BOARDING FAMILIES

**HELPING FAMILIES WITH FEE FLEXIBILITY**

In light of the current economic climate, the likelihood of fee increases, and parents' requests for greater payment flexibility, it is imperative that families have access to flexible payment options that enable them to align fees with their budget constraints.

Being aware and considerate of family circumstances, and having clear and open communication will help schools navigate the current situation. Schools that use Edstart have experienced more open communication with families around finances as well as being able to offer unmatched flexibility for school fee payments.

For more insights and to see how Edstart can help your school, contact our team at [schools@edstart.com.au](mailto:schools@edstart.com.au)



**AUTHOR:**  
Jack Stevens  
CEO  
Edstart

# Striking a Balance

Educational establishments around the world are grappling with the challenge of curbing mobile phone use, but they are up against powerful corporations whose primary role is to create addictive algorithms that fuel the endless scrolling of social media platforms, something commonly referred to as doomscrolling. These algorithms are designed to suck users in and keep them engaged, making it increasingly difficult to compete for students' attention.

Despite best efforts to implement phone-free policies and promote focused learning environments, educators are facing an uphill battle as they navigate the pervasive influence of technology giants and their strategies that prioritise profit over the wellbeing of students.

Boarding schools in particular face unique challenges in managing mobile phone usage among their students. With students residing on campus, the boundaries between school and personal life blur, making it more challenging to enforce strict phone policies. While mobile phones can provide a sense of comfort and connection to home for boarders, they can also become a constant distraction from academic and social activities. Boarding schools must strike a delicate balance between allowing limited phone access for essential communication and ensuring that students are fully engaged in their educational and communal experiences. In the face of growing concerns about excessive smartphone use, many boarding schools implement 'tech-free time' or 'device lock-up' in a push-back against smartphone dependency, attempting to highlight the benefits of disconnecting and

finding a balance in the digital world.

Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for some boarders, and even their parents, to resist the protective measures put in place by boarding schools, asserting that smartphones are necessary tools to alleviate anxiety. Boarding supervisors often find themselves facing a challenge, navigating the presence of second or even third secret or dummy phones that boarders acquire, often with the support or direct involvement of their parents! This can create a complex dynamic where students and parents are finding ways to bypass boarding house policies, thereby undermining efforts to create a balanced and supportive environment with equity for all.

However, it is important to recognise that they may not fully understand how these very devices have become conduits for stress and anxiety themselves. Mobile phones, with their constant stream of notifications, social media updates, and the pressure to stay connected, can activate our body's "stress activation system" or the "fight or flight" response. This biological process floods our bodies with stress hormones like cortisol, preparing us to respond to perceived threats and the overload of information keeps this stress response system active throughout the day. The unfiltered and unrelenting nature of information received through devices often fails to prioritise urgency or importance, further adding to stress levels.

Social media platforms introduce a unique level of anxiety as the constant exposure to carefully curated highlight reels



of others' lives can fuel feelings of inadequacy and comparison. And for those working in girls' boarding, research also indicates that girls are more susceptible to the negative effects of social media. They often face societal pressures to conform to unrealistic beauty standards, lifestyles, and achievements showcased on these platforms. The constant scrolling through meticulously filtered images and posts can trigger a downward spiral of self-comparison, leading to feelings of dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and even depression.

Smartphone and tech developers deliberately design features such as "likes" and notifications to activate our brain's reward system, triggering a sense of pleasure and a desire for more (causing that endless

cycle of doomscrolling). Our brains are constantly toggling between our pleasure centre and stress reaction centre, leaving little room for relaxation. This persistent connection to phones makes it challenging to unwind and disconnect. The resulting disruption in sleep patterns, elevated levels of depression and anxiety, and reduced ability to function well in daily life further emphasise the need to address phone-induced stress and anxiety.

As boarding schools, we need to empower our boarders to take control of their relationship with technology. Educating both boarders and their parents about the impact of excessive mobile phone use on mental health and wellbeing can help bridge the gap in understanding. By fostering open and honest discussions, schools can work towards building a collective awareness of the potential dangers of unrestricted smartphone use.

However, achieving this balance is challenging, especially in a society that perpetuates constant connectivity. It is crucial for

boarding schools to continually reassess and adapt their policies to address the evolving challenges surrounding smartphone use. Striking a balance between providing support and understanding for students' anxiety concerns while maintaining a safe and focused environment is a delicate task. This may involve implementing strategies such as designated phone-free zones, promoting face-to-face interactions, and offering alternative stress-relief activities to help students manage their anxiety without relying solely on smartphones. ■



**AUTHOR:**  
Dr Gemma Dale  
Somerville House



# Accredited Boarding Practitioner

The Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) has always been committed to outstanding boarding practice in member schools to achieve the best possible outcomes for every boarder. As such the ABSA Accredited Boarding Practitioner scheme is an individual recognition of those boarding staff who are making a personal, professional commitment to best boarding practice.

To be considered, all applicants are expected to demonstrate a commitment to meeting the following core commitments:

- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
- Achieving excellent boarding practice and outstanding outcomes for boarders.
- Reflecting on practice and undertaking regular training.
- Working collaboratively with other boarding colleagues.

## WHAT ARE THE LEVELS?

**LEVEL 1** – A boarding member of staff who has completed at least one year working in boarding, undertaken a minimum of the ‘Duty of Care Certificate Course in Student Residential Care’ training or ‘Boarding Fundamentals’ training (or equivalent) within the last five years and met the core commitments.

**LEVEL 2** – Someone who has worked in boarding for at least three years, met the core commitments and those in level 1, and completed appropriate specific boarding training in each year.

**LEVEL 3** – A person managing boarding, or an aspect of boarding, within their own school, has served for a minimum of five years in boarding, consistently met the key commitments and has completed a higher level of specific boarding training during their time of service. They are also actively involved in their respective Regional Division of ABSA.

**LEVEL 4** – Someone who has been a boarding practitioner for ten years or more, has consistently met the key commitments, completed further study in boarding and has made a significant contribution to boarding beyond their own setting, for example as a presenter at an ABSA Conference (or equivalent) or a regular contributor to Lights Out or similar.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

In addition to the appropriate professional designation as an Accredited Boarding Practitioner the scheme has the following benefits:

- Certificate and pin/lapel badge.
- A dedicated newsletter each Semester (coming soon).
- A dedicated online peer support forum.
- Joining the mailing list to receive all ABSA publications.
- Offers from selected partners. ■

# ABP Recipients



## LEVEL 1

### Samual Armitage

Paige Ashby - Ipswich Girls' Grammar School  
Hannah Jacobson - Christ Church Grammar School  
Tom Jerram - St Joseph's Nudgee College  
Matthew Lalor - St Joseph's Nudgee College  
Kayleigh Lovell - Ipswich Girls' Grammar School  
Zachary Mansfield - St Joseph's Nudgee College  
Damien McLuskie - St Brendan's College  
Matthew Oakes - Scots All Saints College  
Stacey Walker - The Cathedral School Townsville



## LEVEL 2

### Tal Ashby - Perth College

Helena Budiarto - UWC SEA - East Campus  
Mandy Burns - St Paul's College Walla Walla  
Katrina Davies - Prince Alfred College  
Lidia Ellis - Christ Church Grammar School  
Jono Farrell - Toowoomba Grammar School  
Darren Frost - St Joseph's College  
Jonathon Hall - Toowoomba Grammar School  
Bradley Hemopo - St Joseph's Nudgee College  
Jenny Hunter - Canberra Grammar School  
Claire Jones - Scotch College Melbourne  
Declan Markey-Towler - St Joseph's Nudgee College  
Timothy Martin - Scotch College Melbourne  
Mitchell McAuley-Powell - The Cathedral College  
Gerard McKeown - St Joseph's Nudgee College  
Suzanne Miller  
Patrick Molinari - Christ Church Grammar School  
Josie Pavone - Brisbane Boys College  
Ujith Perera - Immanuel College  
Hazel Raymond - Brisbane Boys College  
Ashleigh Resuggan - Guildford Grammar School  
Julianne Turner - St Paul's College, Walla Walla  
Sam Wallace - Christ Church Grammar School



