

Lights Out

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Raising the Standard:
*Strengthening Child
Safety in Australian
Boarding Houses*

Girls vs Boys
Boarding:
*By Someone
Who's Seen It All*



2025
Regional
Symposium
in photos



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ON THE COVER

Boarders from Djarrugun College enjoying a day out

CONTACT US

Australian Boarding Schools Association.
Postal: PO Box 148, NORTHGATE, QLD, 4013
Office: Unit 6, 26 Navigator Place, HENDRA, QLD, 4011
P: + 61 7 3205 4940 E: absa@boarding.org.au
www.boarding.org.au

EDITOR

Richard Stokes, Chief Executive Officer,
Australian Boarding Schools Association

GRAPHIC DESIGN

www.trishbiggsgraphicdesign.com.au
+61 403 471 903

PRINTING

Professional Print Services
sales@professionalprintservices.com.au

Raising the Standard: Strengthening Child Safety in Australian Boarding Houses

Child safety is the single most important responsibility of every adult working in a boarding school environment. For boarding staff, the duty of care extends beyond classroom hours. We are not just educators or supervisors - we are carers, protectors, and trusted figures in a child's life, especially when home is far away.

Many of our schools are really committed to providing safe, nurturing environments, but commitment alone is not enough. The risk landscape is evolving, and we must ensure our practices evolve with it. This means raising our standards, deepening our knowledge, and embedding a culture of safety that goes beyond compliance - one that is lived every day by every member of staff.

Understanding the Unique Risks in Boarding

Boarding houses are unique settings. Students live where they learn. They sleep, eat, and socialise under the supervision of adults who are not their parents. These blurred boundaries require special vigilance. Risks can range from physical and emotional abuse to neglect, peer bullying, and online exploitation. In many cases, students may not report issues, either out of fear, shame, or simply not knowing who to talk to.

That is why child safety in boarding environments demands more than a general awareness. It requires targeted understanding,

proactive leadership, and systematic response mechanisms tailored to the realities of residential care.

Awareness: Recognising Risks Before They Escalate

Awareness is the first step toward prevention. Boarding staff must be able to recognise signs of harm, no matter how subtle. This includes changes in behaviour, withdrawal from peers, expressions of fear or discomfort, or physical indicators of abuse.

Importantly, awareness also means recognising risks not only from adults but from peers. In a boarding environment, unsupervised peer interactions can present risks that must be monitored sensitively and consistently. Staff should feel confident in their ability to identify red flags early and equally confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and acted upon quickly.

Training: Equipping Staff for Real-World Scenarios

Even the most vigilant staff can be ineffective without proper training. Child safety is not just about having the right instincts

- it's about having the right skills.

Every boarding school must invest in ongoing, high-quality training for all boarding staff - not just senior leaders or pastoral care teams. This training should cover:

- recognising and responding to abuse
- mandatory reporting requirements in each jurisdiction
- cultural sensitivity and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and International students
- gender and sexuality inclusion
- boundary-setting and professional conduct
- managing disclosures of harm
- trauma-informed care
- mental health first aid.

Training should be practical, scenario-based, and especially tailored to residential settings. It is not a 'one size fits all'. Specific child protection and boundary training for boarding schools is imperative. Further, it must be refreshed regularly, not treated as a one-off.

Leadership also has a role here. School Principals and Heads of Boarding must lead from the front, attending training themselves and setting clear expectations of conduct and vigilance.

Knowledge: Embedding Safety in Systems and Culture

Creating a safe boarding environment is not just about individual action, it is about organisational culture and culture is shaped by what we know, value and reward.

Staff need to understand not just what to do in a crisis, but why certain practices exist. Why are there visitor protocols? Why is it important to document disclosures meticulously? Why are shared sleeping spaces supervised in specific ways?

This knowledge must be embedded into everyday practice - from how rooms are allocated, to how rosters are structured, to how technology use is monitored.

Crucially, students must also be educated. They should know their rights, understand what is and is not appropriate behaviour from adults and peers and feel safe reporting concerns. Schools must build trust through transparency and consistency.

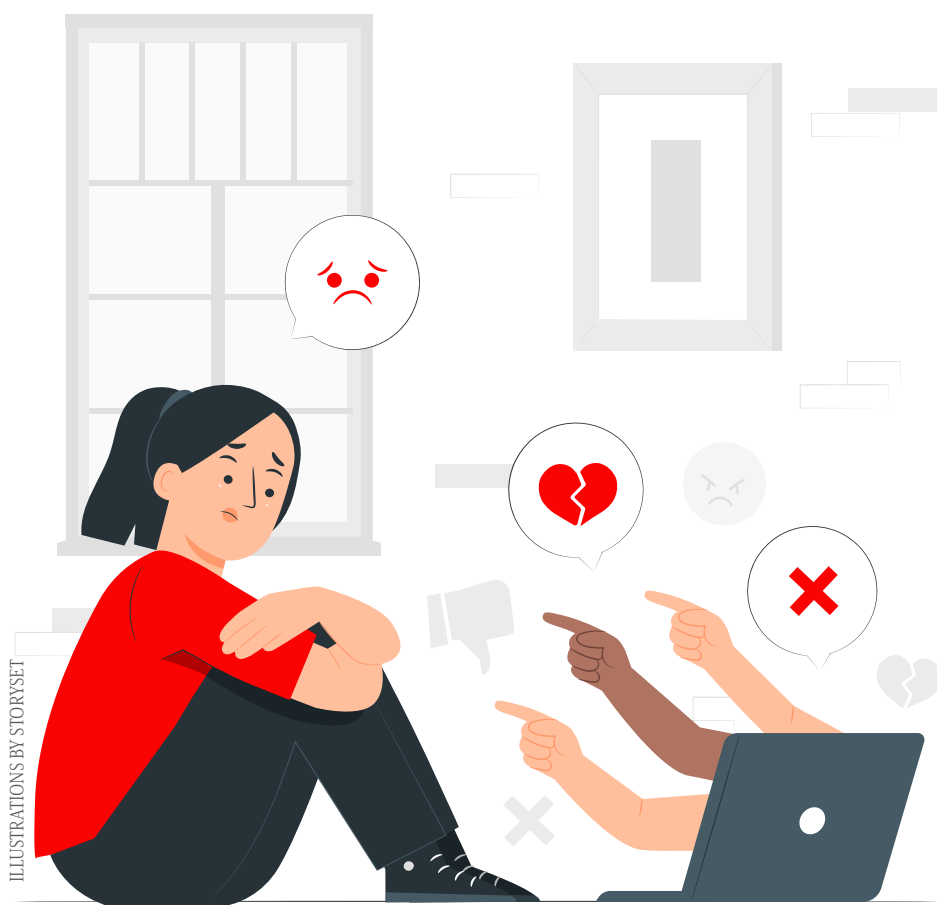
The Role of the Boarding Standard AS5725:2015

To help guide schools in this work, the Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residences (AS5725:2015) provides a national benchmark for excellent practice.

This standard sets out clear expectations around governance, staffing, physical environments, health and wellbeing, cultural safety, and child protection. It is a comprehensive framework that helps schools ensure they are not just meeting their legal obligations, but going beyond them.

Key child safety components in the standard include:

- screening and suitability of all adults in contact with boarders
- supervision practices appropriate to age, gender, and vulnerability
- formalised policies for responding to complaints and disclosures
- clear separation of staff accommodation and student spaces
- cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and International students
- confidentiality and privacy protections for students.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY STORYSSET

Meeting this standard is not just about avoiding risk, it is about signalling to students, families, and regulators that your school takes safety seriously.

For schools that have already met the standard, the next step is using it as a launchpad for continuous improvement. For those yet to adopt it, it is time to make it a priority.

A Shared Responsibility

Child safety is not the responsibility of a single staff member, or even just the boarding leadership team. It is a collective, shared commitment.

It means creating a culture where concerns are raised early, where questions are welcomed, and where every adult sees themselves as part of the safeguarding framework.

It means acknowledging that child safety is not “extra” work, it is the work.

What Comes Next

As a boarding school sector, we must continue to invest in:

- clearer national alignment on boarding care standards
- stronger onboarding for new boarding staff
- external audits and continuous feedback loops
- platforms for student voice and participation in safety planning
- peer support networks for boarding staff to share challenges and strategies
- specific training relevant to boarding staff.

The days of informal, ad hoc approaches to safety are over. Our duty is to be proactive, not reactive.

Final Thoughts

Parents trust boarding schools with their most precious responsibility, their children. That trust is earned, and it must be protected.

By strengthening our awareness, training, and knowledge, and by fully embracing AS5725:2015 Boarding Standard, we build not just safer environments, but stronger communities.

The goal is not simply to prevent harm - but to create spaces where children thrive, feel protected, and know they are valued.

Safety is not a checkbox. It is a culture. And it starts with us. ■



AUTHOR:
Richard Stokes
Chief Executive
Officer
Australian
Boarding
Schools
Association

Accredited Boarding Practitioner

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.

For more information or to become an Accredited Boarding Practitioner contact ABSA today. Check out the website at:
www.boarding.org.au/our-community/accredited-boarding-professional



Meticulously Engineered *Attention Traps*



You probably missed it (buried somewhere between the Middle East and Ukraine) but the European Commission's Joint Research Centre dropped a bombshell recently: marinating in social media, with its endless pings and dopamine hits, doesn't just fray young nerves - it might actually rewire the emotional circuitry of the brain. These platforms aren't just digital playgrounds; they're meticulously engineered attention traps, designed to keep young minds scrolling and swiping.

Social media is less a sparkling stream and more a psychological sewer, and our kids are wading in deeper every year. Fast-forward to 2025 and Australian 13-15-year-olds are clocking up a jaw-dropping 371 minutes a day on these platforms. TikTok, Snapchat, Roblox - take your pick. The numbers are climbing faster than a viral dance challenge: 29% of 9-10-year-olds, 59% of 11-12-year-olds, and a whopping 92% of 15-16-year-olds are logging in daily.

Every week, we see the casualties: anxiety, sextortion, cyberbullying, sleep deprivation, and the never-ending quest to polish the "perfect" online persona. Wanting to protect our kids isn't just reasonable - it's non-negotiable. But the PM's plan to slap a blanket ban on under-16s using social media? Well-meaning, sure. But as practical solutions go, it's right up there with banning teenagers from ever eating fries.

The notion that we can legislate every under-16 off TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat is pure fantasy. Today's teens are digital ninjas - they'll sidestep age gates, borrow a parent's details, or conjure up a workaround faster than you can say "Terms and Conditions." Unless we're keen on launching a national biometric dragnet (paging George Orwell), there's simply no foolproof way to verify age online for anyone at any age. Even the tech

giants admit it: enforcing a 16+ ban is a logistical migraine. The more you tighten the net, the more loopholes appear - and the more likely you are to spark privacy nightmares and a booming black market for fake accounts which will place children in a place of far greater harm. Many have already changed their date of birth and others have a VPN at the ready. If approx. 80% of under 13's are already on these platforms with parental approval, then raising the age will do nothing to address that.

If we're serious about change, let's aim for what's actually doable. There's already an international baseline: 13 is the minimum age for social media, thanks to the US's COPPA (Child Online Privacy Protection Act) law. That's not just a number plucked from a hat. Ask any adolescent psychologist - under-13s simply aren't wired for the emotional rollercoaster of likes, comments, and DMs.

They are sitting ducks for predators, scams, and the addictive feedback loops these platforms are built on. This does not mean older teens are not at risk - but numeric age is not a measure of maturity and the age of 16 aligns with nothing.

