

ABSA *History* The first 15 years

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AUSTRALIAN
BOARDING
SCHOOLS
ASSOCIATION

CREATING THE FUTURE FOR BOARDING SCHOOLS

Australian Boarding History



The King's School

Hale School
Melbourne Grammar School
St Vincent's College
St Catherine's School
Geelong Grammar School
Scotch College Vic



St Patrick's College, Townsville
St Scholastica's College
Xavier College
Presbyterian Ladies' College Vic
St Joseph's College
Toowoomba Grammar School
Toorak College
All Saints College
St Saviour's College
The Hamilton & Alexandra College

Somerville House
Barker College
Loreto Normanhurst
Sacred Heart College
Scotch College WA
Tara Anglican School for Girls
Tudor House School
Guildford Grammar
St Catherine's School Vic
St Ursula's Anglican School for Girls
New England Girls School
St Margaret's Anglican Girls School
The Armidale School
Melbourne Girls Grammar
St Patrick's College Vic
The Scots College
Walford Anglican School for Girls
Ipswich Girls' Grammar School
Rockhampton Girls Grammar School
St Michael's Collegiate
St Joseph's Nudgee College

Blackheath & Thornburgh College
Calrossy Anglican School Girls
Scotch College SA
Cranbrook School
Scots PGC College
St Ursula's College Yeppoon
The Cathedral School of St Anne & St James
Pymble Ladies' College
Presbyterian Ladies' College WA
Frensham
Trinity Grammar School
Anglican Church Grammar School
St Hilda's School
Ballarat Grammar
Toowoomba Anglican College
Christ Church Grammar School



Farrer Memorial Ag. High School
St Brendan's College
Northam Residential College
Edmund Rice College
Santa Maria College
Fahan School
St Teresa's College Abergowrie
La Salle College
Clayfield College
Downlands College
St Ursula's College Toowoomba



WA College of Agriculture Cunderdin
Immanuel College
St Augustine's College
St Francis De Sales Regional College
Dalby State High School
Merredin Residential College
Monivae College
WA College of Agriculture Harvey
Penrhos College
Springvale Accommodation

1830s

1850s

1870s

1890s

1910s

1930s

1950s

1840s

1860s

1880s

1900s

1920s

1940s

1960s

St Peter's College
Launceston Church Grammar School
The Hutchins School



Prince Alfred College
Brisbane Grammar School
St Stanislaus' College
Wesley College Melbourne
Ballarat Clarendon College
Ipswich Grammar School
Newington College
Geelong College



Genazzano FCJ College
Shore
Presbyterian Ladies' College Sydney
Townsville Grammar School
Kambala
Presbyterian Ladies' College Armidale
The Friends' School
Ascham School
Scotch Oakburn College
Wenona School
Abbotsleigh
Wilderness School
The Scots School Albury
Methodist Ladies' College
Caulfield Grammar School
Kinross Wolaroi School
The Rockhampton Grammar School
Avalon College
Saint Ignatius' College Riverview



Firbank Grammar School
Fairholme College
The Glennie School
Iona Presentation College
Carmel Adventist College
Hurlstone Agricultural High School
Methodist Ladies' College WA
WA College of Agriculture Narragoin
Brisbane Boys College
Perth College
Trinity Grammar School Kew
Clontarf Aboriginal School
Ravenswood School For Girls
The Southport School



Canberra Grammar School
St Brigid's College
Loreto College
Huntingtower School
St Joseph's School
Canberra Girls' Grammar School
St Gregory's College
St Mark's College
Gippsland Grammar School
Knox Grammar School
Rostrevor College
Wesley College, WA
Seymour College
Yanco Agricultural High School
Mount St Bernard College
St Mary's Anglican Girls' School
All Souls St Gabriels School
Stuartholme School



St Paul's College
Concordia Lutheran College
The Scots School Bathurst
St Peters Lutheran College
WA College of Agriculture Denmark
Marist College Ashgrove



Assumption College
Emerald Agricultural College
Esperance Residential College
Longreach Pastoral College
MacKillop College
Mazenod College
St Philip's College
Aquinas College
Narragin Residential College
Peninsula Grammar
Westminster School
St John's Catholic College





WA College of Agriculture Morawa
Red Bend Catholic College
Albany Residential College
Pembroke School
Yirara College
Bunbury Cathedral Grammar School
Kincoppal - Rose Bay School



Great Southern Grammar
Hills College
AFL House Cape York
Columba Catholic College
Snowy Mountains Grammar School
The Regent's School Pattaya
Peace Lutheran College
Haileybury Rendall School
(formerly Kormilda College)
Rotary Residential College
The Cathedral College
The Kilmore International School



The Australian Ballet School
Melbourne Indigenous Transition School
Currawah Aboriginal Education Centre
Western Cape College Residential Campus

1970s

1990s

2010s

1980s

2000s

All Saints Anglican School
The Kooralbyn International School
Whitsunday Anglican School
Shalom Christian College
The McDonald College
Moora Residential College
Dubbo Christian School
Holy Spirit College
Worawa Aboriginal College
John Paul College
Dalby Christian College

Tec-NQ
Broome Residential College
Esperance Anglican Community School
City Beach Residential College
Kildare Catholic College
Spinifex Residential College
Geraldton Residential College
Djarragan College



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CHAPTER 1

Prologue – **How ABSA began**

Before the days of the internet and mobile phones, communication among staff working in boarding houses was very difficult. Back in the 1980's, in an effort to get over this isolation, groups of boarding staff were meeting together to share good practice and to tour each other's boarding houses. Queensland and Western Australia both formed Residential Staff Associations that over time became Boarding Staff Associations in each State.



During these years other Australian States had not formed formal boarding staff associations, though Heads of Boarding did meet regularly in some states.

In 1987 the Queensland Residential Schools Staff Association (QRSSA) was formed with about forty members. QRSSA changed names to Boarding Schools Association of Queensland (BSAQ) which morphed into Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA), as we know it today.

However, there were many steps along the way. In its first years QRSSA/BSAQ organised workshops and annual tours for staff working in boarding schools in south east Queensland. About this time WARSSA/BSAWA was formed and organising similar activities for Western Australian boarding



Dorm inspection 1980





schools, mostly metropolitan. Western Australia remained a separate state-based organisation until it became part of the national organisation of ABSA in 2007.

Back to Queensland. In 1996, after a very successful conference at the Anglican Church Grammar School in Brisbane at which there were several interstate delegates,

the name was changed from the Queensland Residential Schools Staff Association to Boarding Staff Association Queensland to better reflect the changing membership. BSAQ ran very successful annual national conferences which were mainly held in boarding schools throughout south-east Queensland.

About this time AHISA, the

Association of Heads of Independent Schools in Australia, was becoming concerned about the lack of training of boarding staff and convened three conferences for Principals and boarding staff.

- 1996 - Fairholme College, Toowoomba, Queensland.
- 2005 - Christ Church Grammar School, Perth, Western Australia.

2007 - Melbourne Grammar School,
Melbourne, Victoria.