## LEVEL 3

### Jodie Ashford - Blackheath & Thornburgh College

Nonie Ayling - Wenona School  
Matthew Banes - Cranbrook  
Elizabeth Birrell - Toorak College  
Ty Casey - Marist College, Ashgrove  
Rachel Clemenger - John Paul College  
Samantha Cocks - Tara Anglican School  
Thomas Coupland - St Joseph's Nudgee College  
Renee Coventry - Wilderness School  
Herbert da Silva - Anglican Church Grammar School  
Danielle Fairthorne - Kincoppal Rose Bay School  
Chemane Fairleigh - Abbotsleigh  
Kathryn Glover  
Trent Gorrie - Holy Spirit College  
Todd Harnwell - Christ Church Grammar School  
John Hill - Scots College Albury  
Tina Jensen - Ipswich Girls' Grammar School  
Stephen King - St Augustine's College

Michael Krause - Geelong Grammar School  
Jason Lamb - Christ Church Grammar School  
Bianca Lingard - Toowoomba Anglican School  
Bobby Jo Looms

Ian Lundie - Trinity Grammar School, Kew  
Darryl McCart

Ross McKeown

Chris Miles - Hale School

Steven Montgomery - Scotch College, Perth

Graham Moore - St Joseph's Nudgee College

Rosemary Newcombe - Genazzano FCJ School

Amanda Rigby - St Hilda's School, Gold Coast

Lauren Ryznar - Ascham

Jason Sheard - Clontarf Aboriginal College

Fiona Short - Fahan

Wayne Stewart - Whitsunday Anglican School

Scout Symons - Ascham

Jacqueline Tassell - St Paul's College, Walla Walla

Maureen Taurima - Concordia Lutheran College

Nam Tran - Assumption College Kilmore

Thomas Van Greunsven - St Joseph's Nudgee College

Alistair Waite - St Paul's College, Walla Walla

Nic Wheeler - St Paul's College, Walla Walla

Warwick Yeates - Christ Church Grammar School



## LEVEL 4

### Jaye Beutel

Casey Brealy - St Joseph's Nudgee College  
John Bussenschutt - Mount Erin Boarding School  
Robin Bussenschutt - Canberra Girls Grammar School  
Nick Byron - Toowoomba Grammar School

Tina Campbell

Kara Cleary - Scotch College, Adelaide

Sue Collister

Suzanne Coulter

Stuart Delaney - St Peter's Lutheran College

Thomas Dunsmore - Torres Strait Kaziw Meta

Gabriel Fernandez - United World College

Steven Florrison - Boarding Training Australia

Jeremy Holt

Timothy Jenkinson

Fr Pius Jones, SM

Ashley Keatch - Great Southern Grammar School

Kate Kovacs - Loreto Normanhurst

Carolyn Matthews - Methodist Ladies' College, Melbourne

Grant Muirhead - Whanganui Collegiate School

James Noble - Marist College, Ashgrove

Phil Noble - Prince Alfred College

Ally Patterson - The Southport School

Martin Rein - Canberra Grammar School

Michael Silcock - St Joseph's Nudgee College

Jane Shone - Methodist Ladies' College, Melbourne

Rodney Steer - Wesley College, Perth

Richard Stokes

Pauline Turner - PLC, Sydney

Carole Ward

Kris Wheeler

Berian Williams-Jones

# Have you been at the receiving end of an emotional ‘distance dump’?

## How to support your boarder and engage an emotional ‘garbage collector’ on campus.

A recent interview piece on The New Yorker went viral, *“The Parent of a Teenager is an emotional garbage collector”* by Jessica Winter where she interviews clinical psychologist **Lisa Damour**.

Damour’s latest book *“The Emotional Lives of Teenagers”* was released in February and only one week following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s report on the mental health of adolescents which reported some really startling findings in the US.

I couldn’t ignore the challenges Damour’s responses in this interview raised from the point of view of a boarding school parent, along with the fact that it directly links to one of our topics for 2023’s Boarding Schools Summit. I found myself wanting to discuss it for those of us that parent from afar and rely on our boarding school

staff to be the co-garbage collectors... So to speak.

*“By and large, our teenagers are incredibly well behaved for the duration of the school day. They spend all day, nearly every day, with a whole bunch of peers and adults whom they did not choose, shuttling from room to room, doing things that they may or may not have chosen for themselves, and actually being quite gracious, patient, and polite through the whole thing. Usually, the way they make that bargain work is, in the course of the day, they catalogue all of the injustices and indignities to which they feel they’ve been subjected, and save them up to tell us all about them.”*  
**Lisa Damour**

I remember when my son began boarding school he was so incredibly homesick we both really struggled in the early days (months... bordering on years if I’m honest) and one thing the boarding staff were always reminding me was that his emotional ‘distance dump’ on me during that phone call home was essentially highlighting the very worst moments of his day. He wasn’t sharing the great stuff. Not initially, I was the garbage collector and the staff knew it.

I didn’t yet understand the complexities of nurturing resilience in my son from afar and supporting the role of boarding schools within the framework of ensuring his emotional wellbeing. Of learning what to throw out, the leaky stinky garbage and what to recycle for sharing with my ‘co-garbage collectors’.

Parenting from afar presents unique challenges, but it also offers opportunities for teenagers to learn self-reliance and independence. For their part our boarding schools should facilitate communication channels between parents and their children, fostering a safe space for teenagers to share their emotional burdens, successes, and concerns. It’s just so important for our boarders to establish a relationship within the boarding house with a staff member or a Gappie where they feel comfortable enough to ‘dump’ the rigours of their day.

Many schools have well-being centres these days and Damour certainly has an opinion about the commercialisation of the wellness space. The schools that I speak to across NSW, Victoria and Queensland that have ‘wellness centres’ are really just wanting to ensure that their students have support and counsel when it is needed.



*“The adolescent mental-health crisis doesn’t end when all teenagers feel good. It ends when teenagers have the support they deserve and are able to cope effectively with the distress that they will invariably face.”*

Our teenagers experience a wide range of emotions, including stress, anxiety, peer pressure, and the need to fit in. With parents often geographically distant in boarding school scenarios, teenagers may struggle to find an outlet for their ‘emotional garbage’. It becomes essential for boarding school staff to step in and fill this void by providing a supportive environment that encourages honest open communication between staff and student.

For boarding staff it may well be the case that they’ve dealt with the same issue thousands of times during the course of their career, but for the parent it’s the first time, or only the fifth .... Whatever the case may be as we’ve always got our ‘L’ plates on. The truly great boarding staff respect that and work on cultivating meaningful connections with their students, ultimately creating a sense of belonging and trust.

The result? Our teens who we are parenting from afar, feel comfortable enough to offload their ‘emotional garbage’ after a day at school just as a day student would going home to Mum and Dad or big brother/sister. And we know, that over the course of their time at boarding school they’ll become more and more attune with knowing when to seek guidance and from whom within their cohort of boarding staff.

Staff play a pivotal role in shaping our teenager’s emotional resilience - they’re



not only educators, they’re also mentors, counsellors and empathetic listeners.