A ban for under-13s? Achievable, defensible, and - crucially - something parents, schools, and platforms can actually enforce. It is roughly the time a child moves from

primary to secondary so has an element of manageability. The tech is already in place (imperfect, but leagues ahead of anything for older teens). And let's face it: telling a 10-year-old "no Instagram" is a lot easier than prying a phone from a 15-year-old whose social life lives online. What about those with part time jobs who receive notifications or roster changes via SM platforms? Those who have developed a community of support online that in one foul swoop will be pulled from under them? We should not delude ourselves, even an under 13 ban won't solve everything. But it gives us a fighting chance. The real solution isn't just about age limits - it's about education. We need to arm young people with the skills to navigate the digital world safely and critically. That means digital literacy in every classroom, robust parental controls, and open conversations at home. We don't keep kids safe by pretending we can keep them offline forever. We keep them safe by preparing them for the world they actually live, study, work and play in.

To the politicians pushing a 16+ ban: We get it. You want to protect kids. So do we. But let's not pass laws that sound good in a press release but collapse in the real world. Focus on under-13s, where the science, the law, and the practicalities all line up. Anything more is a distraction - and risks leaving our teenagers more vulnerable, not less. Let's be smart, not just scared and lets not pander to the panicked. Support parents with the tools including education and ensure that platforms are safe for their users. Enforce a digital duty of care and let's focus on under-13s - where science, law, and logic actually meet. Anything more is smoke and mirrors, and risks leaving teens more exposed, not less. Young Australians may be just 17% of the population, but they are 100% of the future. ■

AUTHOR:
Michael Carr-Gregg
Honorary Psychologist

Engaging Victoria Police *to help ensure International Boarding Students' Safety*

International boarding students face unique challenges when studying in Australia, including adapting to a new culture, language barriers, and unfamiliar environments. One critical area of concern is safety, both personal and community wide.

Under CRICOS registration requirements, schools and institutions responsible for these students have a vital role in ensuring that students understand how to protect themselves and stay safe in their new surroundings as well as how to respond in an emergency. International students living away from their families often encounter heightened vulnerability. Without immediate family support and potential cultural differences, international students may be unaware of potential risks or how to respond to emergencies in their new environment. Additionally, international students are often more susceptible to misunderstandings

in social settings, encounters with crime, antisocial or unsafe behaviours.

At Peninsula Grammar School, a largely International Boarding Program, we wanted to reimagine how to deliver this information more effectively. Of course, when we considered who could deliver this information more effectively, Victoria Police immediately came to mind.

Beyond traditional orientation procedures, students need practical safety education tailored to their local area and procedures within their boarding house, especially with respect to leave protocols. Our partnership with Victoria

Police in this process aimed to bridge gaps between student knowledge and local safety knowledge, in turn, fostering proactive safety behaviours in our boarders.

When I was a child in the 1990s in New South Wales, the Police were a regular fixture in school education as 'stranger danger' was a very real threat to children and young people. Of course, the scope of 'stranger danger' has changed dramatically since then but the role of community policing in schools remains vital for students to understand safety, the role of the Police and create positive partnerships with law enforcement.

In conjunction with the Proactive Policing Unit at Somerville Police Station in Victoria, students were able to hear directly from law enforcement about personal safety, what to do in the event of an emergency as well as understand the laws affecting young people in Australia.

Victoria Police is committed to community engagement and education, making them an ideal, and largely underutilised partner for boarding schools, especially those with international students. Proactive Policing in Victoria aims to create positive partnerships with the community, especially young people and help them to understand risk and safety.

Many students have preconceived notions or fears about police based on their own personal experiences. In a boarding population of largely international students, these preconceived notions can be even more complex. Positive interactions with Victoria Police helps build trust, making students more comfortable reaching out for help when needed and understanding the role of Police in Australia.





In our sessions with Victoria Police, students were empowered with local knowledge of areas of risk, especially around local train stations, crime rates after sundown, and the powers of Police in Victoria. This knowledge, in turn, helped students to understand our local area in more depth as well as our policies and procedures as a school, especially with respect to curfews and leave protocols.

Additionally, students took delight in Victoria Police's knowledge around 'eshays' and their known locations around our local area. Students were equipped with skills to keep themselves safe when on leave without boarding staff and on public transport. This proactive approach aimed to reduce incidents of scams, theft, bullying, and cybercrime as well as promote personal safety. Students were empowered with how to navigate safety concerns and to take responsibility for their own wellbeing. Confidence in their knowledge and skills, in turn, helped them to further embrace life in Victoria and aimed to encourage active participation in their new community.

Of course, no education session should be without an element of fun and the session concluded with a series of photos in a police car as well as turning the lights and sirens on. Certainly, a joyful end to a night of serious content!

Ensuring the safety of international boarding students is a multifaceted challenge that requires cultural sensitivity, practical knowledge, and strong community partnerships. Victoria Police offer invaluable expertise and resources to help boarding schools provide comprehensive safety education, while fulfilling CRICOS registration requirements. In turn, students are empowered to confidently navigate their new environment while fostering a safe and inclusive community.

At Peninsula Grammar, proactively engaging Victoria Police in our safety education not only protects our students but also contributes to a more connected and resilient community. For international boarding students, this partnership can transform a potentially intimidating experience into one of support, learning, and empowerment, ultimately enriching their educational journey and personal growth. ■



AUTHOR:
Elizabeth Birrell
Head of Boarding
Peninsula Grammar

Girls vs Boys Boarding: *By Someone Who's Seen It All (and is only mildly traumatised)*

One term in, and I've seen the light (and the casual chaos) After years (plural, and yes, they aged me hence the grey hair) in girls' boarding, I made the leap - or perhaps more like I stumbled - into boys' boarding this past term. I'm actually enjoying it, I would go as far as to say loving it.

No offence to the girls - I've got a soft spot the size of NZ and Australia for girls boarding - but boys' boarding is a whole different species of chaos... and honestly? I believe it suits me.

1. Emotional Outbursts: Subtle vs Spectacular

Girls: When things go wrong - say, a lost netball match or a friend saying something vaguely offensive in group chat - girls tend to internalise. There's sulking. There are whispered dramas. Doors close with a very deliberate level of firmness. You'll hear, "I'm fine," but know they are, in fact, not fine.

Boys: Boys don't sulk - they explode, then move on. Lose a game of table tennis? The bat's going through the wall or at someone's head. There's shouting, a bit of wrestling, and then, five minutes later, they're mates again eating toast like nothing ever happened. It's deeply unsettling, but weirdly efficient.

2. Punishments: Tears vs Shrugs

This is where boys really shine. Give a girl a consequence and you might trigger a three-day emotional spiral. "This is SO unfair, the staff are picking on me" you'll hear, as she disappears under a weighted

blanket of injustice. She will bring it up with you again three years later in her final year in boarding, "Remember when..." Nope I don't remember as it was a very minor incident that I haven't thought about again in the last three years.

Give a boy a punishment and it's, "Sweet, sorry Ma'am, what's for supper?" They might even forget they had a consequence, which honestly saves everyone a lot of hassle. Zero drama. Maximum simplicity.

3. The Dorm Dynamic: Intensity vs Hilarity

Girls' dorms are emotional ecosystems. You've got best friends, sworn enemies, and that one girl who has a bedtime skincare routine that takes 45 minutes. It's deep. It's intense. There are alliances.

Boys' dorms? Reminds me of a zoo. But in a kind of charming, feral way. Cold water is flying over shower cubicles, someone's brushing their teeth with someone else's brush "as a joke," and someone's almost naked for no reason. And somehow, despite the chaos, they're in bed asleep at a reasonably good time.

4. Cleanliness: Controlled Chaos vs Biohazard

Let's not pretend girls are perfect - there

are definitely crime scenes of makeup, clothes on the floor, dirty mugs with things growing inside them, and clothes that haven't seen a hanger since September.

But boys... Boys don't see mess. At all. You could walk in with a peg on your nose and they'd ask why you're being "extra." There's a sock that's been on the floor since week 1, and no one's picked it up because "it's not mine." (Spoiler: it belongs to none of them, apparently.)

5. Self-Image: Confidence Crisis vs Confidence Overload

Girls - brilliant, funny, kind girls - are riddled with self-doubt. You spend a lot of time building them up, reminding them they're good enough, strong enough, and that perfection isn't the goal. It's delicate work, and hugely important.

Boys, on the other hand? They need the opposite treatment. These boys will fail a maths test, score a try at rugby, and still say they're "basically elite at everything." You've got boys rating themselves a solid 9.5/10 on looks and talent, while wearing shorts backwards and not knowing how to make toast.

Boys' egos need grounding. Frequently. But in fairness, it's kind of refreshing to have to dial someone down for once, instead of constantly trying to build them up.

6. What Boys Think Is Appropriate Conversation

This deserves its own category. Because boys - bless them - have zero filter. Topics they think are perfectly suitable for

conversation while I'm doing a roll:

- Gym workouts (and how I must notice they have been working out).
- The pros and cons of different protein powders.
- Whether they can bench more than the Head of PE.
- Asking me if I've ever "tried creatine".
- Who I would think would win a fight out of different boys.
- Want to know who they think is a 10/10.

I've perfected the art of the polite-but-firm subject changes and asking if it is going to be an appropriate conversation with me if it starts with "I probably shouldn't tell you this but....."

7. Humour: Sass vs Smash

Girls are witty. Razor-sharp, actually. Insults are disguised as compliments and there's a whole lot of sarcasm flying about.

Boys? It's all comedy. Laughing at unfortunate events that have happened to them or someone else. The constant banter with each other. And I'll admit it - it's infectious and funny listening to the banter.

8. Communication: Flowery vs Army Briefing

I have officially transitioned from the elegant world of messaging girls, where every message was like a Jane Austin novel, "Good morning gorgeous girls, may your rooms sparkle like the morning sun and please remember to drift off into dreamland by 9.30pm xoxo, to my now messages of "1 Shower, 2 Eat food, 3 Tidy, 4 Sleep".

Gone are the flowering messages and re-reading before pressing send to my SWAT operation bullet points.

Final Thoughts: Would I Go Back?

Look, girls' boarding has its perks - deeper conversations, better room decor, and fewer mysterious smells.

But boys' boarding? It's laid-back, it's loud, and it doesn't take itself too seriously. There's less emotional labour and more actual labour.

So after years with the girls and just one term with the boys, I'll say this: boys are less complicated, but definitely more chaotic. And honestly? I believe this is the change I didn't know I needed.

And if one more table tennis bat goes flying, I might finally qualify for danger money so another plus! ■

AUTHOR:

Dee Guillemot-Rodgerson
Assistant House Manager
St Andrew's College, Christchurch.