Because of his experience in organising conferences for boarding staff, Richard Stokes, then President of BSAQ, was seconded to the organising committees for those conferences. With the formation of the national organisation, the Australian Boarding Schools Association in 2007, AHISA decided not to continue convening boarding conferences.

In 2001 BSAQ became a national body, the Australian Boarding Staff Association, ABSA, a reflection of the rapidly increasing number of interstate members. ABSA developed a constitution to govern the organisation and direct its management committee, composed of representatives from most States of Australia. The minutes of meetings during that time show that discussions were

taking place reflecting the need for better training of boarding staff and recognition of the work that boarding staff undertook (not just babysitting boarders between the hours of 3pm and 9am).

Also the need for acceptance by AHISA that the organisation was working towards improving practices within boarding houses, and the lives of the students who boarded at their schools.

Boarding was changing across Australia. Accepted practice was being questioned as society was changing, boarders were no longer coming only from rural and remote Australia, but international boarders and flexible boarding programmes were changing the nature of boarding schools.



*Senior student's study-bedroom, 1965
- Newington College*

CHAPTER 2

TARSA, The Australian Residential Schools Association

TARSA was established by Dr Timothy Hawkes, Headmaster of The King's School, Parramatta, in 2000. Dr Hawkes was becoming very concerned about issues confronting the boarding industry in Australia and initiated the formation of a new boarding school organisation, TARSA.



1930s Junior Division Open Air Dormitory Sth Wing - Xavier College



Lunch at the Tabernacle - Somerville House

TARSA was to be an umbrella organisation for those involved in the residential care of children. It was not an easy task to persuade school principals to see the need for such an organisation. However, unfortunate scandals within some Australian boarding residences, and the knowledge that the UK government had mandated a suffocating raft of standards and inspection procedures on their boarding schools, persuaded the doubters that such an organisation was a good idea.

TARSA needed something to offer

to schools and that offering was the first course in residential care called Duty of Care, written by Dr Hawkes.

Duty of Care was a single book covering topics relevant to boarding, including the philosophy of boarding, the welfare of students, health and safety of staff and students. The book could be purchased, and staff were able to complete modules in their own time. An alliance was formed with the Australian Catholic University and the completed course was accredited to become a Certificate in Residential Care. This certificate course was later

discontinued by the Australian Catholic University, an internal decision that did not involve ABSA. However, all was not lost and after the amalgamation of TARSA and ABSA in 2007 the first face to face Duty of Care workshops were held in all States. On completion of the course, the books, now two in number by 2010, could be marked by the new organisation and a certificate issued.

Dr Hawkes thought his first edition of Duty of Care was in his words 'amateur', but to boarding staff it was a revelation! It explained what they were doing and why.



CHAPTER 3

The formation of ABSA – The Australian Boarding Schools Association

During 2006 Dr Timothy Hawkes began discussions with the Committee of the Australian Boarding Staff Association and a decision was reached to merge the two organisations, TARSA and ABSA, to become the Australian Boarding Schools Association. This was the merger of TARSA, an employer organisation, and ABSA, an employee organisation. The new organisation now recognised all employees of boarding schools. The new association came into being as a Company Limited by Guarantee in October 2007.



The earlier ABSA had been run by a committee whose members represented most Australian States and governed its activities. The new association needed a new constitution that would define the parameters of its governance. The Committee became members of the Board whose operation and duties were governed by the new constitution.

What happened next?

Dr Hawkes was elected the founding Chairman of the Board of the new Association and Mr Richard Stokes was appointed as the first Executive Director, taking

on the role in a part time basis. In the years between 2007 and 2010, Richard ran the Association while continuing his teaching commitments at St Joseph's Nudgee College, Brisbane. In 2011 Richard took leave from St Joseph's Nudgee College to become the first fulltime CEO of ABSA on a year's trial.

Thus began a time of much decision making for the new Board. The Board debated passionately on topics that would define the foundations of the new Association. Topics included the number of Board members, their legal liability, their duties and who they represented, financial stability including the imperative to pay a fulltime CEO, scale of fees for member schools and the beginnings of discussion about standards in boarding.

Richard was appointed to the full-time paid position of CEO in 2012, a position he still holds. For many new Board members, being on a national Board was a steep learning experience. Under the guidance of the Chairs of ABSA, Dr. Hawkes, Mr Garth Wynne, Headmaster of Christ Church Grammar School, Perth and Ms Pauline Turner, Director of Boarding at PLC, Sydney, the Board evolved into the well-functioning unit that it is today.

CHAPTER 4

ABSA Governance

Without good governance, any organisation will struggle. ABSA, as a Company Limited by Guarantee, is governed by a Board of Directors which is directed by the Constitution.



1926 Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School Basketball - Bell



1927 CPLC Boarders' Picnic Moorabool Reserve
- Ballarat Clarendon College

1. The Constitution

For an organisation to operate safely and legally across Australia it must be a Company Limited by Guarantee and it must have a Constitution. ABSA used as it's basis the constitution of the original ABSA (Australian Boarding Staff Association), plus best practice of similar not-for-profit organisations in Australia. A copy of the constitution can be found on the ABSA web site: www.boarding.org.au/about-us/our-constitution

ABSA was registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee on October 15th, 2007. Since 2007 the Constitution has been modified to reflect changes in society. All changes to the Constitution must be approved by the members at Annual General Meetings.

2. The Board

The Board is the governing body of ABSA and consists of a number of Directors. According to the constitution the number of Directors shall be no less than three and no more than sixteen. The Board consists of Directors, one from each regional division, two Principals, one appointed by AHISA and one appointed by the Board and up to two Directors appointed by the Board. The Board meets at least three times a year, either face to face or via the internet.

The Board regularly conducts professional learning seminars for Board members, usually before Board meetings. These are important as Directors may be new or have limited prior board experience.



3. The Strategic Plan

What is a strategic plan? It is a tool to define the strategy or direction of an organisation. It guides decision making and evaluates progress. It is the 'big picture' for an organisation. It is aspirational, achievable, and measurable.

The first strategic plan was developed by the board under the Chairmanship of Mr Garth Wynne. A management consultant, Mr Mark Vincent, from the company Insight Plus facilitated the process that the Board took to formulate the plan. Implementation of a strategic plan became possible with an increase in the number of ABSA staff. Tom Dunsmore joined the ABSA staff in 2012 and together with Richard Stokes became the operational team that was the 'nuts and bolts' of putting the plan into action.

History of the Strategic Plans

Plan 1 - 2014 - 2018. The first plan stabilised the organisation. It provided a framework for the Board to make policy decisions affecting the progress and growth of ABSA. It removed the operational decisions from the Board and centred them with the staff of ABSA.

Plan 2 - 2018 - 2021. The second plan was more aspirational and allowed the Board to consider what might be achievable. It looked to develop new areas to expand the activities of ABSA. The new areas included developing additional income streams to allow the number of staff to increase, to develop more services to members and to expand the outreach of ABSA to include international members.

Plan 3 - 2022 - 2025. At the time of writing, the plan is still under development, postponed because of Covid.