What we do know is that a boarding school provides structure, and a great boarding school provides warmth. Two elements that Damour espouses to being the key to effective parenting. We don’t always get it right, and that’s particularly challenging from a distance but if we throw in good measures of structure and warmth then we’ve got to be closer to getting off our ‘L’s and onto our ‘P’s in the parenting stakes.

Who are the emotional garbage collectors in your child’s boarding house? Make sure you thank them and return the warmth they’re so beautifully sharing with your teenager. ■

#### References :

The New Yorker

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/the-new-yorker-interview/the-parent-of-a-teen-ager-is-an-emotional-garbage-collector>

Mama Mia Out Loud Podcast

<https://www.mamamia.com.au/podcasts/mamamia-out-loud/barbie-movie>

The Emotional Lives of Teenagers

Lisa Damour

- if you’re time poor but love a good audio book in the car then here’s a link for you.

#### **AUTHOR:**

Amanda Ferrari

Director

Boarding School Expo Australia

# Wilderness Bahadure Boarding House *an outreach project*

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Wilderness Bahadure Boarding House. The idea for Wilderness School to establish a Boarding House in Nepal was born in 2012 during a student trek through the country. Since 2013, when the Boarding House in Nepal was established, the Wilderness boarding community has committed to contributing significant funds to support the daily living needs of the girls who attend the school, enabling them to complete their education.

Created from the desire to raise funds that would support girls attending the Wilderness Bahadure Boarding House, the Boarders' Fashion Parade was established as an annual fundraising event. Over time, it has become a key event in the school calendar that brings the community together. With more than 275 people attending the event in May of 2023, the Wilderness boarding community was pleased to raise almost \$10,000 for boarders in Nepal this year.

By providing a fun and engaging way to support an important cause, the Boarders' Fashion Parade has established pathways for boarders to build confidence, foster creativity, develop partnerships and promote their home regions to the city. Such opportunities bring the mission of the school to life, fostering independence and resilience while supporting the individual needs, gifts and talents of each girl—enabling her to become the best version of herself.

## BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Boarders are expected to be involved in each year's fashion parade, in a way that enables them to build up industry skills and confidence. From working backstage with the sound and lighting team or as makeup artists, to taking the stage as speakers or models, each boarder plays a part in bringing the event together.

In 2023, over the course of three weeks, we were fortunate to work alongside Rachel Sanderson, a modelling agent and former Member for Adelaide. Rachel's professional mentorship guided girls through the ways to hold themselves when on stage. Even after the first session, it was evident that the boarders' sense of confidence had lifted with a better understanding of how to walk confidently on the runway. These skills were not only vital for the fashion parade, but they will also help the girls conduct themselves with confidence in other situations, including presentations, interviews and performances.

We were also fortunate to have girls work alongside industry experts in sound, lighting and makeup ahead of the event. One Year 11 boarder was able to apply skills that she had learned through a certificate course in makeup. She, together with one of her good friends, formed our 'makeup team' and they prepared more than 40 faces for the runway on the night.

## FOSTERING CREATIVITY

'Come to Life with Colour' was the theme for the 2023 Boarders' Fashion Parade. This theme of creativity and colour drew on the passion of a handful of boarders who were eager to feature their own creative designs in the show.

In the lead up to the event, our Housemother, Chris Hill set up a sewing room for girls to learn basic sewing skills. Following the initial enthusiasm, we engaged a local seamstress, Jenny Trotta, who worked alongside girls to select patterns and fabrics before embarking on the creative process. Pleasingly, four girls presented their designs at the fashion parade, including students who brought their pieces to life as part of the new AIF (Activating Identities and Futures) subject for their SACE (South Australian Certificate of Education) studies.

The sewing room remains as a legacy of the 2023 Boarders' Fashion Parade, where girls work alongside our Housemother to learn simple skills and create a range of items, including heat packs, tote bags, scrunchies and pencil cases.

## DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

Community support has always been a critical feature of the Boarders' Fashion Parade, as boarding families contribute generous donations for raffle and auction items. In 2023, through new partnerships, we welcomed a range of creatives with connections to the Wilderness boarding community.

Early in the year, Wilderness School boarders partnered with old scholar Sarah Laurie (Class of 2012) and her label, Salubrious Hour to create a casual Boarders Jumper. A former Wilderness School boarder herself, Sarah understood the experiences of our boarders and mentored them through the design process. Her surf brand was once again a feature on the runway, for a second year in a row.

Boarding staff member, artist and clothing designer, Kira Bayliss truly made the event 'come to life with colour' as she painted

a garment live on stage throughout the fashion parade. Her clothing label, Kira Bayliss Clothing was also featured, and it was inspiring to witness her celebration of entrepreneurship and creativity through this process.

With many of our boarding families coming from the Clare Valley, we were similarly fortunate to host Clare Valley artist, Holly Geyer. Throughout the evening, she engaged guests in a collaborative process of creating an artwork that then went up for auction at the end of the night.

## PROMOTING THE REGIONS

The Boarders' Fashion Parade allows the Wilderness School community to celebrate and recognise the creativity that is alive in regional areas of South Australia. Household labels, including RM Williams and Bullrush, have been a staple of the fashion parade for many years, alongside emerging regional brands. This year, we were pleased to feature the fashion labels of our old scholars, such as Sant and Abel (Sophie Lovejoy, Class of 1999), Salubrious Hour (Sarah Laurie, Class of 2012), Lonely Goat (Georgie Duncan, Class of 1990) and La Nina Lounge (Lucy Duncan, Class of 2020). Garments were modelled by Wilderness School boarders, mothers and siblings. We were also pleased to showcase Burra wool brand Iris & Wool, Yellowbird handmade handbags from McLaren Vale and Adelaide labels Binny, Aston Studio and Daisy Says, as well as pieces from local stores like Outdoors on the Parade (Annie Lovejoy, Class of 1967) and One Rundle Trading.

An event such as the Boarders' Fashion Parade certainly takes a village to help a village. In keeping with the desire to give back, a group of old scholars will visit the Bahadure village in Nepal this October to celebrate the ten-year relationship between our communities. As Wilderness School recommences international trips, many of our current boarders are looking forward to visiting the village in 2024, furthering the connection they have established over years of participation in the fashion parade. ■

### AUTHOR:

Renee Coventry  
Head of Boarding  
Wilderness School.



# Tec-NQ *Kitchen Garden Project*

In 2021, Tec-NQ House reached out to our local Bunnings store for support in sponsoring our kitchen garden project. In early 2022, we received a generous response from Bunnings, who contributed \$1000 towards our vision of creating this space. The garden features Indigenous plants native to our area, as well as sustainable fruits, vegetables, and herbs that can be harvested year-round.

**O**ur goal for this garden is to provide both our boarding students and hospitality students with a foundation in basic gardening and horticultural skills. We aim for them to gain knowledge about the origins of food, foster collaboration and

communication, and ultimately make healthier food choices not only within Tec-NQ but also in their lives beyond. We also envision the garden as a space where our students can actively engage, collaborate, and cultivate positive attitudes and preferences towards food.

Tec-NQ is not only a school, but a trade school as well. Our instructional team, consisting of skilled professionals in automotive, electrical, plumbing, carpentry and engineering, will play a crucial role in realising the long-term vision of our kitchen garden. They will have their students working together to design a self-watering irrigation system equipped with sensors that regulate soil moisture levels. These sensors will be connected to our mobile devices, providing real-time alerts for any adjustments or concerns with the watering system. The project will be designed, tested and built by Tec-NQ trade students as part of our vision for a sustainable, long term kitchen garden. ■

**AUTHOR:**

Penny Ross  
Head of Boarding  
Tec-NQ



# How to Get Your Boarding House Ready for Accommodation Hire

Ensuring an enjoyable visit for your visitors during the holidays, while maintaining your facilities for your students' return.