86 Life Hacks

from Chris

I've been collecting life hacks for a while now - advice I give my kids, little tricks I try to remember for myself, things that everyone might find useful - so they mustn't be too specialised (not things like "Store your unicycle upside down to preserve the tyre", or "When coding in Python v3 be sure to edit your architecture BEFORE uploading the protocol stack" or "Feed your Chinchilla with ordinary peanuts not salted ones")

1. Don't call or write or act when you're angry - wait to cool off, or sleep on it.
2. When travelling keep everything in the same place / same pocket every time, or you'll lose it.
3. Salt on coaster stops it sticking to the bottom of your glass.
4. When travelling to remote places have a small magic trick - disappearing stone or balancing a coke can, to amuse local kids.
5. Meeting a new person? Be a great listener, ask about them, minimal talking about yourself.
6. In a social group ~ never take more than your share of talking time, eg 25% if it's four people.
7. Don't stop in the doorway of a shop or at the top of an escalator.
8. Use mouthwash and floss and an interdental brush.
9. Smell your home when you come back from a trip - that's what it's like for guests! (you get used to it).
10. Negotiate on all expensive items .
11. Learn about types of glue.
12. Keep an up to date master CV/resume (with everything, so you can delete sections that are not relevant) always ready in case an opportunity comes up.
13. What's your elevator pitch? (What you do and the benefit it gives to the other person, in 15 seconds), Have one ready!
14. Have a doctor and dentist younger than you - so they won't retire just when you really like them.
15. For dentists, lawyers etc if in doubt always choose the woman - who is likely to be much better, to have got there in the first place in a world that is still, unfortunately, male-dominated.
16. Learn about their, they're and there - and apostrophes for plurals and it's.
17. Spell peoples' names right - make notes of Jackie, Jacqui etc.
18. Keep one list of all your contacts, all up to date - and add everyone new .
19. Search for 'Open Source' rather than 'Free' software - avoids junk.
20. Choosing restaurants, films etc with a group of friends - you give them five choices, they pick two, you pick the final one. Similar to one divides and the other chooses.
21. Hotel ~ leave keys (or key card) on the floor by door as soon as you arrive, so you can't forget them when you leave.
22. Always have in your car - phone charger, food in case of being stranded, torch, paracetamol, loose change, bottle of water, warm coat if winter, ice-scraper, and some emergency cash (well hidden).
23. Drive right to the door of your destination and then away from there again - take the first space you see (also, imagine and believe that there will be a space for you - for some reason this works!).
24. Parking - if there is one, look in the shop window to see how much space you have behind you - it's even better than reversing beepers.
25. Have a travel bag, always ready. Ideally compartmentalised.
26. Make a 'box of important things' - passport, driving licence, spare keys so you can always find them.
27. Never have only one key left - always make copies if you lose one.
28. Hide a house key outside your house (but not under the mat!).
29. Write everything down - I like Ever-note for this but other methods are available e.g. one note, apple notes etc. Guess where this list has been stored!
30. Back everything up. Photos, laptop etc - yes, even hard drives fail.
31. Take photos of your parents doing things they do every day.
32. Spend a night in your own guest bedroom.
33. Phone your office number when you're away - who answers and what do they say?
34. Flying or travelling - put your name and contact details inside your bags in case they get lost.
35. Put your price up.
36. Improve your quality, aim to be the best in your field.
37. Measure as much as you can, get facts, test, split test, only spend marketing money if you can measure the results and it looks as if it'll pay back .
38. Never lie to customers or to colleagues or to your boss .
39. Service is as important as quality, possibly even more.
40. Communicate! Keep in touch, reply to messages, explain, etc.
41. Download the relevant google maps before you travel - you can then use them offline.
42. Assume that all other drivers are idiots or out to kill you - that will keep

- you safer!
43. Have some emergency cash hidden everywhere, in jacket pockets, in your car, in your bag/rucksack etc.
 44. Use timers for lights, electric blanket etc - they are cheap and save you time.
 45. Have a great voicemail message and keep your promise; call everyone back.
 46. Have a great email footer and include your mobile number and postal address.
 47. If you like your latest shoes / shorts / hat etc get a second one while you can.
 48. Travel ~ even in hot countries take a fleece (or a stylish pashmina wrap) in case it's colder than you think, esp evenings and water.
 49. Travel ~ take a hat in case of sun - and maybe rain too!
 50. Start with the veggie options on menu, and then only go to the meat if you have to.
 51. If you don't have children: plan your holidays to be outside of the school holidays (to avoid the noisy kids and the higher prices).
 52. Always tip taxi drivers, food delivery people etc. generously. But check restaurant bills to see if service has already been added.
 53. Always start the evening by being nice and polite to your waiter/waitress ~ they have power!
 54. Phones, computers etc: get the biggest memory you can afford - your device will last longer and the cost will pay back.
 55. Keep a life overview summary of each year, for future reference - where you worked, travelled, the car you had, significant people and events etc.
 56. Keep brief notes on the contents of each book you read.
 57. Read at least one book a year on the subject of your work.
 58. Pay for a financial adviser, and if you're self-employed get the best accountant you can afford.
 59. Sleep with your phone in airplane mode so it doesn't affect the alarm but you don't get phone calls or notifications waking you up by buzzing.
 60. Take photos of important documents as soon as you get handed them. And also your cloakroom ticket! And your airport parking location! Photograph everything basically.
 61. If you're decluttering and want to keep something for sentimental reasons then photograph it instead, and then throw it away.
 62. Have a stock of generic birthday and thank you cards. But don't buy multi packs in case you send the same one twice!
 63. Always take binoculars.
 64. Find ways to unexpectedly delight your families.
 65. Always keep your promises. If you say you will do something you must do it, or at least go back and say that things have changed and you now can no longer do it. It's better to say no than to fail to deliver.
 66. Pour from cartons holding them so that the hole is at the TOP of the end, rather than the bottom - this will give it a much smoother flow because air can get in smoothly.
 67. Rotate any wobbly table - there will always be a point where it will not wobble.
 68. Invest in good equipment: Sharp knives in the kitchen, a large T-bar bike pump, good quality tools (screw drivers, spanners, pliers etc) - and for outdoor padlocks, get marine stainless steel ones.
 69. When using a sharp knife: never cut towards yourself.
 70. Cutting bread - watch the other side so you can keep the slice precise.
 71. When you stand up to go, look behind you to check you haven't left anything behind.
 72. Never tell people bad news that they don't NEED to hear. For example that they paid more than they needed to for something.
 73. Travel - if you need to travel light, merino wool T-shirts can be worn for many days in a row without getting smelly.
 74. Don't dive into water unless you can see how deep it is.
 75. Buy the best one you can afford (lasts longer, does a better job, more enjoyable to use). Fridge, hedge clipper, shoes, coat, bike, knives, hairdryer, tv, torch, washing machine, suitcase, lawn mower, headphones, etc.
 76. Send thank you notes.
 77. Double white lines (which mean no overtaking) are always there for a reason.
 78. "Make it a feature" - anything that's wrong with a house or a holiday or you or your partner, can you turn it into a positive side and at least laugh about it, but even better than that, use it in a good way.
 79. Things always take longer than you think - so allow extra time for the over-run.
 80. Abundance mentality when doing business - make it more likely that the other person will make an effort for you, by giving them a decent share.
 81. Don't invest (or sell) based on rumours - get facts yourself. Otherwise you will always be behind the curve, buying too late, after the change has already been factored in to the price.
 82. Learn how to edit videos - and how to convert file formats.
 83. You can get sunburn through clouds.
 84. Water (lakes or the sea) - are always colder than you expect, so take a coat, but also look out for double the risk of sunburn.
 85. Take every opportunity to talk to strangers, we never know where it will lead. People are often much more interesting and impressive than you might expect from just looking at them.
 86. Wear in your new shoes for a few days before the wedding / mountain hike / trip to London.
 87. What else? ■



AUTHOR

Chris Croft
Chris Croft Training
chris@chriscrofttraining.co.uk

Suffering in Silence

How Can We Help?

At 9.10 pm on a Thursday night, a young school boarder is about to go to bed when she receives a hurtful text calling her names and accusing her of having been disloyal to her friendship group.

She has absolutely no idea where the text has come from or why she is facing this accusation.

She messages the group chat, 'I don't understand. What are you talking about?'

The replies come thick and fast.

But far from clarifying the situation, they are just loaded with venom and more accusations.

'Don't play Miss Innocent. You know exactly what we're talking about.'

'You spiteful cow. How could you do that?'

'I can't believe you'd do that. I thought we were friends.'

'We should have known she couldn't be trusted. Little Miss Perfect.'

A cold chill goes through her body. She has no idea what the girls are talking about, but they clearly do. And they are all united against her. She's tried so hard to be accepted as part of the group after arriving at the start of the year, the new girl trying to break into the well-established cliques. Just when she was starting to feel safe and accepted, something has gone horribly wrong.

Desperate to know more, she sends a personal text to her closest friend. 'What on earth is going on?'

Almost instantly she receives a reply:

'What did you expect? You can't slag off at the whole group like that and not expect a reaction. Sort yourself out! And don't bother messaging me again.'

Alone and confused, the girl checks her social feeds, only to find more hatred and vitriol. She scrolls back through the messages to find the root cause of all this anger.

And then she sees them. Numerous texts, sent in her name, revealing the most awful 'facts' about each of the girls in the group and a number of the guys too.

Stories that she didn't even know, discussed in words she would never use.

Her stomach is in knots, and she has no idea what to do. She can't talk to the boarding staff. She knows she's not supposed to have her phone on her - and she doesn't ever want them to know that the one she handed in at curfew was a burner phone. If they started investigating that, half the boarding house would be sprung, and she'd be hated even more.

Utterly miserable and with no one to talk to, she struggles through the longest night of her life.

At breakfast she can't even eat and can barely hear anyone around her as she is drowning in her own misery.

Once at school she thinks about going to see the counsellor. But she knows that will only make things worse. If anyone found

out, she'd be accused of being weak and pathetic and making it all about her.

So, she suffers in silence.

Classes go by and she fails to take in anything the teachers say. She can feel the other students' eyes boring into her as she sits at her desk, her head down and her stomach churning.

By 3pm, despite the school-time phone ban, the ugly accusations supposedly posted by her have gone viral. Even if she could get anyone to listen to her, there is no way she can explain or defend herself. As far as they are concerned, the evidence is all too clear.

As the afternoon turns into night, she wonders how she can possibly survive the weekend. Everyone in the boarding house is ignoring her, their only interaction is to mutter spitefully under their breath as they walk past and 'accidentally' bump into her.

By Sunday morning she is at breaking point. As all her friends head off into town, she spends a lonely morning in the boarding house. She sits beneath the bell tower lost in her own miserable thoughts. She wonders if maybe she should climb the tower. One jump and it would all be over...

This might all seem a bit extreme, but for a 14 year-old girl, being ostracised from your social group is the end of the world.

Facing accusations of divulging secrets and destroying reputations through online posts, will make many students feel alone and desperate. Some will even decide there is no way to go on.

Sadly, it's a common story, but one we never think will happen to us or our children.

And yet, this story could have been so different.

If, instead of lying awake all Thursday night in utter misery, this girl had rung the 24/7 Cyber Incident Helpline, she would have had the support and advice she needed to meet this head on.

This is how an alternative scenario could have played out.

9.15pm Call to 24/7 Cyber Incident Helpline

9.30pm First responder determines the girl needs professional support in the form of counselling and investigation.

She receives Mental Health First Aid support and calming strategies. She is assured that the case will be looked into and help will be made available.

8.30am The school is notified about the call and asked to initiate the insurance policy. The team give the school advice on how to discuss the event with the student cohort in a supportive and non-accusatory manner.

Her phone is taken for investigation (at no cost to the family or school) to determine the source of the messages.

Where necessary, other students' phones are also investigated.

9.00am Her parents are informed that six one-hour counselling sessions are available to her at no cost to the family or school and are given details of how to book these with a counsellor.

By 3pm, rather than facing a viral incident, the students and the school can head into the weekend

knowing they are supported and that the true facts behind the online incident will be properly investigated.

By Friday, the team has the evidence to show that the accused girl was the victim of catfishing and was not the person responsible for sending the texts.

With access to other students' phones, the real perpetrator is identified and can receive the support and guidance they require.

Online traumas are real. Cyberbullying, trolling, doxing, identity theft and sextortion can destroy, if not end, a young person's life. But they don't have to face the

trauma alone or in silence. They can now have 24/7 real time, professional and expert assistance to help support them through such online incidents, find the facts and help them navigate a difficult situation with compassion. It can also help other students learn by this example and prompt desirable behavioural and cultural change within the school. This is the support and service that Cybernetic Shield can provide. ■

AUTHOR:

Jean Yates
CCO / Director of Education
Cybernetic Shield



A Fresh Boost: *Smoothie Refuelling Station Officially Opens in the Boarding House*

This term, St Vincent's College Boarding House has officially opened its brand-new Smoothie Refuelling Station, an initiative designed to promote health, wellbeing and further fuel our boarders.