4. Finances

To operate efficiently, an organisation must have a secure financial base. ABSA, in its early years, relied on school membership subscriptions, the sale of Duty of Care books and workshops for its income. By 2014 ABSA had become a stronger organisation and the Board, under the chairmanship of Mr Garth Wynne, decided that it needed a more substantial and regular financial underpinning.

A consultant, Julian Moore, was engaged by the Board to establish a financial partnership program. The goal was two hundred thousand dollars, an eye watering amount in those days. Today the value of the partnerships is approaching three hundred thousand dollars annually.

A carefully designed brochure put together by Tom Dunsmore, an ABSA





staffer, was used to inform potential partners what they could expect to gain by becoming a partner with ABSA.

Note: The difference between a sponsor and a partner. A sponsor usually provides money for a specific event or service, for example, a conference. A partner has an ongoing relationship, and the organisations work together for their mutual benefit.

The partner works with ABSA, and thus the schools, to develop an ongoing relationship. A partner offers schools a pathway to solve challenges or provide services. The schools provide the partner an avenue into new markets and thus an expansion of their business. Today the number of partners is approximately twenty. The original list was five: Letz Live, Student Horizons Travel; AH Beard (mattresses); Chartwells, Catering; Reach, Computer Management

Software for Boarding Schools. These organisations were the foundation of the current very successful partnership programme.

Other financial sources

1. Membership subscriptions. Member schools and other boarding institutions pay an annual subscription based on their number of boarders.
2. Workshops, both face to face and virtual.
3. Sale and marking of Duty of Care books.
4. Reviews of staff and boarding operations as requested by the school.
5. Programmes, webinars, certificate courses, etc offered through the ABSA Training Academy.

5. Membership

Who are members of ABSA?

1. Schools or hostels that pay the Membership Fee.
2. Affiliate member - a person who is currently working in a boarding school or hostel.
3. Associate Member - a person who pays an Individual Membership Fee - they do not work in a boarding school.
4. Life Members - who do not pay a Membership Fee.



CHAPTER 5

Publications

A critical part of the work of the Australian Boarding Schools Association is to provide member schools with documents they can use to train their staff, keep up to date on good practice in boarding, and assist parents and staff to choose a particular boarding school.



1. Duty of Care

Duty of Care is the flagship publication of ABSA. Duty of Care was written by Dr Timothy Hawkes in 2000 as a training manual for those working with boarders of school age.

Earlier that year Dr Hawkes had established TARSA, The Australian Residential Schools Association. Duty of Care, then one book, was published under the logo of TARSA. Duty of Care was written because the level of school-based training for boarding staff varied greatly. It was written to improve practice. Written by those working in the industry, for those working in the industry. It was practical and down to earth, not too academic or theoretical.

With the establishment of ABSA in 2007 an updated version of Duty of Care (now two books) was published with a Forward by ABSA.





Time line for the publication of Duty of Care.

2010 - A second edition, now two books, was published.

Book 1 - essential knowledge for boarding staff.

Book 2 - highly desirable knowledge for boarding staff.

2015 - A third edition, again two books, was published.

New information was included to stay abreast of changing times.

Mobile phones and the internet were now omnipresent in boarding houses and had to be managed.

2018 - 1. Gap edition - an abridged version of Duty of Care containing basic information for those working in a boarding house for a short time, for example, a Gap year. It was also suitable for staff who undertook boarding duties for a short time, for example, a term or semester.

- 2. International edition. A general training manual that could be adapted to local conditions and free from any Australianisms. Note: The BSA, the British equivalent of ABSA used a modified version of Duty of Care before its own training manual was written.

2021 - A fourth edition, again two books, was completely re-written.

Society changes, expectations change, but Duty of Care remains the best training manual for staff working in boarding schools in Australia.

Who owns Duty of Care? Dr Hawkes owns the intellectual property of Duty of Care while he continues to be the author. The profits of the sale of Duty of Care books are shared equally between Dr Hawkes and ABSA.

2. Pamphlets

1. Let's Talk About Boarding

An informative document written by Tina Campbell, Richard Stokes and others in 2015 for families 'considering' boarding for their children. Copies are sent to families, to schools and are available at information sessions, education expos and ICPA conferences.

2. Warts and All

An introductory and informative document written by Mike Silcock, Richard Stokes and others, for people thinking about working in a boarding school. Copies are sent to schools and are available at Duty of Care workshops.



Both these pamphlets are very useful for families, prospective boarders, and staff in boarding schools. They provide information that is not otherwise readily available, filling a gap in the market.

3. Lights Out

'Lights Out' has developed since its inception from a one-page production printed in a boarding house office with nuts and bolts articles about boarding, to a sophisticated magazine, printed three times a year. Wide ranging

articles promote boarding and boarding activities, both national and international. It is increasingly read online - an example of 'soft marketing' that reaches a very wide audience. 'Lights Out' is recognised as the best professional boarding magazine in the world.

CHAPTER 6

Conferences, Symposia and Seminars

One of the most rewarding roles the Association has played is to bring people together to learn about their role and how to perform it to the best of their ability.



1. National Conferences

The first national conference was held in Canberra, a fitting venue to launch the new association.

National conferences have been held biannually since then.

- 2008 - Developing Excellence in Boarding - Canberra
Venue: Hotel Realm
- 2010 - Point of Difference - Canberra
Venue: Hotel Realm
- 2012 - Are You Up to Standard? - Gold Coast
Venue: Crowne Plaza
- 2014 - It's Not What You do. It's Why You Do It - Surfers Paradise
Venue: QT Hotel
- 2016 - Creating the Future for Boarding Schools - Gold Coast
Venue: QT Hotel



- 2018 - Boarding - Opening Doors to the World - Melbourne
Venue: Crown Promenade

- 2020 - Unlock the Potential
This face-to-face conference was to have been held in Fremantle, WA but was cancelled due to the Covid 19 pandemic. It was replaced by an online conference.

As the membership of ABSA increased and with the establishment of a national secretariat, more targeted professional learning programmes were developed to meet the needs of specific groups within the boarding community.



2. Leaders Symposia

These programmes are designed to enhance the knowledge of senior staff working in boarding houses. The themes are very practical, focused on the skills and behaviours that need to be developed to ensure that boarding houses operate efficiently, safely and within the law.

The symposiums are held in the years between the National Conferences. The first symposium was held in 2009.

- 2009 - Lights On - Melbourne
Venue: Novotel on Collins
- 2011 - Be the Ripple Effect - Adelaide
Venue: Crowne Plaza Hotel
- 2013 - Risk Management - Perth
Venue: Crown Perth
- 2015 - A Long Way from Home - emphasis on rural, remote and international students - Alice Springs
Venue: Alice Springs Convention Centre
- 2017 - Positive Change - Sydney
Venue: International Convention Centre
- 2019 - Practical Leadership Habits in The Digital Age - Adelaide Hills
Venue: Convention Centre Hahndorf



3. Taking the Reins Seminars

These seminars are designed for staff newly appointed to leadership positions in boarding houses.

The presenters are usually members of the ABSA Board who are themselves Heads of Boarding and Principals of Boarding Schools. Practical knowledge from old hands!