In the lead-up to the school holidays, preparing your boarding house facilities for visitors can be a demanding and stressful task. It's important to make a positive impression on those temporarily renting your space, while also ensuring that your boarding house is ready for the return of your students – and the easiest way to do this is with a robust and effective cleaning plan. Here are some expert tips and strategies for ensuring your boarding house is not only ready for your visitors, but maintained effectively for when your students return to boarding.

## PREPARATION IS KEY

Ensuring that your facilities are well prepared for visitors is the key to making a good impression – and this begins with a deep clean after term has concluded. Deep cleaning involves a more thorough cleaning process than what occurs during the school term; reaching into every nook and cranny of your accommodation, including hard-to-reach areas like vents and ducts. Reputable professional school cleaning companies will use specialised equipment and cleaning solutions to ensure the highest level of cleanliness for your facilities.

## HEALTH AND SAFETY MEASURES

Your preparation activities should also consider the health, safety and well-being of the visitors to your school. There are several factors you need to take into account, including effectively sanitising common areas and high-touch surfaces to

eliminate viruses and bacteria. Inspecting and maintaining facilities, such as wiring, plumbing and the structural integrity of your boarding house, is also essential to keep your visitors safe.

Cleaning performed by professional cleaners promotes both health and hygiene for your visitors. Their duties include removing dirt, dust, allergens, and various other contaminants from high-touch surfaces and high-traffic areas in your boarding house. Furthermore, they are also responsible for removing health and safety hazards to minimise the risk of accidents occurring.

## CUSTOMISED CLEANING PLANS

It is important when you are liaising with your cleaning company in the lead-up to the school holidays to ensure that the unique nature of your facilities is addressed in your cleaning plan. Each facility has a different set of needs for its cleaning, and your professional cleaners should be able to tailor their services to suit your school's needs. By communicating effectively with your cleaning company and emphasising the nuances of your boarding house, you can ensure a top-notch experience for your guests.

## POST-RENTAL CLEANING BEFORE YOUR STUDENTS RETURN

Another important aspect you need to consider is the cleaning of your boarding house after your visitors leave, to ensure a



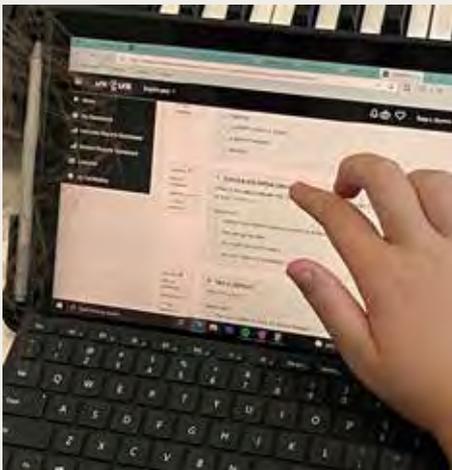
smooth transition for your returning students. Thus, you should organise for your cleaning company to complete another deep clean before school resumes. This is the best way to care for the health and safety of your students before they move back in. Again, a good cleaning company will be able to cater to the specific needs of your facilities, and perform any specialised cleaning necessary to get your space ready for the new school term.

At Cleanworks, we can provide you with advice on creating effective strategies your facilities. Call us on 0421 752 273 to speak with Troy Stahlhut regarding your boarding house cleaning. ■

**AUTHOR:**  
Troy Stahlhut  
Cleanworks

# Ways to Practically Improve Literacy for Every Student *in Classrooms and in Boarding Houses*

As teachers or boarding staff you may have sent an email or text message similar to the one below to a student's parents/caregivers. It's a message that creates angst on all sides:



- the student who knows they are behind their peers
- increased concern from his/her parents
- the classroom teacher who is unsure where the learning gaps lie and
- the boarding mentor who also has to pinpoint literacy issues.

What if we could potentially avoid this text message? Improving literacy among students is a crucial goal for educators, including teachers and boarding masters. We know that literacy skills are fundamental to success in life.

Here are some strategies that you can employ to enhance the literacy of all students:

## 1. Create a Literacy-Rich Environment

**Reading Corners:** Set up inviting reading corners with a variety of books, magazines and other reading materials.

**Classroom Libraries:** Maintain well-stocked classroom libraries with books that cover a range of genres and reading levels.

**Bulletin Boards:** A colourful display of quotes, students' written work and new book titles can grab their interest

## 2. Promote – and model – reading behaviour

The key word here is 'model'.

*If young people see the adults around them buying into the reading culture, then their interest will naturally follow.*

When I speak at schools or seminars, I use the following example:

I had a small group of boys in Year Six who were all quite good readers but very reluctant to pick up books. I tried everything but their attention would drift, books would not be finished and they would revert back to toilet humour books (ones they had read for the fifth time!). I came across a book about Zombies – this is not my preferred genre, in fact I'm not into zombie movies or books! I gave them each a copy. They saw me reading it in class (during DEAR time), it was visible

on my desk and I would take it home to read a chapter at night. I read the book alongside the students. Each day we'd informally chat about why X decided to do Y and what would you have done in this situation etc. We'd touch base each day: ask which chapter we were up to, make predictions, critique character decisions and share funny comments.

As their teacher, I genuinely enjoyed the text: the characters were brilliant, the action was fast flowing and the writing was clever. The best thing was that this book was a series, which meant the boys went on to read the next five books. Whether you are their class teacher or boarding staff member, consider reading a book alongside your students: it communicates a strong message that you value reading!

Note: the book that I am referring to is from the Rot and Ruin series by Jonathan Maberry.

## 3. Building Confidence in the Student/Boarder

Building reading confidence in students is essential for fostering a love for reading and improving their overall literacy skills. Everyone has had experience teaching and/or tutoring kids – particularly boys – who lack confidence in their schooling. Mostly it starts with literacy. You will have witnessed that boy or girl who just seems to switch off from reading. But we know that literacy overarches everything. Even in the area of Physical Education – where the talented athlete is striving for an A – he/she needs to have literacy skills in order to write an assignment in this subject.



In your care you will have students who are wanting an ATAR score and those who want an apprenticeship or to return to the family farm or agriculture. Regardless of their pathway, we need to prepare these students with key skills of numeracy and literacy.

How can you help as a boarding staff member? Reading is key – 15 minutes a night. Here are some tips:

**Choose appropriate reading material:** select books that match the student's reading level and interests.

**Provide positive reinforcement:** offer praise and positive feedback for their efforts. Focus on their progress.

#### 4. Integrate reading across subjects

**Cross-curricular activities:** incorporate reading assignments and discussions in subjects like science, history, art.

#### 5. Technology Integration

Online programs can offer significant value for literacy development. Both Literacy for Boys and Literacy for Kids have data-proven results and many schools are in their fifth year of using our programs. We offer the following advantages:

**Engaging, kid-centric content that drives improvement:** our latest data has shown that users made a 15% improvement in their comprehension scores after only one-term. Multimedia elements such as videos, animations, interactive quizzes and games means that our programs are the fastest growing literacy in Australia and New Zealand.

**Progress tracking:** teacher Dashboard tracks students' progress, providing insights into their strengths and areas for improvement. This data can help educators tailor instruction effectively.

**Used in boarding schools:** LFB and LFK have been used to boost literacy skills of students before they attend boarding school. Our programs can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection, making learning convenient for those students living in isolated parts of the country. Teachers and parents have access to the program, which means they can track student completion of literacy tasks.