The idea came from an AIS online meeting where Alison Miles (The Fuel School) presented on fuelling our boarders. We also recognised the busy schedules of our students, who balance study, sport, co-curricular activities and community life. Often, the afternoon and evening can be the times when

energy levels dip - and the Smoothie Station provides a quick, nourishing option for boarders to refuel and recharge.

The official opening was met with great excitement, as students gathered to sample their first creations. With bowls of fresh fruit, yoghurt, and milk ready to go, blenders whirred as boarders experimented with combinations - from classic strawberry-banana blends to adventurous mixes of mango, pineapple and spinach.

Beyond the fun and flavour, there is a serious benefit to this initiative. Research into adolescent health highlights the importance of consistent nutrition during teenage years, particularly for girls balancing high levels of academic and sporting commitments. Studies suggest that smoothies made from whole fruits, vegetables and protein-rich bases provide a fast source of energy while also delivering essential vitamins, minerals and fibre. When consumed as a snack between meals, they can help stabilise blood sugar levels,

improve concentration, and support recovery after sport.

The Smoothie Station also supports independence and life skills. Boarders are encouraged to take responsibility for preparing, cleaning, and sharing the space. Clear guidelines and a "terms of use" policy ensure that hygiene, safety and fairness are prioritised, while students learn the everyday habits of food



preparation and communal living. This was developed in consultation with our Boarders Representative Council so it has become student led.

Year Eight boarder Pepper says: “The new smoothie bar has become a highlight of our mornings! It’s been a fantastic addition to our dining room, giving us a delicious and healthy way to start the day. The freedom to create our own unique smoothies is what makes it so much fun. I love the thrill of experimenting with different combinations of fresh fruits like raspberries, bananas and more. It makes me feel energised and ready to tackle my classes. Every day is a new opportunity to discover my next favourite smoothie combo”. Year Eight boarder Alice says: “The smoothie bar is a great addition. I love having smoothies in the mornings. Now every morning I can’t wait to get down stairs and have breakfast hoping there’s no line. What makes the smoothie bar so good is how we can choose what to put in it, making it a fun experience”.

For the staff, the highlight has been watching students come together in the space, laughing, experimenting, and often collaborating on new recipe ideas. Another highlight has been our very own supply of honey from one of our Year Eight boarders, Pepper. She has a honey business, Sticky Pepper, and is now our supplier!

The Smoothie Refuelling Station is already becoming a much-loved part of boarding life, reminding us that small, practical initiatives can have a big impact on student wellbeing. With blenders at the ready and creativity flowing, our boarders are proving that healthy living can be both fun and delicious. ■



AUTHOR:

Scout Symons
Dean of Boarding
St Vincent’s College

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Erin Hetherington
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Growing Through Service *at Seymour College*



At Seymour College, service has always been central to student life. In 2025, boarders have taken this commitment further, embedding service as a defining part of their Boarding House culture. Guided by the College's motto, *Crescam Ministrando - I grow by serving* - boarders have stepped forward as leaders of service, creating and managing projects that are not only innovative and impactful, but also deeply connected to wellbeing.

Recent research underpins the value of this approach. The Australian Education Research Organisation (2025) highlights the importance of embedding evidence-based practices in schools to support student wellbeing, showing that when students are engaged in purposeful activities that strengthen culture and community, their wellbeing outcomes improve significantly. Likewise, findings from the OECD (2023) demonstrate that when students feel supported by peers and connected through collective activities,

their emotional resilience and sense of belonging increase. Reviews of school-based wellbeing programs also indicate that when service and social-emotional learning initiatives are integrated into the daily life of schools, students develop improved emotional regulation, stronger relationships, improved academic performance, and reduced levels of distress. Moreover, these findings are echoed in the Resilient Youth: State of the Nation report, which shows that while mental health challenges remain common, sustained, community-focused approaches are



beginning to stabilise trends in student wellbeing (University of Adelaide, 2025).

At Seymour, these insights have come to life through the creativity and passion of the boarders themselves. The most ambitious initiative came from a Year Eleven boarder who, driven by personal tragedy, initiated Seymour's involvement in Relay for Life. Over 45 students and staff walked continuously for 20 hours, raising more than \$13,000 for Cancer Council SA. The event exemplified how service can provide a platform for healing, solidarity, and purpose, while also uniting students, families, and staff in a shared cause.

Other initiatives reinforced this spirit. Every year level have participated in a Sunday beach clean-up, combining environmental awareness with the opportunity to strengthen bonds; Year Eleven students led the Push-Up Challenge for Mental Health, raising \$700 and providing a fun way to raise awareness and healthy competition in the Boarding House; Year Twelve leaders, motivated by personal experiences, organised Do It for Dolly Day, raising \$1,100 and spreading a message of kindness and inclusion throughout the College community.

These efforts culminated in the Seymour's annual Boarders' Week, a much-loved tradition that blends celebration of boarding



spirit with fundraising for the Royal Flying Doctor Service. This year, boarders worked together to organise a produce stall, a raffle featuring contributions from families' hometowns, and the launch of 'Our House to Yours', the Boarding House's first-ever cookbook. Organised solely by students, the cookbook not only showcases family recipes and traditions but also raised over \$2,300, a testament to the community's generosity and creativity.

Together, Seymour boarders have raised more than \$19,100 to date in 2025, with an additional \$6,000 expected from Boarders' Week. Yet the true measure of success lies not in the financial outcomes, but in the students' growing sense of identity, wellbeing, and belonging. At a time when schools across Australia are grappling with increasing demand for student mental health support (Rudd, 2024), this approach demonstrates that service, when embedded in culture and led by students, can act as a powerful protective factor.

In Seymour's Boarding House, service is no longer something students do; it is a part of who we are and the fabric of the overall culture in the Boarding House. ■



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AUTHOR:
Carolyn Cochrane
Director of Boarding
Seymour College

Why Tour Overseas?

An Immersive Experience

At Student Horizons we design immersive and meaningful tours that go beyond the sporting arena - combining high-level athletic competition with deep cultural insights and genuine community engagement. We were honoured to deliver this year's Brisbane Boys' College (BBC) rugby and cultural immersion tour across South Africa - an adventure brimming with exciting rugby experiences, powerful learning moments, and lifelong memories.

On-field Achievements and Professional Development

Kicking off in Cape Town, the BBC First and Second XV squads quickly established themselves with victories against local opposition. According to Welmar du Plessis, Director of Rugby at Brisbane Boys' College, *"From a rugby development standpoint, the tour was world class. The level of opposition, the variety of playing styles, and the intense rugby culture in South Africa provided our boys with a rare opportunity to grow technically, physically, and mentally. Every fixture*

was competitive, and the learning outcomes for our coaching staff and players were significant." These successes built momentum and camaraderie as the teams headed to the headline event: the Independent Schools Rugby Festival in Pietermaritzburg, proudly hosted this year by St Charles' College.

Throughout the festival, BBC's squads faced some of South Africa's well-known schoolboy rugby sides. The BBC First XV rose to the challenge, showcasing skill and resilience to finish the festival

undefeated - a testament to their teamwork and preparation.

"This tour will leave a lasting legacy within our program."

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the organisers of the Independent Schools Rugby Festival and to St Charles College for their outstanding hospitality, superb facilities, and spirit of welcome that made the entire experience so memorable for our touring squad.

A further rugby highlight was the top-tier coaching clinic at the Natal Sharks Rugby Academy. BBC students immersed themselves in an elite training environment, led by professional rugby coaches, gaining invaluable technical skills, tactical awareness, and a taste of South Africa's renowned rugby intensity.

"Equally the logistical execution - from training schedules and field bookings to accommodation and meals - was seamless. That allowed our staff to focus on coaching

Student Horizons.



and mentoring without being bogged down by operational stress. Their understanding of the needs of a high-performance rugby program was clear throughout the process.”

Cultural Immersion: The Apartheid Museum and Cape Point

Our tours are crafted to deepen students’ understanding of the places they visit, and this itinerary was no exception. In Johannesburg, students toured the Apartheid Museum, learning first-hand about South Africa’s journey from division to unity. Engaging with powerful exhibits, the boys reflected on the country’s political and social evolution, and the role sport plays in reconciliation and nation-building.

“Beyond the rugby, the cultural and team-building experiences - whether it was visiting local communities, game drives in the game reserve, or standing atop Table Mountain - enriched the tour beyond measure. These moments deepened team connection and built resilience, humility, and perspective in our players.”

In Cape Town, the team experienced the natural wonders of the Cape Peninsula on a full day Cape Point tour - standing at the iconic Cape of Good Hope and spotting wildlife on the coast. These moments of wonder and exploration gave students a chance to bond, reflect, and make memories beyond the rugby field.

Community Impact: Giving Back in Lagunya Township

One of the most impactful experiences of the tour was the delivery of a rugby coaching clinic in Lagunya Township alongside the inspiring Sakumzi Rugby Organisation (SRO). Founded by Sakumzi Vapi, SRO is dedicated to supporting local children - boys and girls - by providing pathways and a sense of belonging through rugby.

With BBC players and coaches partnering directly with SRO’s young athletes, the clinic was filled with energy, laughter, teamwork, and mutual appreciation. Friendship and respect grew quickly, as BBC students shared drills and skills while SRO’s athletes shared their passion, tenacity, and local pride. As the BBC Director reflected, *“These moments deepened team connection and built resilience, humility, and perspective in our players.”* Meaningful collaborations like this embody the ethos of our tours: using sport as a bridge across cultures and a catalyst for personal growth.

Building Better People, Broader Horizons

Every moment, whether in fierce competition or reflective learning, contributed to the growth of these students as confident, empathetic, and globally-minded young men. *“Our 2025 Rugby Tour to South Africa, delivered by Student Horizons, achieved all*

of that and more. Their professionalism and strategic alignment with our vision was clear, and I would strongly recommend them to any school looking to deliver a truly meaningful rugby tour.”

We at Student Horizons are immensely proud to have played a role in their development, and grateful for the opportunity to deliver such a transformative journey.

With Thanks

A sincere thank you to the families, staff, and players who placed their trust in us; to the Natal Sharks Rugby Academy and Sakumzi Rugby Organisation for their collaboration; and especially to the Independent Schools Rugby Festival and St Charles College for setting the stage for an unforgettable rugby experience. Your warm hospitality and commitment to schoolboy rugby are what make these tours so special. ■

AUTHOR:

Izzy Lobwein

Head of Education Tours Australia
Student Horizons

<https://student-horizons.com>



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Renewing Marist Boarding: *Insights from the 2025 Conference*

Marist Colleges across Australia hold a special place in the Australian Boarding Community landscape. There are almost 2000 students attending Marist Boarding Schools, making up almost 10% of the 21,000 students in boarding schools across the nation. Their reach and impact on the lives of both rural, metropolitan, indigenous, and international students is enormous.

The 2025 Marist Boarding Conference, co-hosted by St Gregory's College, Gregory Hills and St Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill in Sydney in May, brought together boarding leaders from across Australia. The theme for this year's conference, the first since 2019, was 'Renewing a faith-filled, academically supported residential community in the Marist way'.

After an Opening Mass and Welcome Dinner, the Conference was opened by Dr Frank Malloy, National Director

of Marist Schools Australia, alongside Professor Br David Hall, Chairman of the Marist Schools Australia Board. Dr. Malloy, discussed the MSA Strategic Plan, specifically Teaching and Learning, and the Marist Measures of Excellence from a Boarding Context, challenging our Boarding Community Leaders to strive for improvement in these areas. Br. David Hall shared insights into faith formation and educational governance drawn from his extensive leadership and formation work in Australia and overseas. As always it was a highly entertaining and

thought-provoking presentation.