The first Taking the Reins seminar was held in 2014 and the ABSA office was the venue. The seminars are held annually, and their current venue is Bond University, Gold Coast, Queensland.



4. Online Seminars

As with all forward-thinking organisations, ABSA was moving into the digital age prior to the Covid19 pandemic. There were short-term and long-term ramifications on how organisations could survive and operate in a new business environment.

With the onset of the Pandemic, ABSA had to rapidly review its operations. Face-to-face conferences, seminars and workshops were cancelled due to lockdowns and border closures. The future of these face-to-face happenings seemed bleak. The ABSA team moved quickly into virtual meetings and seminars for boarding staff to keep them connected and well informed.

An unexpected bonus of the online programmes meant that many more staff could be involved. Previously, because of cost, only a limited number of boarding staff could attend conferences and seminars. Each cloud has a silver lining!

ABSA conferences, symposia and seminars are never dull! Conference speakers are always inspiring, always challenging, moving delegates out of their comfort zones to new ways of thinking. The national conference dinners are memorable!

Unforgettable dinners include:

- 2008: Great Hall, Parliament House, Canberra
- 2010: National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
- 2012: Seaworld, Gold Coast
- 2015: Oraminna Station, Alice Springs
- 2018: The MCG, Melbourne

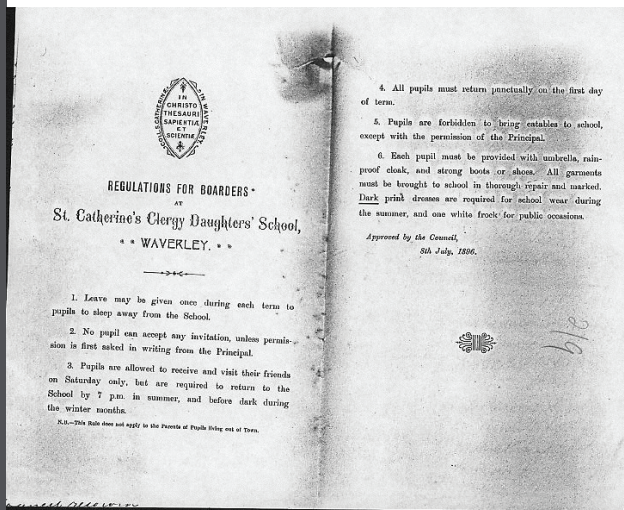
Note: these conference dinners are the writer's favourites. Delegates at national conferences will no doubt have other favourites!



CHAPTER 7

The Boarding Standard

There had been considerable discussion between Dr Hawkes and AHISA, and also ABSA about the need to write a Standard for Australian boarding schools.



*Boarders Regulations 1896 -
St Catherine's School, Waverley*

The British government had imposed a long and exhaustive list of Standards on boarding schools in Britain and after some revision the Standards became regulation in 1912.

AHISA did not want the Australian government to impose such standards on Australian schools. Dr Hawkes wrote a draft Standard with the blessing of the ABSA Board and most members of AHISA.

At the national conference of ABSA on the Gold Coast in 1912 Dr Hawkes introduced the draft Standard, but stressed the need for such a Standard and insisted that its application would be voluntary.

At an ABSA Board meeting later that year, Darren Roylett from Prince Alfred College in Adelaide suggested that Standards Australia be approached to determine the way forward.

About this time Boarding Australia (which would later become IEBA, Indigenous Education and Boarding Australia) had obtained a grant from the Federal Government to write a boarding standard covering boarding schools and hostels in Australia. A flurry of animated discussions took place between ABSA and Boarding Australia and the result was that the then Minister for Education, The Right Honourable Peter Garrett, rewrote the guidelines for the Boarding Australia grant, and that the Standard written would only apply to hostels and boarding schools that were members of Boarding Australia.

There was a concerted sigh of relief from AHISA and ABSA, the organisation that was responsible for about thirteen times the number of students than those cared for by Boarding Australia, a ratio of 1 to 13.



*c1952 Boarders in Fairholme Dining Room
- Fairholme College*



Glow Party 2017 - Fairholme College

What next?

It was decided to work with Standards Australia and fund the Standards project, and a working committee was established by Standards Australia with Richard Stokes from ABSA as Drafting Chair, and representatives from a wide group of Australian organisations that had an interest

in the care of boarding students in Australia. This committee included representatives from the Isolated Children's Parents Association, (ICPA), the Country Women's Association (CWA) and parents' organisations both state and federal, among others.

The Draft Standard from 2012 was re-written in 'Standards

language'. Dr Hawkes remained a consultant to that committee.

After three years of monthly meetings and great debate about the content, including a time of public consultation, the Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residences was published on 23rd July 2015.





Boarders' Picnic 1966 - PLC Sydney

Why was all that work important?

The Standard gave schools a best practice plan to work towards, to ensure that policies and procedures were in place to protect both staff and boarders.

ABSA developed a Certification process for schools, with three stages in the process. Stages 1

and 2 are self-assessed. Stage 3 is externally assessed

Stage 1 Where am I at now?

Stage 2 How far have I come?
What do I still need to do?

Stage 3 External assessment.

It is hoped that in the future all boarding schools will be externally credentialed, a recognition of reaching The Boarding Standard.



Digging the Air Raid shelter - Wenona School



CHAPTER 8

Professional Recognition

The Australian Boarding Schools Association places major emphasis on ensuring those working in boarding schools, looking after the boarders, are recognised as professionals for their wonderful work.



1. The Accredited Boarding Practitioner Scheme

Jointly developed by ABSA and BSA, Boarding Schools Association, UK, this scheme has given boarding staff an opportunity to celebrate their professional standing in their schools and within the industry.

Boarding staff have long laboured under the misguided notion held by others that nothing much happens in the boarding houses between the hours of 3pm and 9am. 'But what do you actually do?' is the often asked question. Through gritted teeth, boarding

staff try to answer that question.

The Accredited Boarding Practitioner Scheme was the answer! This scheme provided a pathway for boarding staff to have their service and professional learning recognised. There are four levels to the accreditation which recognises years of service, professional learning, seniority, leadership, academic boarding qualifications and commitment to State and National committees.



2. Awards

1. Premier Leadership Award

These awards are for exemplary leadership and dedication to the promotion of excellence in boarding education.

2012 - Dave Scott, Head of Boarding, Scotch College, Adelaide.

2014 - Kim Walters, Head of Boarding, Worawa Aboriginal College, Victoria.

2016 - Tina Campbell, Head of Boarding, St Mary's Anglican Girls' School, Perth.

2017 - Bernie Dean, Head of Boarding, Immanuel College, Adelaide.

2018 - Charlie Scudamore, Deputy Principal, Geelong Grammar School, Geelong.

2019 - Chris van Styn, Director of Boarding, Ballarat Grammar, Ballarat.

2020 - Lesa Fowler, Head of Boarding, St Margaret's Anglican Girls' School, Brisbane.

2021 - Berian Williams-Jones, Director of Boarding, Brisbane Grammar School, Brisbane.



2. Innovation in Boarding Schools Award

These awards are for programmes that inspire and challenge boarders to achieve amazing outcomes.