#### IDEAS THAT BOOST LITERACY - YOU CAN START THESE TODAY!

**Start a Book Club:** select authors that have wide appeal. Tristan Banks is an Australian author who is often chosen as a classroom text. Fantasy and dystopian genres are also popular.

**Reading Survey:** it's a good idea to find out how your students feel about reading (are they confident? do they perceive themselves as a reader? do they dislike reading?) and where their interests lie.

**Use resources other than books:** the weekend newspaper contains the sports report/games reviews that cover netball, footy, basketball, soccer etc. Some of the articles might be enjoyed by your students in the areas of beauty, mindfulness, health, recipes.

**Written Timetable/Planner:** help your students to stay ahead of due dates and assignments by using a timetable. Use different colours to highlight the different subjects. Being organised will assist with exam and assignment anxiety.

Remember that consistency and patience are key when implementing the strategies above. Tailor them to the specific needs of your classroom or boarding house to create an engaging and effective literacy improvement plan. ■

**AUTHOR:**  
Tanya Grambower  
Founder  
Literacy for Kids

# Beyond Comfort: *What Boarding Schools Teach Us About Adaptability*

I still remember my first visit to a large, prestigious boarding school in Sydney. As I walked through its corridors, with Richard on one side of the Director of Boarding and Jared on the other, I couldn't shake the feeling of being an outsider. As I hung back five metres behind and tried to take in all I could overhear, whatever I caught went straight over my head as all I could think to myself was: "What am I doing here?"

**O**verwhelmed with the questions like whether I had made the right career move?; Was I ever going to get it?; Will the members even respect me? I still had 4 days of this trip to get through. By the time that flight back to Brisbane came, I realised it wasn't so different from the feeling a young student gets when they first walk into a boarding house realising this is there home for the next few years.

Fast forward a month, and there I was, boarding a plane to spend three nights in the boarding house at The Hamilton and

Alexandra College in rural Victoria. The irony wasn't lost on me; here I was, trying to grasp the challenges faced by boarders while embarking on my own journey of discomfort in a new industry.

## **THE FIRST FORAY: SYDNEY**

The grandeur of the Sydney boarding school was almost paralysing. The walls whispered legacies, and the atmosphere was thick with tradition. It was easy to feel insignificant amidst the institution's long history and palpable sense of community. As someone who had never experienced

boarding life, I questioned my place in this new world. My challenges were different, of course, but they were challenges nonetheless.

## **A CHANGE OF SCENE: SHEEPVENTION**

Contrast that with my experience at The Hamilton and Alexandra College. What was originally a trip to represent ABSA at the Victoria Boarding Staff Breakfast during the Sheepvention Expo, it became an opportunity to grow. This time, I didn't just walk the halls; I lived there. I swapped my business attire for casual clothes, making sure I was part of the day-to-day rhythms—mealtime chatter, study sessions, even the occasional two-on-two basketball game.

I realised that the only way to genuinely understand the boarders' challenges, as well as the staffs, was to immerse myself in their world. And you know what? The experience was enlightening.





## THE SHARED EXPERIENCE OF ADAPTATION

In a boarding school, students grapple with homesickness, form new friendships, and adapt to a life away from their families. While my adaptation didn't involve sharing a dorm or partaking in house activities, it did entail establishing credibility in a new role and navigating a different organisational culture at ABSA.

Just like the boarders, I was faced with the necessity to adapt quickly. I needed to learn the ropes, understand the concerns of our member schools, and forge partnerships that would benefit both the schools and the organisation. The challenges were new, but the underlying themes were universal: adaptability, resilience, and growth.

But my adaptation journey didn't stop there. As my stay continued, it became evident that the staff, too, faced their own set of challenges. From managing the emotional well-being of the boarders to balancing administrative duties, the scope of their responsibilities was broader than I had initially imagined.

Recognising these challenges elevated the importance of what we do at ABSA, particularly in the area of staff training. Our programs aren't just designed to be a box-ticking exercise; they aim to empower staff with the skills they need



to navigate the complexities of their roles effectively. Whether it's conflict resolution, mental health awareness, or building a community within the boarding house, our training modules address the diverse challenges that the staff confront daily.

This understanding has been a game-changer for me. It's fortified my commitment to ensuring that our initiatives aren't merely transactional but transformational. Because, when it comes down to it, we're all working toward the same goal: creating an environment where everyone - boarders, staff, and even us newcomers - can adapt, grow, and ultimately thrive.

## EMBRACING DISCOMFORT: A CATALYST FOR GROWTH

Today, I can confidently say that the boarders, their staff and I have something valuable to offer each other. They taught me about the importance of community and resilience in the face of adversity. In turn, my fresh perspective has fuelled new initiatives at ABSA aimed at further supporting our member schools and enhancing the boarding experience for students and staff.

Through my immersion in the world of boarding life, I discovered that stepping outside of my comfort zone was not only necessary, but it was also a catalyst for personal and professional growth. The challenges I have encountered, and continue to, mirror those faced by the boarders themselves, fostering a sense of empathy and understanding.



Jordan Swepson and Andrew Monk



The experience of living in the boarding house allowed me to witness firsthand the power of community and the importance of forging connections. It became evident that by bridging the gap between ABSA and member schools, we could create a stronger support system for students, staff and families, enhancing their boarding experience and ultimately contributing to their overall development.

So the next time you find yourself questioning, “What am I doing here?” consider it an opportunity. It’s a chance to learn, to grow, and to understand a world outside your comfort zone. And who knows, you might just find that the challenges you face are the stepping stones to a richer, more fulfilling journey—both for you and for those whose lives you touch.

## THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

My time spent in the boarding house was just the beginning of a transformative journey. Armed with a newfound appreciation for the challenges faced by boarders, I am committed to continuously improving our programs and initiatives at ABSA. As I write this, I am currently on a plane (shock) to Alice Springs to immerse myself in the culture of our First Nations people. A brand new journey, with brand new challenges which means a whole new level of comfort.

I would like to thank Andrew Monk, The Director of Boarding at The Hamilton and Alexandria College for the opportunity, and all the staff and students who were involved with my stay there. ■



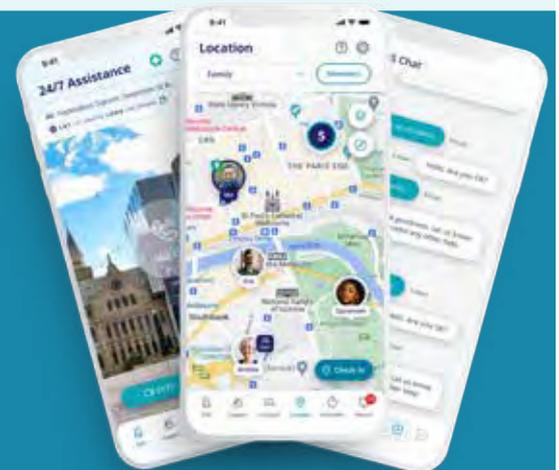
**AUTHOR:**  
Jordan Swepson,  
Director of  
Members  
Experience,  
Australian  
Boarding Schools  
Association.

## Do you have a process in place when a student leaves the school premises?

**lifestream**  
by Guardian

### Lifestream has got your back!

- ✓ Create groups for easy communication and connection with your students.
- ✓ Receive Check-ins to know when your students have arrived, need a pick up or assistance.
- ✓ When needed, access 24/7 emergency assistance at the touch of a button.