After recess, The Leaders of the Mission and Life Formation Team at Marist School's Australia, Br. Michael Callinan's and Mr. Tony Clarke keynote, focused on spiritual wellbeing and evangelisation within boarding environments. They provided practical examples of nurturing faith in young people within our care in the boarding environment and challenged us to make this a central component of daily life in our communities.

Breakout sessions, shaped by participant surveys, allowed for targeted discussions on challenges and opportunities within Marist boarding. The day also included tours of the St Gregory's College boarding facilities, giving attendees a chance to see the facilities of another boarding community.

In the afternoon, the conference moved to St Joseph's College for a tour of their boarding facilities. The evening concluded





with drinks and dinner in the Farrell Auditorium continuing the spirit of Marist hospitality and networking.

The final day of the conference saw Br Anthony Boyd's keynote, focusing on the importance of faith-centred leadership within boarding schools. He provided real life examples of students and situations from his enormous boarding experience and kept the group thoroughly entertained with his stories. Further breakout sessions allowed participants to share "One Idea" to take back to their communities, fostering a collaborative spirit of

renewal and innovation.

The conference was attended by Heads of Boarding and relevant staff from across the National Marist Boarding Network including: Marist College, Ashgrove; St Augustine's College, Cairns; Assumption College, Kilmore; Sacred Heart College, Adelaide; Redbend College, Forbes; St Francis College, Leeton; and the host schools, St Joseph's College, Hunter's Hill, and St Gregory's College, Gregory Hills. Feedback from the attendees was very positive, and energised participants to continue the mission of creating

faith-filled, academically robust boarding communities in the Marist way. We look forward to bringing this group together again in Brisbane in 2026. ■

AUTHOR:

Luke Morrissey
 Director of Boarding
 St Gregory's College

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Celebrating History

60 Years in Alice Springs

St Philip's College, Alice Springs - is a cornerstone of education in the Northern Territory, and marked a historic milestone on Friday 28 March this year, celebrating 60 years of boarding services at the beloved institution. The celebration brought together staff, students, alumni and community members to honour six decades of nurturing generations of young minds.



Since its inception, St Philip's College has been at the heart of education and cultural exchange in Central Australia. The college's boarding program has played a pivotal role in shaping generations of young people, offering a supportive environment where students can thrive academically, socially and spiritually.

Over the past six decades, the college has welcomed students from remote pastoral families and Indigenous communities, providing them with access to quality education, lifelong friendships, and enriching cultural experiences. The dedicated staff and vibrant boarding community have been instrumental in nurturing resilience, independence and a sense of belonging among students.

Among the most heartfelt moments was the reunion of an original staff member and some boarders from the very first class of 1965 who returned to reminisce and share their experiences. Those boarders have since gone on to make significant contributions in their communities.



The original staff member, was warmly welcomed with applause as he reflected on his time as a Boarding Supervisor, saying, "It's an incredible feeling to see how much the college has grown and how it continues to serve as a home away from home for so many students. I am proud to have been part of its journey."

"Celebrating 60 years is a testament to the resilience and dedication of everyone who has been part of this journey", said Leslie Tillbrook, Principal of St Philip's College, "Our boarding program has transformed countless lives, and we are committed to continuing this legacy of excellence."

The weekend was celebrated with a series



of commemorative activities which included a 'Boarders' Muster' barbeque, followed by former Headmaster, Chris Tudor and his Bush Band performing for the guests in the college hall. Current Principal, Leslie Tilbrook had the honour of cutting the cake before everyone enjoyed dancing and spinning a few stories with current boarders about the 'good old days'! There were college tours and the weekend finished with an online Q and A session, which gave former boarders and friends of the college who could not travel to Alice Springs the opportunity

to join the occasion by linking up online.

What a fabulous weekend of celebrations! Before you know it, we'll be celebrating 75 years!

If you would like to read more about the history of St Philip's College order your copy of the book "The Right Amount of Crazy" <https://www.stphilips.nt.edu.au/about-spc/history> and learn how one man's vision has resulted in St Philip's being listed in the 2025 Top 100 private schools in Australia.* ■

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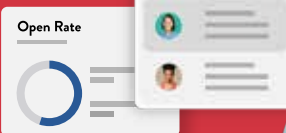
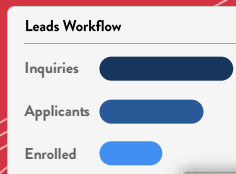
AUTHOR:

Mr Kris Wheeler
Director of Boarding
St Philip's College

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Boarder's Academic Advantage: *Boosting Academic Support Without Breaking the Budget!*

The Changing Landscape of Boarding Education

Boarding schools are evolving under new pressures. Tightening budgets and rising expectations mean schools must do more with less. At the same time, parents and students are seeking more personalised learning support than ever before. Literacy and numeracy, the foundations of academic success, remain critical, yet ensuring every boarder gets enough individual attention can be challenging. In this changing landscape, forward-thinking schools are looking for innovative ways to strengthen academic care without straining their resources.

The Academic Care Challenge

Boarding staff wear many hats: they provide pastoral care, maintain wellbeing, and supervise academics after hours. How can a school balance all these needs, especially when some students require extra help? During evening “prep” or study time, a handful of boarders might struggle with homework or fall behind in key skills. Teachers on duty do their best to help, but they already handle full days of classes. Traditional tutoring programs that cover an entire cohort can be effective, but they’re costly to fund and hard to sustain year after year. The result is a gap – students who need more support than regular school hours provide, and a school limited by budget constraints.

The Parent Perspective

Parents of boarders entrust their children’s all-round development to the school. Still, many worry: Is my child getting enough academic support away from home? With high-stakes exams

and benchmark tests like NAPLAN, families want assurance that literacy and numeracy gaps are being addressed. It’s no surprise that an increasing number of families have turned to private tutoring. Weekend sessions, online tutors, or extra help during holidays are becoming common, even for students living on campus. Parents are willing to invest in their child’s education, but coordinating external tutoring for a boarder can be logistically difficult and expensive. What families truly appreciate is when the school itself helps facilitate that support in a convenient, caring way.

An Innovative Supplementary Approach

Imagine a program that runs during boarding prep time, right on campus, seamlessly integrated into the evening routine. Now imagine this program requires no extra administrative burden or funding from the school. This is the concept behind The Academic Advantage Program – an innovative tutoring program designed specifically for boarding schools. Instead of a one-size-fits-all study hall, the program offers personal or small-group tutoring sessions in literacy, numeracy and other core areas, delivered by trained tutors on-site during prep hours. Participation is optional and entirely funded by interested families, making it cost-neutral for the school.

Crucially, this approach is meant to enhance, not replace, the school’s existing academic framework. Tutors work in alignment with the school’s curriculum and teachers, reinforcing classwork and helping with assignments. The program blends into the boarding house schedule

so naturally that it feels like an extension of the school’s academic care. And because the sessions happen at school in a familiar, supervised environment, students don’t need to travel or juggle an extra activity, tutoring becomes a convenient part of their evening routine.

Benefits in Practice

Early adopters of the The Academic Advantage Program model have reported impressive outcomes. Students who receive this additional support often show increased confidence, better grades, and more active participation in class. In fact, many boarders describe feeling less stressed and more motivated once they know help is at hand during prep time. Instead of struggling alone with a tricky math problem or an English essay, they have a mentor-tutor ready to guide them. Over time, this consistent support builds strong study habits and a positive mindset toward learning.

Schools partnering with such programs see tangible benefits as well. Teachers notice that students come to class better prepared and require less remedial attention after hours. Parents express greater satisfaction, knowing the school is proactively catering to their child’s academic needs. The boarding experience as a whole is strengthened. It’s not just a dormitory where students sleep and do homework, but a true residential learning community focused on each child’s growth. Some schools even use the availability of an on-site tutoring program as a selling point for prospective families – it differentiates the school as one that goes the extra mile academically.

Benefits for Schools

Value-Added Boarding Experience: Offering an academic tutoring option enhances the appeal of the boarding program. It shows families that the school provides holistic support, beyond the standard curriculum. This can be a key differentiator when attracting and retaining enrolments.

Commitment to Academic Care: Boarder's Advantage signals the school's commitment to student wellbeing and academic excellence. Principals can confidently say they are addressing literacy and numeracy gaps for their boarders, which reflects well on school performance outcomes.

Budget-Friendly Support: Because the program is funded by participating families, the school can provide this enrichment without dipping into school funds. There's no strain on tight budgets or need to hire additional full-time staff. All administration – from recruiting qualified tutors to monitoring progress – is handled by the program, not the school.

Reduced Teacher Workload: With professional tutors assisting students in the evenings, the pressure on teachers and boarding staff to be the sole academic support is lifted. They regain time and energy to focus on their primary roles, while knowing students are in good hands.

Benefits for Students and Families

Convenient, Consistent Help: Boarders get academic help right where they live and study. There's no need for travel or altering their schedule – support is available during normal prep time in a familiar environment.

Personalised Learning: Tutors can pinpoint each student's weaknesses and tailor support, something that's hard to achieve in a large study hall. Whether a student needs to reinforce foundational numeracy or polish their essay-writing, the help is targeted to them.

Affordable for Families: Because the program is a group session format and a partnership with the school, it often comes at a much lower cost than private one-on-one tutoring outside of school. It's an affordable investment for parents compared to coordinating external tutoring and associated costs (transport, higher tutoring fees, etc.).

Confidence and Improved Outcomes:

Perhaps most importantly, students in the program tend to feel more confident and less anxious about their studies. With regular coaching and mentorship, they develop better study strategies and start seeing improvements in their results. This boost in self-esteem and academic progress benefits their overall wellbeing and future opportunities.

The Bigger Picture

Introducing a supplementary tutoring program like The Academic Advantage Program transforms a boarding school into a centre of holistic care. It reinforces a culture where academic support is woven into daily life, hand-in-hand with pastoral care. In challenging times, such forward-thinking solutions allow schools to be responsive to students' and parents' needs without financial strain. It's a way of saying "we hear you, and we're doing something about it" – addressing the very real concerns about academic gaps and wellbeing in a proactive manner.

Boarding schools have always been about more than just providing a bed and meals; they are about nurturing growth in every aspect of a young person's life. By extending academic care through an opt-in, on-site tutoring program, schools can ensure no student falls through the cracks after hours. The Academic Advantage Program

is one example of how schools can innovate smartly, supporting students academically in the evenings while keeping budgets intact. It's a win-win-win scenario for schools, families, and most importantly, the students who can now truly thrive in the boarding environment.

For Principals and school leaders looking to strengthen their boarding offering, this model is a compelling option. It demonstrates that even with budget pressures, there are creative ways to enhance student support. In an era where educational excellence and wellbeing go hand in hand, providing such an opportunity shows a school's dedication to its students' success and happiness.

Interested in learning more? Schools or families keen to explore the Boarder's Advantage program further can simply reach out via swilliamson@ateamtuition.com. By inquiring, you take the first step toward giving your boarders an academic advantage – one that lights up their learning journey long after lights-out! ■

AUTHOR:

Hayden McEvoy
Founder and CEO
A Team Tuition



Financial Literacy *for Boarder Sub-groups*

Boarding schools welcome students from a wide variety of backgrounds, each bringing unique experiences, opportunities, and challenges. Within this diversity, there are countless subgroups whose needs and circumstances may influence how they approach money and financial decision-making.

It is impossible to define them all, but exploring a few examples highlights why tailored financial education is so important. The five subgroups outlined below represent only a small sample, showing how financial literacy can empower students in very different ways, without reducing their experiences to stereotypes.