2012 - **Scotch College, Perth.**

The Bibbulmun Track. A demanding trek in and around Perth that begins in Year 8 and culminates in Year 12. Boys walk approximately 200 kilometres a year in two one-week blocks per year.

2014 - **Michael Holland, for his role in developing the Reach Boarding House System.**

Reach is a program that centralises boarding house operations in a system that is easy to use, stores information about boarder activities and is easily accessible by boarding staff.

2016 - **The Peninsula Grammar, Melbourne.**

Drumbeat. A programme that focuses on social and emotional learning. Drumbeat is an acronym standing for: Discovering Relationships, Using Music, Beliefs, Emotions, Attitudes, Thoughts.

2017 - **City Beach Residential College, Perth.**

Positive Behaviour App. An app used by staff to reward with points, positive behaviour of

students. Students can accumulate points to redeem prizes for themselves or their house.

2018 - **Spinfex Residential Campus, Mt Isa.**

Community Minded. A programme designed to encourage engagement with the community wider than the school and to remind students that it is better to be a Giver and not a Taker.

2019 - **Christ's College, Canterbury, New Zealand.**

Immerse and Inspire. A programme for Year 10 boys to encourage them to learn new skills, to be open to new ideas, to understand themselves and to respect differences in others. In groups of 30 -35 the boys live in one of the boarding houses for a 4-week period during Terms 2 and 3.

2020 - **Mt St. Bernard's College, Queensland.**

Developing a Mountain Bike Track. During lock down in 2020 when boarders went home, the boarding staff designed and developed three mountain bike tracks on a section of College property. The tracks will be used by the school students and are of such a standard that they can be used for competitions.



2021 - Guildford Grammar School, Perth.

VI programme. A programme that provides a comprehensive and individualised pastoral and wellbeing initiative to ensure that boarders leave school with the social and emotional skills they need in a complex and challenging world. The title 'VI', the Latin word for 6, has two meanings: 6, representing the 6 stages in boarding school from Year 7 to Year 12 and also translated as You, representing the role each person plays in managing their own lives with personal wellbeing at the centre.

3. Excellence in Indigenous Boarding Award

The ABSA / IEBA Excellence in Indigenous Boarding Award is jointly presented by ABSA and Indigenous Education and Boarding Australia.

2018 - Kinross Wolaroi School, Orange, New South Wales.

The programme provides an educational opportunity for Indigenous students to enhance their identity and develop skills to enable them to walk in two worlds.

2019 - Yiramalay / Wesley Studio School, Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia.

This programme provides opportunities for Indigenous students to continue their education in Years 10, 11, and 12. It is immersive and residential. The programme also provides opportunities for Wesley students to experience life in remote Australia.

2020 - Melbourne Indigenous Transition School, Melbourne, Victoria.

MITS is a residential transitional school for Year Seven Indigenous students from rural and remote communities. Students spend a year at MITS before transitioning to Melbourne partner schools. During 2020, MITS relocated to Darwin so that students who had returned to their families because of Covid19 could recommence face-to-face learning in a residential setting.

2021 - Sacred Heart College, Adelaide

Sacred Heart College has developed a culturally supportive programme for Indigenous students recognising that the transition from home to boarding school can be very difficult for many students. Sacred Heart College has forged a long-term relationship over 15 years between the College and the Port Augusta community and, most recently, stretching to the APY Lands.



3. Service Awards

These awards recognise years of service to boarding. Currently these awards are given for 10, 20, 30 years and 30 plus years.

4. Life Members

These awards are for people who have given exemplary service to boarding over a number of years.

Current Life Members:

Mrs Karen Stokes - 2013

Dr Timothy Hawkes - 2017

Mrs Rosalyn Lindsay - 2019

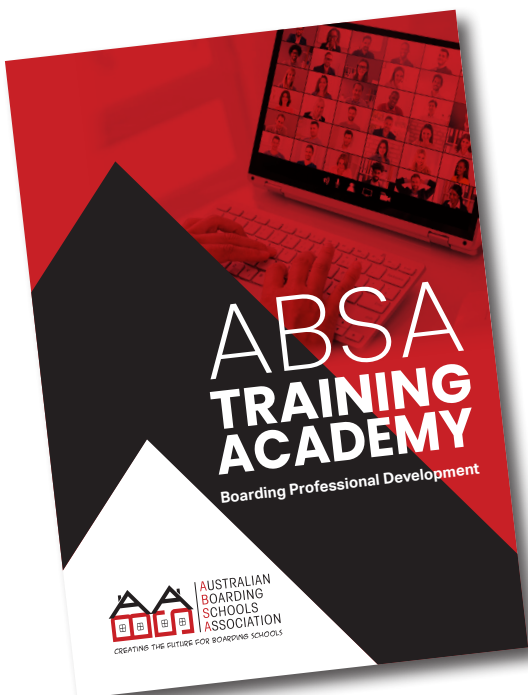


Long before the advent of emails, smart phones, social media and messenger, boarders at St Margaret's Anglican Girls School in Brisbane in the 1950s would gather to receive handwritten letters during mail delivery.

CHAPTER 9

ABSA Training Academy

After many frustrating years trying to persuade tertiary institutions around Australia to provide a pathway for the accreditation of boarding professional learning into undergraduate degrees, ABSA developed an academy modelled on the BSA Training Academy of the United Kingdom. The Academy is designed to bring together professional learning opportunities for all staff working in boarding. Academy training can be accessed in person at a workshop, online through a webinar, at a conference or through an accredited training course.



Much of the work was developed in Australia. ABSA has also incorporated into the Academy, programmes designed and developed from around the world.

There are four levels of learning.

Level 1. Induction

Duty of Care.

Level 2. Day seminars

Webinars.
Symposia.
Conferences.

Level 3. Certificates

These are professional learning opportunities specifically designed for staff working in boarding schools.

Level 4. Masters in Residential Education

ABSA has partnered with BSA (UK) and the University of Buckingham to provide a Masters in Residential Education. The course is designed for experienced boarding practitioners from Australia, the UK and overseas. The course is delivered online.

The ABSA Training Academy has brought together courses and activities that ABSA has developed over the years into one coherent program. The advent of Covid19 curtailed many of the activities of ABSA - travelling by ABSA staff, face-to-face presentations, conferences and workshops - and forced the development of new ways to deliver essential services. The Training Academy was the culmination of a new way of operating. It will be a welcome addition to the already excellent professional learning activities of ABSA.



*Centenary Building c.1913
Boarding was on the 2nd and 3rd floor
- Methodist Ladies' College, WA*

Other Professional learning

1. Webinars

ABSA has produced a significant number of professional learning webinars that are accessed not only locally but by many international schools.

2. Virtual School Tours

Technology has enabled virtual walk-through boarding house tours. At the click of the mouse, access to an Australian school, maybe a New Zealand school or maybe much further away? Central Asia? USA? What a choice!

3. Podcasts

A series of informal chats between ABSA staff and people who had interesting and often very

funny stories to tell about their experiences in boarding was commenced in 2020. The interest in the podcasts was very surprising and they have been accessed both nationally and internationally.