Receive your 3 months free trial today\*

\*For ABSA school members only



[www.GETLIFESTREAM.com](http://www.GETLIFESTREAM.com)

# Assertiveness Top 20

1. A person can change if they want to – most of our behaviour comes from our attitudes and beliefs which have been collected and learned over the years, and which are stored in our subconscious as habits. We can choose to change our behaviour, and we can also (gradually) change our beliefs about the world and about ourselves.
2. Assertiveness is difficult because it goes against our natural instincts for fight or flight. We have to learn to make a conscious effort to overcome the adrenaline in our bodies and remain calm.
3. A good step towards being assertive is to realise that the perceived benefits of being aggressive or submissive are always incorrect. Aggressive people think that they will be respected and will get their way – not true in the long run. Submissive people think that they will be liked and will have an easy life – also not true.
4. Assertiveness requires a starting belief that you are OK – which you are! Not perfect, but good enough to deserve your rights. Your self worth should come from YOU, not from what other people think, or what you think they think. Think you yourself “No-one else can push me into the not-OK box”.
5. Assertiveness means standing up for your rights, but also respecting the rights of others. To not stand up for your own rights is submissive, and to disrespect the rights of others is aggressive.
6. Persist if necessary. You have the right to be heard. You’re not being rude, they are.
7. You have a right to say how you feel. And you don’t have to justify how you feel.
8. Take responsibility for how you feel, what you do, and what happens to you.
9. “We teach others how to treat us”. Lack of taking responsibility is at the root of all negative emotions.
9. Take responsibility for mistakes. It’s OK to make them (the only way to never make a mistake is to never do anything, and making a mistake doesn’t make you a bad person) but you must learn from them. Then let them go – they are in the past.
10. Your behaviour is controlled by your subconscious beliefs, or “scripts”. You can change your scripts by what you say to yourself – keep it positive. Saying positive things about yourself repeatedly will gradually convince your subconscious that they are the case – anything you say regularly will become true.
11. You can change your behaviour, but only if you are aware of it. Practise detachment: observe yourself in situations: how did you do?
12. The other side of detachment is that other people are responsible for their own actions. Don’t blame yourself for the actions that others have chosen to take.
13. Remain calm in situations where the other person is being aggressive. It’s their problem not yours, so remember your rights, and take time to plan. Don’t get aggressive back!
14. Aggression can be behaviour other than physically attacking someone – it can be verbal intimidation, interrupting, invading someone’s space, patronising, etc. If someone is using emotive words to attack you, pick them up on the words: “I agree that it was a mistake but I wouldn’t say it was ‘stupid.’”
15. Pick them up on aggressive body language using the format “I notice that you are doing xxx and I interpret this to mean yyy, am I right?” This will force them to put up or shut up.
16. When criticised, consider whether they may be right. If they are: learn from it and thank them. If they are not, you can choose between letting it go or challenging them – both are OK. If you are unsure about what they are unhappy with, or if you are unsure whether they are right about it, ask them for more information.
17. Giving criticism is not usually effective because asking someone to change their personality is not feasible, and it’s even worse if you don’t say what you want instead. However, asking someone to change their behaviour towards you CAN be effective.
18. Look out for Games Players, who move between Persecutor, Rescuer and Victim (for example I’m Only Trying To Help You, Yes But, It’s Alright For You, You shouldn’t let him get away with that, etc) and then either refuse to play, be assertive about their behaviour (“I don’t like it when you...”) or expose the game (“Have you noticed how you....?”).
19. Use the 4-step process to make your point: “I understand, I feel, I want, Is that OK?”
20. Wish you’d said something at the time? Don’t worry – it’s never too late to go back and be assertive. Plan it and then do it. ■

## AUTHOR

Chris Croft

Chris Croft Training

[chris@chriscrofttraining.co.uk](mailto:chris@chriscrofttraining.co.uk)



## Student Support Role- *Wellbeing in Boarding*

Adolescence is a unique and formative time, characterised by significant physical, emotional and social changes. Early intervention via psychoeducational programmes has been shown to 'strengthen an individual's capacity to regulate emotions, enhance alternatives to risk-taking behaviours, build resilience for managing difficult situations and adversity, and promote supportive social environments and social networks' World Health Organisation (2021).

**A**t Kinross Wolaroi School we offer a multi-level approach to boarding wellbeing, delivered via our wide network of academic and pastoral staff. Term Two also saw the addition of a student support officer to the wellbeing and boarding team. Working closely with the Head of Wellbeing, School Psychologists and Heads of Boarding we have been able to identify and implement a series of evidence based, specialist wellbeing programs to meet the varying needs

of our boarders at each developmental stage. We are listening and responding to the feedback from our boarders and encouraging them to play a lead role in shaping the direction of future programs.

In Term 3 we implemented three successful boarding wellbeing programmes including 'The Resourceful Adolescent Program' (Queensland University of Technology). This is an experiential, resilience and resource building programme

which has an underpinning in Cognitive Behavioural therapy. Within this group we have worked with Year Seven to explore themes of self esteem/problem solving/identifying personal strengths and relaxation strategies in a fun and interactive way. This program has encouraged an understanding that in order to be a happy and healthy individual, we need to have a number of skills and resources within our 'wellbeing toolkit'.

The 'Mindfulness in Schools project' course is an extensively researched and globally implemented program which has been introduced and offered to all boarders throughout Term Three. This course extends over eight to ten weeks and covers themes including sport and academic performance, playing with attention, dealing with worries, befriending difficult emotions and managing overall wellbeing. This course has offered students the

opportunity to become a 'neuroscientist' with its focus on developing an understanding of the brain and its functions and allowing us to test out the theories and ideas via a series of mindfulness practices. Many of our boarders have expressed an interest in extending their new knowledge of mindfulness to all areas of life, from performance on the rugby field, to supporting a restful nights sleep, increasing focus within the classroom and improving and building relationships.

For our Year 11 and 12 HSC students we implemented the 'Study without stress course' (Macquarie University), a cognitive behavioural therapy psychoeducational program which supports students with stress management techniques, timetabling, thought challenging, procrastination and perfectionism, preparing for exams and problem solving. We have been able to work with students ahead of HSC trials to implement these skills and have found it invaluable to come together as a supportive group around this time. All wellbeing programs are offered on an ongoing, rolling basis enabling students

to access them as and when needed.

We have also recently hosted our first Boarding Wellbeing Retreat, where we came together to slow down, to calm the body and mind, engage in creative activities and to build community via the sharing of food. This retreat was delivered in response to student feedback and as the program builds and evolves, we look forward to increasing the scope and reach of such events. The voice of our boarders is an essential focus for our community and as such we always welcome and encourage ideas for future directions.

Alongside structured programs, the Student Support role also offers the flexibility to support students in a responsive and timely way. It is often the case that a Head of House or Housemother has noticed a student is needing some additional support and they are able to drop into houses in the evenings, weekends and during mealtimes as an additional layer of support. In addition to the group programs, there are also students who prefer to catch up on a one-to-one basis,

and so it is often the case that the most supportive intervention at that moment may be a listening ear over a cup of tea, a walk around the oval, or a chat with a small group over a fire pit.

Wellbeing programs and responsive care initiatives are an essential part of our boarding ethos and create a supportive environment that addresses the unique challenges boarding school students might face. This in turn supports them to navigate challenges with confidence and to thrive both academically and personally. ■

Reference: World Health Organisation (2021). 'Mental Health of Adolescents' via Mental health of adolescents (who.int)

**AUTHOR:**

Nicola Byrne  
Student Support Officer  
Kinross Wolaroi School.