Regional and Rural Boarders

Many boarders come from regional or rural communities, where families often work in industries like farming, mining, or small business. These students may be accustomed to cycles of income fluctuation, such as the effects of drought or commodity prices. For them, financial literacy education can help them understand how irregular income requires careful budgeting and forward planning.

For example, a rural student who receives an annual clothing allowance at the start of term might be tempted to spend it quickly. A self-education course can teach the importance of spreading spending across the year and setting aside money for unexpected needs. By building these skills early, such students are better prepared for the financial uncertainties of adulthood.

However, some students from regional or rural areas may feel reticent about financial education. Money may not be openly

discussed in their households, or there may be a belief that financial matters are too complicated for teenagers. Others may feel embarrassed if their family's income is irregular compared to peers. In these cases, encouragement from both parents and boarding staff is essential to help them see financial literacy not as a source of shame, but as a tool for resilience and independence.

International Students

Boarding schools often host students from overseas, many of whom live far from parental support and manage money in an unfamiliar environment. They may also face challenges with currency conversion, cultural differences in spending, and navigating local banking systems.

Financial literacy courses provide international students with practical skills such as understanding exchange rates, using debit cards safely, and managing school-related expenses. For instance, an international student from Asia may need to learn how to compare exchange rates before transferring money into their Australian account. Such knowledge reduces stress and helps them focus on their studies while gaining independence in a new country.

Some international students may be reluctant to engage in financial education because they feel uncertain about

language barriers or embarrassed about asking "basic" questions. Others may worry that learning about finances highlights their lack of independence compared to local students. By receiving reassurance and encouragement from home and staff, they can build confidence and see financial literacy as a pathway to empowerment in their new environment.

Scholarship and Bursary Recipients

Some boarders attend schools through scholarships or bursaries, often because of financial need or academic, sporting, or artistic achievement. While these opportunities provide access to education, students may feel pressure to keep up socially with peers from wealthier backgrounds.

Financial literacy can help these students navigate peer pressure while maintaining confidence in their financial choices. For example, a student on a scholarship might struggle when friends frequently buy new sports gear or go on costly outings. Through self-education courses, they can learn strategies for budgeting their allowance, prioritising essentials, and making confident decisions without feeling they need to spend beyond their means.

Yet some scholarship students may feel anxious about financial education because it draws attention to their economic circumstances. Others may worry about being judged for not having the same financial freedom as their peers. With encouragement from parents and staff, these students can reframe financial literacy not as a reminder of disadvantage, but as a life skill that enhances their independence and future opportunities.

Boarders from Business or Professional Families

Boarders from families where parents are professionals or run businesses may be provided with generous allowances, but without guidance, they risk developing unrealistic expectations about money. Shielded from the realities of budgeting, they may assume financial support is always guaranteed.

Financial literacy education helps these students learn to distinguish between needs and wants, and to value money through planning and saving. For example, a student given \$100 a week in pocket money could be guided to divide it into categories: daily spending, short-term savings for an item like a new phone, and long-term savings for future goals. This builds responsible habits and reduces the likelihood of wasteful spending.

Some students in this subgroup may feel resistant to financial education because they see money as something that will always be provided, making the topic seem irrelevant. Others may fear that discussing budgeting implies mistrust from their parents. Support from both home and boarding staff is crucial here, to help these students understand that financial literacy is not about restriction but about freedom, choice, and independence in their future lives.

Boarders Preparing for University or the Workforce

Older boarders in their final years of school face the imminent transition to university, apprenticeships, or employment. At this stage, financial education becomes even more critical. They must soon manage expenses such as rent, groceries, transport, or tuition fees without the safety net of school staff.

Financial literacy courses can introduce them to more advanced topics, such as how to manage a bank account, use credit responsibly, or understand student loans. For example, a Year 12 student heading to university may benefit from learning how to compare accommodation costs

or create a realistic weekly budget based on limited income. These practical skills directly prepare them for life after school.

Nevertheless, some older students may feel hesitant about financial education because they fear it will expose how unprepared they are for independence. Others may be overwhelmed by the number of financial decisions looming ahead and prefer to avoid the subject. Encouragement from staff and parents can help them see financial literacy as a support, not a burden, giving them the confidence to take their first steps into adulthood with greater security.

Conclusion

Boarders are not a single group, but a diverse community with varied needs and experiences. Regional and rural students, international students, scholarship recipients, children of professionals, and senior boarders preparing for independence each face different financial realities. Tailored financial literacy education acknowledges this diversity while equipping all students with the skills to make sound, confident financial choices. By addressing the needs of different subgroups through self-education courses and group discussions, boarding schools can

ensure that every student - regardless of background - is prepared for the financial responsibilities of adult life. ■

AUTHOR:

Ken Swan

Founder

The Wealth Academy

www.thewealthacademy.com.au



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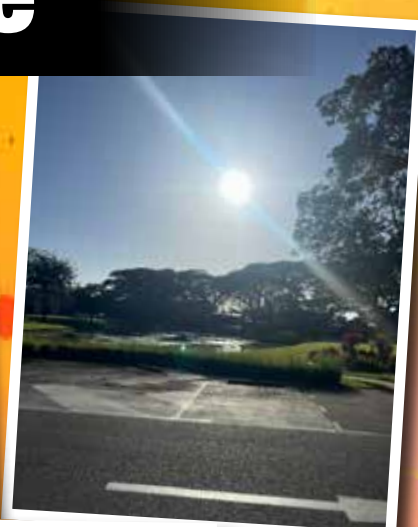


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Challenger Disaster

Despite knowing the ending, it reads like a thriller, and I was on the edge of my seat for much of it. The biggest tragedy of this disaster is that it could have been prevented.

The cause was the failure of the primary and secondary O-ring seals, due, in part, to record-low temperatures on the morning of the launch. Engineers who worked on the shuttle project expressed grave concerns about the efficacy of these seals and the safety implications. The evening before the launch they strongly recommended delaying the mission.

Management overruled this recommendation.

As I was reading, I couldn't help but think of the things that went wrong, and how much we, as business leaders, could learn from this.

My five core lessons from this are:

Psychological safety is the foundation of high performance

The engineers who raised concerns (notably about the cold weather's impact on the O-rings) felt pressure to stay silent or were overridden by management. Many also feared for their jobs by speaking out.

What we should learn: Organisations rely on psychological safety (the ability to speak up without fear of punishment). If your team doesn't feel safe raising issues, you're flying blind. Create an environment where people are heard without fear of punishment.

Culture isn't what you say, it's what you do

NASA had developed a culture where schedule and success were prioritised over safety concerns. Safety and other warnings were ignored or downplayed.

What we should learn: You might say you value safety, wellbeing, or innovation. But if your team is rewarded for pushing through, staying silent, or meeting deadlines at all costs, that's the real culture. Ask yourself: Are people encouraged to speak up when something feels off?

Beware of groupthink and hero culture

NASA had a reputation for success and a "can-do" attitude. But that overconfidence made it hard to acknowledge real risks. Sound familiar?

What we should learn: Healthy teams welcome challenge and dissent. Unhealthy ones chase perfection.

Leadership accountability matters, and leaders set the tone

Leadership failures occurred at multiple levels. There was significant political and organisational pressure to meet a launch schedule tied to public and media expectations.

What we should learn: In the end, it wasn't one person's fault. It was a system shaped by leadership choices and priorities. Leadership either reinforces a culture of safety - or undermines it.

Ask: What shadow are you casting as a leader? What behaviours do you reward, overlook, or discourage?

Don't let external pressure override internal decision-making

The Challenger launch went ahead despite known risks, partly due to political and media expectations. Having teacher Christa McAuliffe on board elevated expectations and pressure, and meant the urgency overpowered better judgement.

What we should learn: Let your core values and internal standards drive decisions, not external hype or short-term optics. And while clients, deadlines, and optics matter, they shouldn't be more important than your values or your people.

Nearly 40 years later, I can still picture that morning - sitting on the edge of my bed, stunned, trying to make sense of what had happened. At the time, I didn't have the language for it. But now, through the lens of the work I do with leaders and teams, I see it differently.

The Challenger disaster wasn't just a technical failure. It was a cultural disaster.

A failure to listen. A failure to create space for truth. A failure to lead with courage under pressure.

Reading this book reminded me how easily things can go wrong when the wrong voices are silenced, and the wrong priorities are upheld.

As leaders it is up to us to create cultures where truth can be spoken, where safety (psychological and physical) is prioritised, and where long-term integrity wins over short-term gains.

So often the most important decisions we make may not be the ones that push us forward, but the ones that remind us to pause, ask the hard questions, and really listen to the answers. ■

AUTHOR:

Mel Kettle

Strategic Communication Expert

Speaker, Author, Mentor,

Facilitator, Trainer

mel@melkettle.com



Change in Boarding: *From Hesitation to Hope*

Change...

The dreaded word that can send a shiver down the spines of staff. The questions, the hesitation, the “why now?,” the sighs, the sideways glances. Change means disruption to routine, a new way of doing things, a shift in what we’ve always known.

But change can also bring opportunities to flourish.

It is hard. It takes time. And it certainly will not happen overnight.

A Vision for Change

When I stepped into my role at Dulwich (DHSZ), here in China, I quickly learned that our boarding model needed transformation. Not because it was broken, but because it was limited. Students were safe,

routines were tight, but the holistic, internationally minded model we wanted was yet to emerge.

We needed urgency. We needed vision. And we needed patience.

John Kotter’s framework on leading change became our quiet compass, helping us navigate each stage:

1. **Create a sense of urgency.** Why did boarding need to evolve?
2. **Build a guiding coalition.** A team of house parents, staff, and student leaders.
3. **Develop and communicate a vision.** What holistic boarding could look like.
4. **Empower others to act.** Staff and students are given a voice and responsibility.

5. **Generate short-term wins.** Celebrations, recognition, visible differences. Constant reinforcement.
6. **Consolidate gains.** Embed new practices, build confidence.
7. **Anchor changes in culture.** Make it the norm, not the exception.

The framework we followed was simple: create clarity on why we needed to change, build the right team, keep communication open, celebrate small wins, and slowly embed new practices into the culture. That became our rhythm.

In China, where boarding has long carried deeply Confucian values of respect, obedience, and discipline, we were asking staff and students to believe in a different story. But then again, every boarding school is niche. Whether in Africa, New Zealand, Australia or Europe, or anywhere in the world for that matter, boarding houses are unique micro-communities. Change in any context is about persistence and remembering the why.

Small Wins, Big Shifts

This week, in my third year at the helm, I found myself watching two videos that reminded me just how far we had come.

The first captured our **Jinji Lake Boarding Walkathon**. When first suggested, it sounded impossible: twelve students working with our communications team to rally staff, organise sponsors, and





encourage 200+ students, parents and community members to walk 16km for charity... impossible?

But on that day, hundreds of people joined. Families travelled hours by train, not just to donate, but to walk with their children. For many, it was the first time they had spent a whole day outdoors together. Watching them finish, hand in hand, I felt shivers. Boarding had become a bridge.

The second video was created by a Year Twelve student passionate about media. It was a highlight reel of our boarding awards evening: water fights, zorb soccer, birthday cakes, quiz nights, R U OK Day, Chinese New Year celebrations - to name just a few of the incredible moments, our small wins. It also captured weekend trips cycling in Suzhou, cultural cooking nights, snowboarding excursions, student-led charity projects, and even the simple but powerful rituals of daily life, like shared meals, study hall successes, and floor games that brought students and staff together. Our wins.

In the 'busyness' of managing duty rosters and safety briefings, pastoral issues that inevitably come with teenagers of all ages, I had overlooked these joyful moments. They had sunk into my subconscious. That was my personal challenge this year: to bring them back to the forefront.

Change is hard. Change is grueling. Change takes time, persistence, and, most of all, communication.