The podcast programme was yet another way that ABSA developed during the pandemic to keep boarding staff connected both in Australia and overseas.

The technical expertise of the ABSA staff enabled them to work quickly with boarding staff to pass on information about health issues, state border closures, travel problems and a myriad of other issues that arose from the new reality of the pandemic. Virtual meetings were organised for like-minded staff and many opportunities were provided to access professional learning, especially Duty of Care courses, through the ABSA Training Academy.





Ipswich Grammar School Boarders 1993



Abbotsleigh - Read House Boarding 2015 - showing the same space as the 1934 view through the arched entrance to Read House - a nice contrast showing the relaxed side of contemporary boarding.



Read House sleepout c1933 - this photograph, dating from c1933, shows the sleepout verandah at Read House, which was both a boarding house for senior boarders and the residence of the Headmistress.



CHAPTER 10

Research

Since its early days, ABSA has been very keen to encourage research into boarding. Financial assistance was to be available for worthwhile projects. Between 2010 and 2012, Dr Brad Papworth, then a Housemaster at The King's School, Parramatta was part of a study financed by grants from the Australian Research Council and ABSA. The study was entitled 'Exploring the Effects of Boarding School on Academic and Non-Academic Outcomes'. The results were interesting and informative. Dr Papworth's excellent PhD thesis is worth reading. Currently this is the only research funded by ABSA.



c1954-1960 Fire Practice B Nettle (nee Milgate)
- PLC Sydney



1955 Fencing team - Rockhampton Girls' Grammar School



1965 Life on the Hill - Scotch College Melbourne



2017 Boarding Village Common Kitchenette
- St Joseph's Nudgee College

CHAPTER 11

International Outreach

The Australian Boarding Schools Association does not exist in isolation. It works closely with other like-minded Associations across the world and supports schools from many countries with their boarding staff professional learning.



1. International Organisations and ABSA

TABS, The Association of Boarding Schools, USA.

As early as 2011, ABSA attended the TABS conferences in Washington DC and Boston. Both Richard Stokes and Tom Dunsmore have been invited to speak at these conferences, presenting aspects of a different style of boarding that is uniquely Australian.

BSA, Boarding Schools Association, UK.

The association with BSA goes back to the mid 1990's, pre-dating the association with TABS. Originally BSA used Duty of Care Book 1 as a training manual but now BSA produces its own training manuals that better reflect the British boarding requirements.

In 2019, Richard spoke at the Heads' Conference in the UK, the first Australian to do so. His speech was well received, and he surprised some when he said boarding in Australia was affected by the weather - think drought and how it affects boarding numbers!

UWC, United World Colleges, UK.

Since 2016, ABSA has worked with schools associated with the United World Colleges in Singapore, China, Armenia, and Bosnia. Duty of Care was the main programme presented but school specific programmes were included as requested.

NZBSA

The New Zealand Boarding Schools Association has worked closely with ABSA for many years, and both Richard Stokes and Tom Dunsmore have presented

at their annual conference on a number of occasions.

Other countries

Singapore. Currently (2021) all boarding schools in Singapore are members of ABSA. ABSA has run Duty of Care workshops in several schools there since 2016.

India. ABSA facilitated a conference in India hosted by an Australian, John Bussenschutt, then working in an Indian boarding school, for a number of Indian boarding schools. Since that conference several Indian boarding schools have joined ABSA.

By 2021, boarding schools in the USA, South Africa, Bosnia and Armenia have become members of ABSA.



CHAPTER 12

ABSA and Rural and Remote Australia

With over 70 percent of the boarders in Australia coming from Rural and Remote areas, it is a critical part of the work of the Association to ensure schools best serve these families.



1. The Isolated Children's Parents Association, the ICPA

The ICPA and ABSA have developed a very strong relationship over the years. ABSA attends both State and National ICPA conferences, sponsoring specific delegate activities. The ICPA was represented on the committee that drafted the Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residences. Input by the ICPA members was very important as the Standard had direct relevance to rural and remote parents and their boarding children.

2. Agfest and Country Shows

Agfest, one of the largest agricultural shows in Australia, is held annually at a site near Launceston, Tasmania. From 2013 to 2021 ABSA coordinated the joint marketing of boarding and boarding schools in Tasmania at Agfest.

The format was experimental and has proved to be a very effective way that schools could jointly promote boarding and at the same time promote their individual schools. The number of people

passing through the ABSA pavilion increased over the years. Admittedly, free sweets and face painting for the children were draw cards, but the friendly and warm pavilion was a good place for interested parents and former students to make contact with the schools.

The Agfest format has proved to be an effective form of group marketing. ABSA hopes that in the future, the Agfest format will be replicated with success in country shows around Australia.



CHAPTER 13

Marketing

ABSA has become the peak body for boarding in Australia and this unique position is well recognised by the media. The ABSA staff, in particular Richard Stokes, are often interviewed on radio and television and write articles for journals that have wide appeal to both rural and urban readers. Journals include The Stock Journal, Queensland Country Life, airline inflight magazines and insert magazines in state and national newspapers.



Richard is a skilled public speaker and regularly speaks at national and international conferences. He has been joined over the years by Tom Dunsmore and between them have become an excellent marketing team complementing each other's style.

Attendances at country shows, ICPSA conferences and awareness raising events with AHISA especially

with newly appointed principals and business managers, are all marketing opportunities that are pursued vigorously by ABSA.

ABSA has become a trusted voice, marketing boarding as a safe education option for parents and potential boarders.

CHAPTER 14

Important People of ABSA

The Chairs of ABSA

Since ABSA began in 2008, there have been three Chairs of the Board. Each was the right person for the time of tenure.



Dr Timothy Hawkes, Chair 2008 – 2013

Dr Hawkes and Richard Stokes were the initial driving force behind the formation of ABSA. Dr Hawkes had previously founded TARSA (The Australian Residential Schools Association), an employer organisation. In consultation with ABSA, an employee organisation, it was decided to merge the two organisations to better reflect the interests of both employers and employees. The combined organisation was able to exert much more political influence and speak with one voice, on all matters boarding.

Dr Hawkes was an enthusiastic ideas man, a great advocate for boarding and one who enjoyed wide government and media contacts. He lobbied hard with government for better conditions in schools, especially boarding schools. He challenged governments over a number of decisions that affected schools, particularly boarding schools. One notable success was when he persuaded the Commonwealth Government to rescind its decision to limit the number of GAP students a school could engage. As he cheerfully admits, there were times when he was less successful in his efforts to effect a decision change.

Dr Hawkes resigned as Chair of the Board in 2013, declaring it was time to pass the baton to a new Chair.





Mr Garth Wynne, Chair 2013 – 2015

Mr Wynne was the Headmaster of Christ Church Grammar School, Perth. He joined the ABSA Board in 2012, as the AHISA representative. Apart from his busy life as a school Head, he was a member of many boards and organisations, both state and national, and brought to the Board a wealth of knowledge of board governance. He oversaw the development of governance policies that enabled ABSA to operate legally and professionally. Under his watch a Governance Manual was written to reflect the excellent governance principles and formalise the relationship between the Board and the CEO.