*Congratulations to*  
**the 2023 ABSA National Award winners**

**Premier Leadership Award**  
Kate Kovacs

**Innovation in Boarding Award**  
Wilderness School - Fashion Parade

**Excellence in Indigenous Boarding Award**  
Torres Stait Kaziw Meta

**Outstanding Contribution to National Boarding Week Award**  
St Joseph's Nudgee College

**Outstanding Social Media Content Creation Award**  
St Hilda's School, Gold Coast

**International School of the Year**  
Nexus International School Malaysia

# Transitioning to university

*How living at a residential college can smooth the transition from boarding school to university.*

Living on campus at a residential college while studying at university can make the giant leap from secondary to tertiary study much less overwhelming. As Trinity College student and former boarder Fergus Guest shares, being able to pursue his interests, surrounded by close friends, has elevated his university experience significantly.

The transition to university can feel overwhelming, especially if it means moving to a new city or even State. Though students who come from a boarding school environment may be used to living away from home, leaving the familiarity of a school routine plus close teacher and staff support can be daunting.

Once a student hits university, they are expected to live independently, find new

friends (often easier said than done, particularly at a large university), direct their own studies and make their own connections to thrive. It can be a huge challenge.

But there is a living option that makes the transition from boarding school to university smooth and familiar – residential college.

A residential college usually provides on-campus accommodation – meaning

students live right next door to their university, and, depending on the college, may offer all meals, plus tutorials, well-being support and regular events.

It's easy to think of college as just a place to eat and sleep, but it can be so much more than that. College is about finding a community that supports students throughout their university journey, and often long after they leave, too.

At Trinity College, the University of Melbourne, we are home to a highly engaged group of 380 talented young people, who live, eat and socialise together, plus an alumni network of more than 30,000 people spread across 80 countries. That's quite the network to tap into.

One thing that makes Trinity so special is that our students eat together in our beautiful Harry Potter-esque dining hall four nights a week (this isn't the case for all colleges). We do this, and have been doing this for more than 150 years, as regular shared meals mean our students easily make friends. Trinity creates an environment where everyone can be friends with everyone – we don't see the tight cliques that you can often find at high school.

Fergus Guest came to Trinity College after growing up on a farm in Pakenham South in regional Victoria, then attending boarding school at Melbourne Grammar. He decided to follow in his older brother's footsteps to Trinity College when he left school.

“Having had my brother attend Trinity and hearing all the amazing stories about his experience at college is what really



sparked my interest in Trinity,” says Fergus. “Making new friends and meeting new people was a big goal of mine and I saw Trinity as a massive opportunity to do just that. The idea of living in a communal environment surrounded by your friends who have similar interests and who are likeminded studying at the University of Melbourne was especially appealing.”

Friendships are strengthened at Trinity through competitive sports against other colleges, extracurricular activities like the play and musical, events like our annual ball and corridor dinners, and through participation in our 30 clubs and societies.

Fergus discovered his love of rugby at boarding school – something he hadn’t been exposed to at his small primary school – so was keen to continue playing when he got to university. Since joining Trinity, Fergus has made the rugby team two years running and was named vice-captain, which he describes as a dream come true.

Fergus has also been taken by the warmth and go-getting nature of the Trinity community. “I was surprised immediately by how sociable everyone at college was. Everyone is always willing to introduce themselves and try things outside of their comfort zones,” he says.

While being encouraged to build connections and try new things, Trinity students are also supported with personalised



tutorials for all their university subjects and have access to academic and counselling support from our staff, which makes the transition from boarding school to university far less intimidating. Plus, there’s the added benefit of always having friends nearby for fun and support.

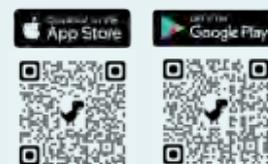
“The communal living aspect is a major part of my love for college,” says Fergus. “Living so near and sometimes next to your closest friends is something that is rarely experienced and makes Trinity almost like one big family. I have become close with people I never would’ve otherwise known and have had the chance to make friends in years above and below me at college.”

Learn more about Trinity College at [trinity.unimelb.edu.au](http://trinity.unimelb.edu.au) ■



**AUTHOR:**

Leonie Jongenelis  
Dean of the Trinity Residential College  
University of Melbourne.



# Leave Management for Off-Campus Activities with Lifestream

In the bustling life of a student, a simple act such as signing out to leave the school campus or a boarding house can involve multiple layers of communication and safety concerns. Parents may grant permission, but the looming questions remain:

- How do you communicate with students when they go on approved leave?
- How do you ensure that students have arrived safely at their stated destinations?
- How do schools handle unexpected changes in plans while maintaining the safety of every student?

## Introducing Lifestream: A Comprehensive Safety and Communication Solution

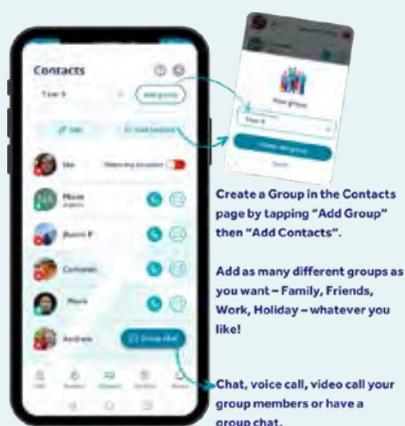
Lifestream is an app designed to streamline communication and connection, promoting the safety and well-being of students, teachers, and families. By facilitating easier communication, it creates additional opportunities for students to connect effortlessly with boarding staff, families, and peers through technology.

With Lifestream, students and teachers can:

- communicate with boarding staff, friends, and family through group chats.
- send/receive status-based check-ins such as “pick me up”, “meet me”, “all good”, or “I need help” when off-campus.
- access 24/7 emergency assistance and support, when needed.

## What is the ‘Check-in’ Functionality?

Picture this: a boarder is heading for a sports excursion either alone or accompanied by his mates. The first step involves creating a school group within the app, a feature that enhances collaborative planning and coordination. They can also add



the Head of Boarding or the supervising staff to keep them informed.

Upon arriving at the approved leave location, students promptly ‘check-in’, a simple yet effective tool in ensuring the school is informed of their whereabouts, fostering a layer of safety and transparency.



However, what if there is a sudden change in plans? Lifestream offers features like ‘meet me’, ‘pick me up’, and ‘I need help’ to facilitate assertive communication

between students and boarding staff in times of unexpected situations. Moreover, the app offers multiple layers of assistance, including instant access to a team of trained first responders who are available 24/7 to support all students. With Lifestream on their smartphone, students can reach out via video, call, or the ever-popular chat feature for emergencies, thus promising a support network that is both responsive and reliable.

## Enhancing School Leave Management Policies

Lifestream seamlessly integrates with school leave management policies, offering real-time, 24/7 features at the touch of a button. It stands as a collaborative and assertive tool, enabling students to communicate with boarding staff if they are off campus, find themselves in a precarious situation, or experience changes in their location. This proactive approach ensures that emergency contacts, including staff members, are kept in the loop, fostering a secure and responsive community.

## Join Us in Pioneering a Safer Future

We invite schools to join us in piloting a new era of safety and connectivity. Sign up to trial Lifestream and experience a transformative approach to student safety and communication, with a complimentary 90-day trial for your school.

To embark on this journey towards a safer and more connected educational-community, download the app via the provided QR code and get in touch via the email below. Together, let’s foster an environment where safety and connection are not just words, but a lived reality for every student.

Contact us:  
enquiry@guardiancorp.com.au ■

# Welcome: New Principals



**Joe Lumsden**  
*Head of School*  
Stonehill International School

## STONEHILL INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Joe Lumsden is currently working as the Head of School at Stonehill International School, after completing three years as Secondary School Principal. Prior to this, Joe completed sixteen years at Istanbul International Community School in Istanbul, Turkey.