To shift culture, we had to lead from the front, assemble the right team, and model the difference. House parents, tutors, and even ancillary staff all had to see the value. Student leaders, when empowered, became change-makers themselves.

We also discovered the power of inclusion. My wife and I, with our two young boys (now eight and six), often join weekend activities. At first, this was unusual in a Chinese context. Staff bringing families into boarding life was "not done." But soon, other staff from our school who were not in boarding joined too.

Students, many of whom miss younger siblings or cousins, lit up in these moments. It added warmth, humanity, and a new dimension to the community. A small change, but one that shifted the feel of boarding culture profoundly.

Takeaways for Boarding Leaders

So, what can boarding colleagues around the world take from our journey?

- Start with Why: Change without a clear purpose breeds resistance. Anchor everything in the ultimate goal: student flourishing.
- Go Slow to Go Far: Culture cannot be shifted overnight. Consistency matters more than speed.
- Empower Student Leadership: Your students are not passengers; they are drivers. When they own the change, it sticks.
- Celebrate Small Wins: A quiz night, a charity walk, a simple birthday cake. These moments build momentum.
- Model Vulnerability: Share the journey. Admit it's hard. Honour tradition while nudging forward.

As the lights dim each evening in boarding houses across the world, change is still at work. Quietly, persistently, in the way we speak to students, the traditions we keep, and the new ideas we dare to try.

For us at DHSZ, structure gave us direction,

but it was persistence, belief, and community that made change real.

So tonight, wherever your Boarding House is in the world - remember change is not an event, it is a process. Begin with one step. Build your team. Celebrate the wins. And little by little, you may find yourself, as I have, humbled and in awe of what once felt impossible. Are we perfect? Absolutely not. But then, what boarding school is?

What matters is the journey, and I've learned to take one deliberate day each week to pause, reflect, appreciate, and celebrate.

Change is hard. Change is slow. But change is worth it. ■

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AUTHOR:

Simon Johnston
Assistant Head of School and
Head of Boarding
Dulwich High School Suzhou

Cold Comfort: *Dunking Yourself in Icy Water is a Hot Trend.*

Research shows it has real benefits. Cold water immersion can improve mood, boost resilience and reduce stress - if you can get past the initial shock.

Amid all the claims by celebrities, sportspeople and influencers about deliberate cold water immersion, there is one undeniable truth: It is not a pleasant experience.

First-timers gasp, swear, squeal and grit their teeth.

Some even panic.

“It’s quite stressful,” says Kevin Kemp-Smith (pictured), an Assistant Professor at Bond University who still struggles with his own ice bath routine.

The chilling jolt got Dr Kemp-Smith and his colleague Dr Mathew Ono thinking. What drives a healthy person to inflict such discomfort upon themselves? What do they get out of it?

To find out, the pair and their team conducted a scoping review that examined 13 international studies into cold water immersion (CWI). Cold water immersion: Exploring the effects on wellbeing - scoping review, published in the International

Journal of Wellbeing, is believed to be the first to examine CWI’s effect on healthy adults.

The history of cold therapy

More than just a TikTok fad or fundraising stunt, cold therapy has been used for thousands of years. The Edwin Smith Papyrus, dating to about 1600 BCE (though likely based on material from as early as 3000 BCE), describes a poultice made from crushed fruit, mason’s mortar and water applied to inflamed lesions. This mixture likely functioned as an early form of cryotherapy, leveraging evaporative cooling.

Greek physicians Hippocrates (460-370 BCE) and Galen (129-210 CE) went further. Hippocrates advocated cold water immersion for fever management, while Galen developed a cold cream of olive oil, beeswax and water.

By the 19th Century, open-water swimming was recognised for its physical and mental health benefits. In Australia, winter swimming clubs began appearing in

the early 1920s with the Bronte Splashers in Sydney, followed by the iconic Bondi Icebergs. Today the Australian Winter Swimming Association has more than 5000 members across 42 clubs who compete weekly from May to September.

Use in sport

Ice baths have become a popular recovery tool among athletes after training and competition. Dr Kemp-Smith says there is a growing evidence base behind the practice.

“The main findings are that ice baths can reduce muscle soreness and the feeling of exertion,” he says. “The other critical element is the release of adrenaline and noradrenaline, the body’s fight-or-flight chemicals. These are the brain chemicals that tell you it is not a great idea to immerse yourself in the cold. Overcoming this thought and actually getting into the cold is how people build resilience and determination. Dopamine is another chemical that is released from the brain at the same time and it causes you to be alert and increase your focus and provides a feeling of wellbeing. Following on from that is serotonin, another neurochemical that helps you feel relaxed and calm, and plays a key role in maintaining a healthy mental state. It’s the same process as the runner’s high. It’s addictive.”

Celebrities

Celebrities including Usher, Mark Wahlberg and Harry Styles have praised CWI. Lady Gaga says it is part of her post-performance routine. Philanthropist Melinda French Gates has been practising cold plunges for a decade.

“If you can get through that, you’re like, OK, I can basically do anything today,” she says.

Cold plunge for recovery and getting to the next big wave . . . #coldplunge #musclesoreness

Big wave surfer Laird Hamilton uses CWI to increase his resilience.

What the Bond researchers found

All 13 studies examined by the Bond University team were qualitative in nature, focusing on how people felt, rather than measuring quantitative factors such as heart rate, temperature, and blood pressure.

“I think that’s important,” Dr Kemp-Smith says. “Whereas data can be confusing and can be manipulated, when it’s qualitative, I just record what you say and report it verbatim.”

Everyone involved in the studies was practising CWI in outdoor settings such as open lakes and coastal waters in the UK, US, and Europe. The average temperature the participants were exposed to was 13.78C, with the coldest being 4C and the warmest 19.9C. They were participating in CWI 2.5-8.5 days per month, with durations from 5-20 minutes.

The scoping review identified four themes:

Physical and psychological benefits

Many of the studies found CWI can improve mood, reduce stress and have anti-depressant effects. It also helps people become more mindful and aware of their



bodies, which can boost overall well-being.

Sense of connectedness

CWI often involves social activities such as group swims which help people feel more connected to others. This can enhance feelings of support and happiness, which are important for mental health.

Personal growth

The discomfort of cold water can help people build resilience and self-regulation skills, contributing to personal growth. This can improve the ability to handle stress and adversity.

Connection with nature

CWI, particularly in natural environments such as lakes or seas, fosters a strong connection with nature which is associated with positive well-being.

CWI Options

At its most basic, trying CWI at home is as simple as some bags of ice dumped in

a bathtub. Portable ice tubs are available for less than \$100, while more expensive models with filtration and bacteria-killing ozone generators cost thousands of dollars. There’s even a booming online community offering tutorials on how to convert chest freezers into DIY ice baths.

The cheapest way to experience CWI is in nature. That can be challenging on the Gold Coast where the ocean temperature drops to about 21C in winter, which is more accurately described as barely-cool water immersion. In contrast, waters off Sydney get down to 16.9C, while Melbourne reaches 11C. Hobart is the natural environment for cold water swimmers year-round, with ocean temperatures ranging from 9-17C.

The convert

Dr Kemp-Smith says he and his wife are now ice bath devotees, using a cheap inflatable ice bath and a commercial ice machine.

“We use the pool in winter when it drops down to about 12C but the rest of the year



we use ice,” he says.

But even with practice he’s still not used to entering 12C water - the temperature of the ocean surrounding the Falkland Islands.

How cold is cold enough?

The 13 studies examined by the Bond researchers spanned ice bath temperatures from 4-19C, with an average of 13.78C.

“Everyone’s tolerance is going to be different,” Dr Kemp-Smith says. “You might go, ‘Oh man, this is really cold. I don’t think I can get myself in. But if I take a few breaths and focus, maybe I can stay in.’ You’re looking for a temperature that is tolerable and safe. Some studies have shown slightly warmer temperatures around 15-16C with a longer duration up to an hour have the same effects as a colder temperature, say 4C for a shorter 1-4 minute immersion. There are no hard or fast rules; it is what the individual can safely undertake.”

Risks

Anyone planning to try CWI for the first time should talk to their doctor first, with risks ranging from bacterial infection

from dirty water to heart attack. Royal Life Saving Australia released a position statement on CWI last year, saying that “as with any aquatic activity there is an inherent risk of drowning”.

The shock of entering cold water can cause hyperventilation, increased heart rate and blood pressure and loss of breathing control. It’s also important not to overdo it, as hypothermia can set in during extended exposure to cold water. People with very low body fat are particularly susceptible to hypothermia.

“It is important that you consult a registered medical doctor first to see if you have any underlying health conditions that could be worsened by deliberate cold exposure,” Dr Kemp-Smith says. “You might have Raynaud’s syndrome, which causes reduced blood flow to the extremities. Pregnant women need to be cautious, and some people may experience a panic attack if they get in too quickly. Oftentimes if someone is competing with friends or colleagues, or they’re competing online, they can go too extreme, too quickly.”

Younger children should also avoid CWI, Dr Kemp-Smith says.

“They don’t have an effective shivering response and find it difficult to control

their body temperature as effectively as adults.”

Beginner tips

Dr Kemp-Smith says CWI newbies should undertake no more than two to three sessions of one to five minutes per week, totalling no more than ten to fifteen minutes at temperatures they can tolerate. Starting with cold showers can be a good way of easing into it, he says. For those seeking a cold water hit in nature, beware of environmental hazards such as currents, waves and wind. It is a good idea to buddy up with another cold-water diehard, particularly if you’re dipping in nature.

Future research

With the scoping review complete, Dr Kemp-Smith says he is interested in researching the benefits of full body immersion in cold water versus cold showers.

“Not everyone can afford an ice bath, but it’s very easy to just turn down the hot water in the shower,” he says. “How cold should the shower be to get a benefit? How long should I stay under the shower for? I’m also interested in the physiological changes in the body”

Exposure to cold converts energy-storing white fat into beige or brown fat, which burns more calories than white fat to generate heat through a process called thermogenesis. This calorie-burning effect improves metabolism, helps regulate blood sugar, and may protect against obesity and diabetes.

Dr Kemp-Smith is also curious about CWI’s impact on inflammatory markers in the blood, and whether it might be a treatment for people with arthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. The search for cold comfort continues. ■

AUTHOR:

Ken Robinson
Photos: Cavan Flynn
Bond University.

The 4 Hidden Drains on Your Energy (And What to Do About Them)

“I’m always tired and I don’t know why”, I told my friend.
Her response? You’re not getting enough sleep.

But here’s the thing.
I was.

I was in bed by 9.30pm, lights off by 10pm,
and I didn’t wake until 6.30am-ish.
I felt like I was getting plenty of sleep.

So I started to think about what I was
doing in my day.

Sure, I had some big things going on, but it
was a lot of little things that were draining
my energy.

The subtle energy leaks that had become
my norm:

- the conversation that left me feeling
anxious
- saying yes to a piece of work that
pushed me into over-committed
- having to think about what to have for
dinner - again!
- my messy office, the clutter on the

dining table, the ever-growing pile
Mt Washmore in the corner of the
bedroom...

There were so many little things that
were draining my energy, and I didn’t
even realise.

Once I was aware of these energy leaks, I
started to pay attention to what drained
me and what filled my cup.

I started to notice:

- What activities left me feeling flat,
frazzled, or frustrated.
- Which people lit me up which ones
left me feeling depleted?
- When in my day I felt most alive,
focused, and engaged?

When was the last time you asked yourself
these questions?

And do you know what recharges you?

I know I’m recharged by:

- A walk outside.
- Focused work with no distractions
(and brain.fm playing in the back-
ground to help me stay focused).
- Music, quiet time with a good book, a
phone call with a close friend.

Once I worked out my personal energy
leaks (and what recharged them) I could
start to embed the boosts and weed out
or limit the leaks.