During this time he and Richard Stokes instituted a programme of professional learning for Board members, many of whom had little experience of being on a board at a national level. While he was the Chair, Mr Wynne recognised that ABSA needed a strategic plan to guide the organisation towards the formation of goals that could be pursued and evaluated to show progress. The first strategic plan was developed in 2014.

Mr Wynne resigned as Chair of the Board in 2015 when he was appointed as Executive Principal of Christ's College, Christchurch, New Zealand.



Ms Pauline Turner, Chair 2016 –present

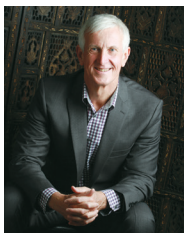
Ms Turner is currently Director of Boarding at PLC Sydney. She became a member of the ABSA Board in 2007 and has had many years of experience in boarding, both as a staff member and as a Head of Boarding.

Ms Turner has a background in the visual arts, applied psychology and theology. Prior to beginning life in boarding as a staff member in schools in country NSW, she worked in Cyprus for several years, ran a small business and worked as a graphic designer.

She has extensive knowledge of issues facing boarders, their families and boarding staff, developed over the time she spent in various schools. During those years she became involved firstly with the Australian Boarding Staff Association, as a member and, later as a state representative for NSW on the Management Committee.

Ms Turner brings a different perspective to the discussions and decision making of the Board and has guided the Board professionally and with much skill during difficult times, especially during the uncertainties of the pandemic.





The First National CEO of ABSA, Richard Stokes

Richard Stokes began his boarding career as a Boarding Supervisor at Immanuel College in Adelaide in 1980. During that time, he completed a BA and a Diploma of Education from Flinders University. As a newlywed and aged 21 he and his wife Karen moved to St Peters Lutheran College in Brisbane in 1982 where, as he says, it was a fast learning curve when he was appointed Assistant Senior Boarding Master in charge of 185 boys.

While at St Peters in 1987, Richard, with like-minded boarding staff from other schools, initiated the formation of the Queensland Residential Schools Staff Association, the forerunner of the current ABSA. After 14 years and by then Coordinator of Boarding, Richard resigned to become Dean of Residential Care at St Joseph's Nudgee College in Brisbane, a position he held until 2005. During the St Peters and Nudgee years, Richard actively promoted boarding through inter-boarding school visits and annual conferences. As the years progressed, representatives to these conferences included delegates from interstate and the membership of ABSA, the Australian Boarding Staff Association, grew rapidly.

Between the years 2007 and 2010 Richard was the Part-time Executive Director of ABSA which was the new organisation formed by the merging of TARSA and the former ABSA (see Chapters 1 and 2). His day job was as a member of the Nudgee academic staff.





ABSA was growing rapidly and after discussions with the Chairman of the Board, Dr Hawkes and the Board members, Richard took a year's leave. The next year, 2012, Richard resigned from Nudgee and was appointed with a permanent contract to continue his work as CEO of ABSA.

This is a potted history of Richard's life in boarding. He is charismatic, inspiring, and hardworking and has been the driving force behind ABSA, now the foremost boarding organisation in Australia. Because of his background in both boarding and teaching he is recognised as one who really understands the tensions felt by boarding staff who work so hard to provide the best possible care for the boarders in their charge.



*Church of England Boys School, St Aiden's Library.
- Toowoomba Anglican and Prep College*

CHAPTER 15

The National Secretariat

The national office of ABSA is in Brisbane. Since 2007 the number of office staff increased from the original one, Richard Stokes, to currently four, to better serve the members.



Richard Stokes, 2007 – present

Richard is the CEO of ABSA. In that position he is responsible for the transfer of the strategy of the Board into that which the Association can achieve. He coordinates all professional development activities of the organisation, engages with Government, both Federal and State, and controls media outreach. He is responsible for the financial management of the organisation as delegated by the Board.

He is actively involved with national organisations including AHISA, ICPA, IEBA, and with international boarding organisations TABS, BSA and the New Zealand BSA. Richard has become the 'voice' of boarding in Australia, recognition of the growth of ABSA that Richard has coordinated since 2007.



Thomas Dunsmore, 2012 – present

Tom was appointed as an office trainee in 2012. After completing a traineeship he became a permanent member of the staff. Tom has moved through many aspects of the ABSA organisation showing dedication and skill development along the way.

He coordinates the very successful Partners Programme. Under his guidance, the number of partners has grown from the original four to a number more than twenty. Tom is currently the General Manager, managing the day-to-day operations of the Association.





Louis Williams, 2013 – 2014

Louis joined ABSA as an office trainee in May 2013. After completing his traineeship in January 2014, he resigned to begin university studies.



Joshua Drahm, 2016 – 2019

Josh joined the ABSA staff as a casual employee in May 2016. He then undertook a traineeship with the Association. He resigned in August 2019 to begin university studies. Joshua was the first Indigenous member of the ABSA staff and often gave Welcome to Country at ABSA conferences.



Jackie Dench, 2019 – 2021

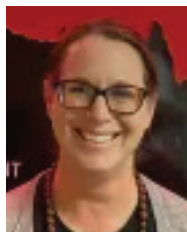
Jackie was appointed Office Manager in 2019. The appointment of an Office Manager facilitated the smooth running of the day-to-day activities of the busy ABSA office. Jackie retired in 2021.





Jared Daunt, 2020 – present.

Jared has a background in schools and Student Travel, joining the ABSA staff in 2020. He found a niche in the organisation where his relationship skills were quickly utilised as the pandemic caused ABSA to find new ways to deliver services to its members. He facilitated the development of the webinar and podcast programmes.



Kim Abrahams, 2021 – present.

Kim was appointed Office Manager in 2021, following the retirement of the former Office Manager.

CHAPTER 16

COVID-19 The Pandemic

In the future when the history of ABSA is read by scholars, the shocks of the first days and months of the pandemic will be, hopefully, history. There were profound and long-lasting effects on the operations of ABSA as, of course, in many organisations. The following are just some of the challenges that had to be managed by ABSA.



1. In March 2020 all State borders closed in Australia. That meant the cancellation of all travelling, face-to-face training, workshops, school reviews and visits.
2. A new business plan had to be developed very quickly. It was essential that ABSA pivoted to a new way of operating as approximately 70% of its operations that funded the organisation had evaporated.
3. Two big challenges emerged:
 - a. Financial - where was the money coming from that financed the operations of ABSA.
 - b. Member engagement - how to keep members connected and informed.
4. How were these challenges managed?
 - a. Financial.

Grants from governments, both State and Federal, provided essential money to keep the organisation afloat.
 - i. Job Keeper - a Federal Government programme that enabled staff to be paid and retained.
 - ii. Cash Boost - a Federal Government





initiative that enabled the business to pay its operating costs, for example pay rent, insurance, and telecommunication costs.

- iii. An IT grant from the Queensland Government was used to purchase new televisions and necessary equipment to enable Zoom communication to be developed. It also enabled development of the webinar and podcast programmes.

b. Member engagement.