Joe is a strategic thinker and a visionary. He believes in a people-centred approach to education and is steered towards progressive educational ideas. He is an active member of New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and Council of International Schools (CIS) accreditation teams. He has completed an MA in Education (Leadership and Management) with a focus on research methodologies, leadership and strategy, and leading and learning. He also has an MA in English Literature and a BA in American Studies.

A keen blogger, Joe has published many articles on progressive education, tech trends shaping the future of education, and learning as an enabler of social change, to name a few. ■

# Welcome: New Heads of Boarding



**Simon Johnston**  
*Head of Residential Life*  
Dulwich International High School  
- Suzhou

## DULWICH INTERNATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL - Suzhou

Boarding is a vocation, and a rewarding one at that. It is unique, it is demanding, energy sapping and all consuming, but it is by far the most enriching and transformative experience one can have. This is the philosophy that has stayed with me since I first entered the dorm buildings in New Zealand, and carry with me now at Dulwich International High School, Suzhou.

The life of a boarding professional is a tapestry woven with challenges, triumphs, and a profound sense of purpose. It is a journey that demands unwavering dedication, adaptability, and a genuine love for fostering growth in young individuals. While it might be physically and emotionally draining, those who embark on this path often find themselves rewarded in ways that go beyond monetary compensation. This concept is certainly where I can categorise myself and I am fortunate to be in this rounding experience; first, as a

Deputy Director in New Zealand, to the Head of Residential Life in UWCEA and now, with Dulwich.

Each posting has instilled a new life and sense of purpose in me and I am thrilled to begin my new boarding chapter with DHSZ.

祝你一切顺利' ■



# From the Chair

## Jaye Beutel

In 2021, the ABSA Board of Directors engaged in the updating of our organisation's strategic plan. This process was informed by a broad set of consultation and feedback parameters, which included the voice of operational personnel, heads of school and boarding practitioners. The Board approved the final product of the *2022/25 Strategic Plan* (Extracts below) and has worked in support of ABSA's Chief Executive Officer, Richard Stokes, to reach the goals set from this process.

It is important that we refer to the aims of this plan and check our corporate temperature and recalibrate as we continue on this mission. There are still aspects of this plan which require action. This has never been more pertinent than in the post-COVID landscape and during times where economic factors have begun to place even greater pressure on business and the education sector.

### THE ABSA STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2025

#### Mission -

The mission of the Association has been encapsulated in the following statement: The Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) exists to promote the interests of boarding schools by enhancing the well-being of boarders, facilitating the professional development of staff and advancing excellent practice among schools.

#### Collective Ambition

Our collective ambition for the next three years is as follows:

To provide strategic leadership for the boarding profession to ensure excellent practice through deeper engagement of members with the Association.

#### Questions to Address/Resolve

1. What might our Board look like in 3-5 Years?
2. How do we, as an organization, focus more on strategy?
3. How can we increase engagement from all members?
4. How do we ensure we are financially successful?
5. How do we maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders?
6. How do we strengthen perceptions and awareness of best practice boarding?
7. How do we influence boarding staff leadership so that the focus is on strategy and leadership?

8. How do we grow the ABSA Training Academy?
9. How do we develop career pathways for boarding staff?
10. How do we create and grow a product extension line?

At the same time as actioning large portions of the strategic plan, the Australian Boarding Schools Association has undergone a significant growth period. During this growth period, the organisation has pivoted to meet the growing demands of our members which included the diversification of our training arm to now include an online training platform. To that end, and as a consequence of this growth, the expansion of the operational team located in Brisbane has also been necessary. And this will continue to be the case based on the services being taken up by members, driven by their needs and influences in their space. I will admit, however, most of the growth outcomes were aims of the strategic plan itself, and they were achieved in part as reasonable and practical responses to the pandemic event itself. Nevertheless, these developments are a direct result of providing services and support to our member schools.

The demands of a growing organisation - one like ours - built for members by members, needs considerable nurturing and patience as it embarks upon instituting the necessary changes in not just the operational functions, but the significant role of its governing body.

Two weaknesses were identified within the core strategic challenges of the plan.

- Deeper engagement and leadership from Board members is needed.
- Improvement needed across the governance processes – Board composition and Principal/Head of School representation.

Over the past year the Board has considered ways of addressing these matters, however with the change of Board Chair and the AHISA Principal Representative, a decisive direction has taken longer than expected.

At the most recent Board of Directors meeting we have unanimously supported a consultation process to commence as soon as practicable. The process will be steered by a special advisory committee formed from the Board of Directors itself and will engage member schools through a series of online collaboration sessions and surveys. This committee will also engage external consultants who specialise in Board structures, as well as other industry professionals that directly or indirectly

influence the Boarding Schools industry.

The aims of the special advisory committee will be:

- Investigate and suggest a Board composition that will be a balance of industry representation and skill-based individuals.
- Investigate and promote the required training for the Board of Directors
- Investigate and promote the necessary advisory bodies which inform the Board of Directors

As you would expect, this will be a broad investigation and consultation process in an effort for the current Board of Directors to consider the advice, endorse a suggested model and report to members ahead of any potential changes to the Board composition which would require voting upon at an Annual General Meeting.

It is expected that this entire process will take the course of the next twelve months, leading to the 2024 Annual General Meeting. This is the aim which the

Board of Directors has set as our target. As Chair, I am confident that we will meet this target and provide our members with a model that will be fit for purpose for many years to come.

I look forward to being part of the process of ensuring that our members can rely on us as the peak professional body within the Boarding Schools industry to do what's in their best interest, whilst remaining relevant and member focused as we grow and transition our governing body towards a model which is representative and skills-based.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter with any of our member heads of school should they wish to reach out. My details can be found on the ABSA website.

Further information and consultation dates will be released in due course by email to member schools and our corporate partners. ■

# Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Our office is closed from  
Thursday 21 December  
to Tuesday 9 January.



 AUSTRALIAN  
BOARDING  
SCHOOLS  
ASSOCIATION  
*Making Boarders' Lives Better*

# Your School FEATURED

## WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR BOARDING SCHOOL FEATURED IN LIGHTS OUT?

We plan to feature at least two schools each edition. All you need to do, is write a brief article (400 to 1000 words) and send us some high resolution photos (300dpi).

Send all files to: [absa@boarding.org.au](mailto:absa@boarding.org.au)  
by 1st February 2024

## Follow us!



Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/austboarding](http://www.facebook.com/austboarding)



Twitter @austboarding



Instagram @austboarding



LinkedIn  
[www.linkedin.com/company/  
australian-boarding-schools-association](http://www.linkedin.com/company/australian-boarding-schools-association)



Download this issue  
from the ABSA website:  
[www.boarding.org.au/our-community](http://www.boarding.org.au/our-community)

# Boarding Around the World



## AUSTRALIA TAKING THE REINS CONFERENCE

Bond University, Gold Coast  
11-12 March 2024

NATIONAL BOARDING WEEK  
12-18 May 2024

INTERNATIONAL BOARDING  
CONFERENCE  
Canberra  
12-13 August 2024

Ongoing Webinars and  
Certificate Courses  
more information:  
[https://www.boarding.org.au/  
training-academy](https://www.boarding.org.au/training-academy)



## NEW ZEALAND

TABS

USA  
TABS ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
16-18 November 2023 - Boston

for more information:  
<https://www.tabs.org/calendar/>

bsa | BOARDING  
SCHOOLS'  
ASSOCIATION

UK  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR  
HEADS  
7 - 8 May 2024  
Heathrow

BSA/TIOB ANNUAL BOARDING  
CONFERENCE  
4-5 June 2024  
Heathrow