The biggest challenge was to not lose members.

- i. Boarding staff needed support as they had to solve new problems. Not all boarders could go home. International travel was restricted. State border restrictions had to be managed. Restrictions either facilitated or frustrated the access of boarders to their homes and schools across State borders.
- ii. Coffee Meetings via Zoom. The weekly meetings provided a platform for boarding staff, particularly Heads of Boarding, to discuss issues of mutual concern. These meetings were very successful because it was now possible to involve all Heads of Boarding around Australia. In 2021 the weekly meetings were no longer a priority and they were replaced

by meetings once a term or as needed.

- iii. Webinar development. In the Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021, it was planned to have one webinar per term. However, the ABSA staff quickly realised that a vacuum in professional learning had occurred. Webinars were developed to assist boarding staff who were grappling with unforeseen situations that Covid 19 had presented.

The first webinar was designed to help boarders, boarding staff and parents become familiar with remote learning. It attracted over 600 viewers. There was obviously a need out there and ABSA came to the rescue.

The rapid development of the webinar programme provided easily accessible professional learning for boarding staff, not only in Australia but increasingly by international boarding staff.

Note: By 2021 over 60 professional learning webinars had been developed each year. Definitely a rapid increase in the original projected numbers!

- iv. Virtual Conferences. Virtual conferences replaced face to face conferences from 2020. A different skill-set was needed to curate a virtual conference

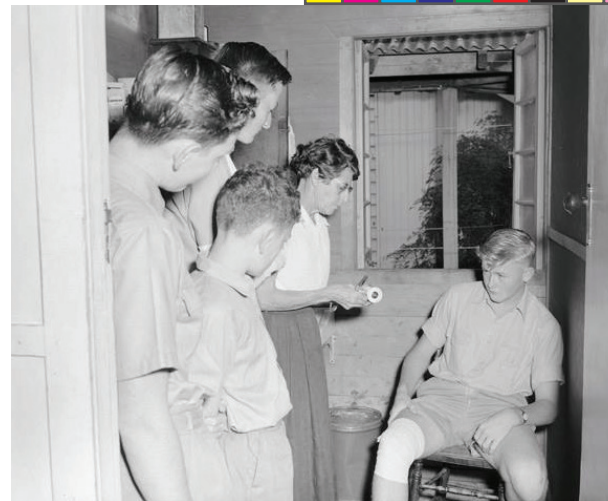


and ABSA used its technical expertise to develop easily accessible conference programmes for boarding staff. The new format was a challenge for some guest presenters!

There were spin offs from the change in presentation of a conference. Maybe, when face-to-face conferences return, new formats could be trialled:

- 2-day conferences instead of the pre-Covid 4 day conferences.
Advantage - less expensive to mount and less expensive for delegates.
- 1-day conferences in each State. Same format, different venue.
Advantage - less expensive to mount, less expensive for delegates and, hopefully, more delegates would be able to attend from each State.

The technical knowledge and the expertise of the ABSA staff, plus long days of hard work, enabled the organisation to meet the challenges of the pandemic to its operations. ABSA remained a financially viable organisation and provided the members with much needed support.



a (reluctant) boarder receiving medical attention from Matron Fox. 1970's Ipswich Grammar School



Sick Bay - Senior Boarding House, 1965 - Newington College



CHAPTER 17

What has ABSA achieved?

Over the 15 years ABSA has existed it has achieved some outstanding and much needed goals.



ABSA achievements?

1. Almost one hundred percent membership of all boarding schools in Australia, an outstanding result for a professional organisation. ABSA is recognised as the 'voice' of boarding in Australia, the best place to go for accurate, impartial information about boarding in Australia.



*Cocoa drinking in the winter sun during the 1950's.
- Toowoomba Anglican and Prep College*

2. Professionalism of the Boarding Industry.

- a. Development of The Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residences.
- b. Development of a national programme for Duty of Care workshops.
- c. Publications:
Lights Out, internationally acclaimed as the best boarding publication currently available.
Let's Talk About Boarding

and *Warts and All*,
Publications for prospective boarders, their parents and people considering a career in boarding.

- d. Professional Recognition: for individuals working in boarding, for innovative boarding programmes, and for service to the boarding industry.

- e. The ABSA Training Academy, a virtual institute that consolidates professional learning modules developed by ABSA from base level entry, through certificate courses to tertiary level courses at the University of Buckingham in the UK.
- f. Fabulous conferences: National Conferences bringing together boarding





staff from around Australia and increasingly from international schools, Leaders Symposia for senior staff in boarding schools and Taking The Reins for those newly appointed to leadership in boarding schools.

- g. Services: ABSA provides a range of professional services to schools, including boarding staff reviews, evaluation of policy documents and procedures and reviews of services associated with boarding.
3. Access to government. ABSA and its high-profile Chairs of the Board have had considerable success lobbying government with respect to issues that affect boarding schools.
Successes include:
 - a. Government agreeing in 2014 that ABSA would be the organisation to define the terms of reference for the development of the Boarding Standard.
 - b. Removal of the cap on the number of GAP Students a school could employ.
 - c. Cooperation with government health entities during the pandemic to facilitate the movement of boarders between their homes and their schools when border restrictions were imposed.
 - d. International Engagement. ABSA has developed strong ties with international boarding school associations: BSA, TABS and NZBSA.
4. National Engagement. ABSA is recognised as the premier boarding organisation in Australia by AHISA, AIS, ICPA and other national organisations with an interest in boarding students and their parents.
5. A Partnership Programme that ensures financial stability for ABSA.
6. Establishment of a National Secretariat. This is an important achievement. It means that:
 - a. The organisation is sufficiently financial to support employment of professional office staff.
 - b. The CEO, Richard Stokes, can strategically focus on the leadership of ABSA into the future.
7. The professionalism of the ABSA Board. The ABSA Board, under the guidance of its three Chairs, has become a truly national body that effectively guides ABSA to provide best practice service to its members, according to its constitution and based on good governance principles.



Postscript

ABSA is an amazing organisation. When one considers that many small to medium size businesses do not survive after two years. ABSA has bucked the trend through excellent leadership, tight financial control, a hard-working Board, adherence to the principles of good governance and a healthy dose of Australian good humour when things looked grim.

This history is a snapshot in life of the ABSA from the mid 1980's to 2021.

The next years will tell another story in the life of ABSA, different but just as interesting.

Acronyms

ABSA	Australian Boarding Staff Association 2001 -2006
ABSA	Australian Boarding Schools Association 2007 -present
BSAQ	Boarding Schools Association Queensland
BSAWA	Boarding Schools Association Western Australia
BSA	Boarding Schools Association, United Kingdom
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
IEBA	Indigenous Education and Boarding Australia
ICPA	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
MITS	Melbourne Indigenous Transition School
NZBSA	New Zealand Boarding Schools Association
PLC	Presbyterian Ladies College
QRSSA	Queensland Residential Schools Staff Association
TARSA	The Australian Residential Schools Association
UWC	United World Colleges
WARSSA	Western Australian Residential Schools Staff Association



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