It’s made a massive difference to my qual-
ity of life. AND, importantly, most days
now I’m not tired all the time.

I’d love you to think about one thing you
can remove - or add - to better support
your energy this week. ■

AUTHOR:

Mel Kettle
Strategic Communication Expert
Speaker, Author, Mentor,
Facilitator, Trainer
mel@melkettle.com



Making Reading Books *a Priority in Your School*

Across the globe, educators are raising the alarm: **reading for pleasure is in steep decline** - not only among young people but adults as well. Studies reveal that fewer students are choosing to read in their free time, with concerning long-term implications for learning, wellbeing, and literacy outcomes. In fact, the UK has gone so far as to declare **2026 the “Year of Reading”** in an effort to reignite the joy of books for children. I’d love for Australia to adopt the same theme!

For schools - particularly **boarding schools**, where the environment shapes both academic and personal growth - the challenge is clear: how can we make reading not just a requirement, but a source of enjoyment and curiosity? The good news is that staff don’t need to overhaul their programs or add to their already busy schedules. Small, intentional shifts can transform

the reading culture in classrooms, schools and boarding houses alike.

Practical Ways to Build a Culture of Reading

1. Model a Love of Reading

Students look to staff for inspiration. Share who you are as a reader - what books you love, what you’re currently

reading, and why it excites you. Something as simple as displaying a book on your desk or weaving a story you’ve read into a dormitory discussion shows students that reading is valued. This provides an additional pathway to engage meaningfully with our students.

2. Leverage What’s Popular

Pop culture can be a powerful hook. Whether it’s the latest YA release, books connected to sports, or biographies of artists like Taylor Swift, using students’ existing interests helps bridge the gap between reluctance and enthusiasm. Leverage the recent winners of Book Week to showcase the value of award-winning books. This year’s theme ‘Book an Adventure’ is the perfect opportunity to use books to introduce new places, meet fascinating characters, and open their minds to endless possibilities. This theme offers appeal to our older students too.

3. Match interests to books

School and local librarians are invaluable partners in connecting students with the right books. This may take a little work, however matching texts to individual interests - be it sport, animals, or mysterious - ensures every student can find something that resonates. I’d encourage staff to follow lots of authors on Instagram or social media. Many authors now share resources online; a quick visit to their websites or social media often uncovers free materials tailored for schools.

4. Read Aloud - At Every Age

Reading aloud shouldn’t stop after primary years. Whether in English, Science, History or in the boarding house, students benefit from hearing fluent reading, staff commentary,



and authentic enthusiasm. When staff model curiosity, questioning, and reflection, they give students permission to engage deeply with texts.

5. **Reading at Home and Rethinking the “20 Minutes a Night” Rule**

Rather than mandating solo reading every evening, encourage parents and boarding staff to make reading a shared experience. This could be students reading aloud together in common rooms, parents sharing what they are reading at home, or group “reading circles” before bedtime. The key is consistency and enjoyment, not obligation. I’m very excited to be trialling a Book Club with parents at one of our schools - it’s another way to show our children how we value reading books.

6. **Create a School-Wide Reading Culture**

I have seen amazing results from some of our schools where this was our priority. The evidence that it works? A direct increase in library borrowing and staff feedback of conversations with students about reading. It is a wonderful initiative. Sustained change happens when reading becomes a visible, valued part of school life.

Here are some examples that we have employed:

a) **Leverage Peer Influence**

Did you know that peers are the greatest influence on students reading? Display what your school readers are reading (together with their photo and a copy of the book). Examples include the school captains, sports captains, boarding house leaders, academic firsts and prefects. Make it thematic around the sporting or cultural seasons of your school.

b) **Match the Selfie to the Shelfie**

This is fun! Can you students match the book to the teacher? Record their answers and award the winners with a block of chocolate or water bottle.

c) **Book Talk session** - Once every week, ask a teacher or staff member at the school to talk to camera about a book they are currently reading or a book that affected them. We’ve had one teacher share with students his

favourite childhood book that he now reads to his 3-year-old son. This can be a short 2 or 3-minute share that you can play to your students, but it communicates that the whole staff value reading books.

Why It Matters

If students cannot find joy in reading, it becomes difficult for them to persist with more demanding texts in other subjects such as Science, History, or other content areas. By **normalising reading for pleasure**, schools not only boost literacy skills but also foster empathy, creativity, and resilience.

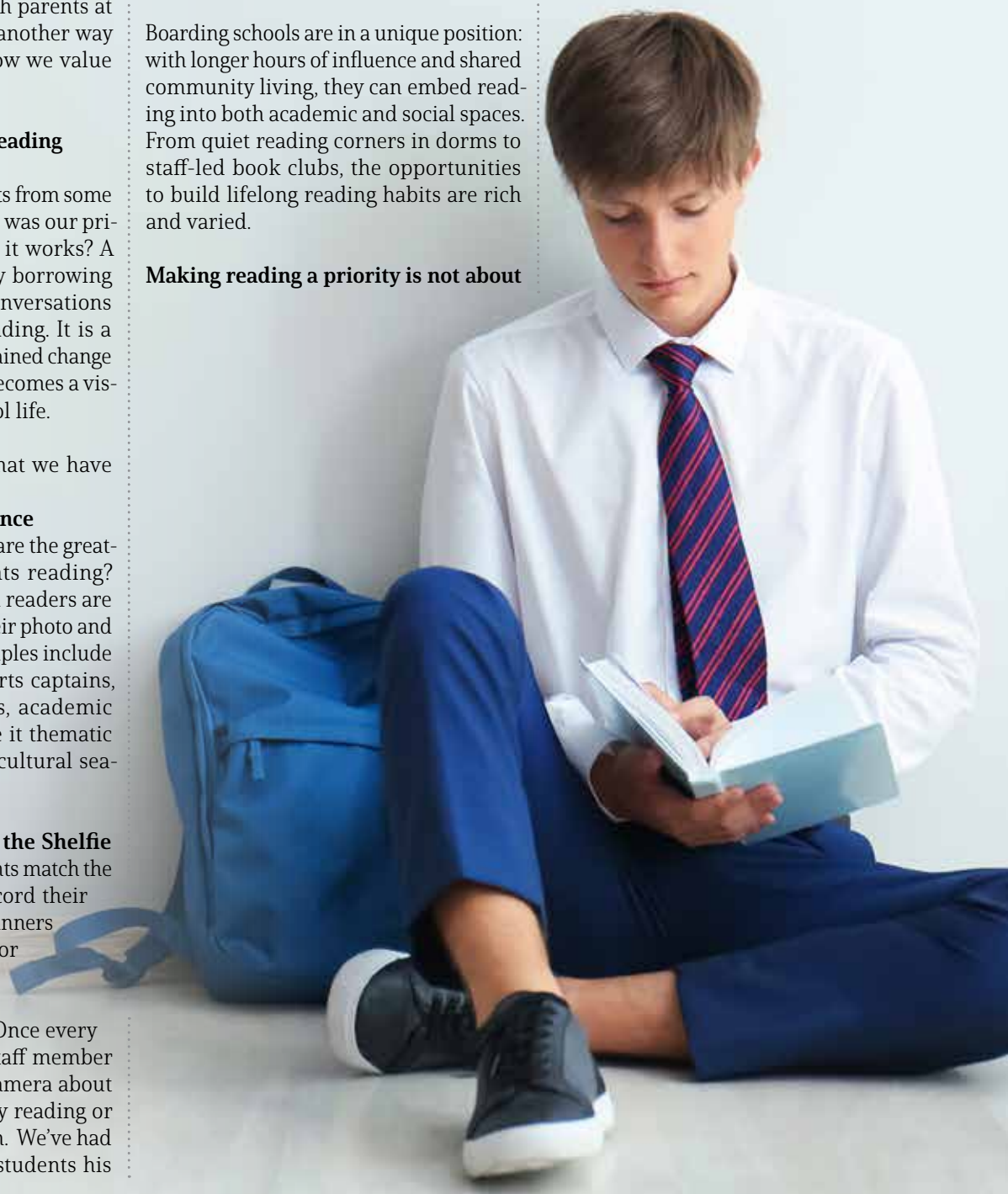
Boarding schools are in a unique position: with longer hours of influence and shared community living, they can embed reading into both academic and social spaces. From quiet reading corners in dorms to staff-led book clubs, the opportunities to build lifelong reading habits are rich and varied.

Making reading a priority is not about

adding more to the curriculum - it’s about weaving it into the fabric of school life. When teachers and boarding staff model genuine enthusiasm, match books to interests, and make reading communal and fun, they equip students with not just stronger literacy skills but also a love of learning that lasts well beyond their school years. ■

AUTHOR:

Tanya Grambow
Founder
Literacy for Kids



Farm Strong, Hostel Proud: *Napier Girls Dig Deep*



Hewett House boarders finish second at FMG Junior Young Farmer of the Year 2025

Boots laced, minds sharp, and sleeves rolled up - two boarders from Napier Girls' High School have proven that girls have a strong place in New Zealand's agriculture sector. At the prestigious FMG Junior Young Farmer of the Year 2025 competition, Kaela Brans and Liana Redpath from Hewett House proudly represented their school, coming an impressive second nationally, missing out on the title by only

six points in one of the closest finishes in the competition's history.

Growing Future Leaders Through Farming

The FMG Junior Young Farmer of the Year competition, organised by New Zealand Young Farmers (NZYF) and sponsored by FMG Insurance, is New Zealand's premier contest for high school students



passionate about agriculture. It's open to teams of two students aged 13-18 from Years Nine to Thirteen (and first-year tertiary students under 18).

This annual event challenges young people to develop and showcase a wide range of skills - from livestock handling and environmental sustainability to farm safety, machinery operation, agribusiness, and public speaking. Teams compete regionally in seven diverse modules before advancing to a buzzer-style "Face-Off" quiz. The top two teams from each of seven regions qualify for the national Grand Final.

A National Stage in Invercargill

In July 2025, the country's top 14 teams gathered in Invercargill to battle for the title over two intense days. The competition combined practical farm tasks, theory exams, speeches, and a live quiz.

Rangiora High School's John Lundy and Harry Parish took out first place, with Napier Girls' High's Kaela Brans and Liana Redpath finishing a close second - just six points behind the champions. Napier Boys' High rounded out the podium in third place.

Individual Excellence Shines Through

Kaela Brans was awarded Best Overall Module Score, recognising her as the top individual performer across all Grand Final challenges. This accolade reflects the depth of her agricultural knowledge, adaptability, and preparation.

"At Hewett House, we learn to support each other, step up when needed, and stay calm under pressure," says Kaela. "Those skills helped us perform as a team. We knew our school and hostel were behind us all the way."

The Power of Boarding Support

Boarding life at Hewett House provides more than a home; it cultivates resilience, leadership, and a supportive community. Kaela and Liana's success is a testament to the environment that encourages young women to challenge themselves and excel both academically and practically.



More Than a Competition - A Career Launchpad

The FMG Junior Young Farmer of the Year competition is a gateway for young New Zealanders to explore the broad opportunities within agriculture, science, and rural leadership. Beyond practical skills, participants gain confidence, teamwork, and leadership capabilities that last a lifetime.

For young women like Kaela and Liana, the competition underscores that the future of farming is diverse, inclusive, and bright.

At Hewett House, the Young Farmers Club plays a vital role in fostering a love for agriculture and building essential skills among our boarders. With 65 enthusiastic girls from Years Nine to Thirteen actively involved, the club provides a supportive community where students can learn practical farming skills, develop leadership, and connect with peers who share their passion for the land. It creates a unique space for young women to grow confidence, explore career pathways, and prepare for competitions like the FMG Junior Young Farmer of the Year - all while building life-long friendships and a sense of belonging within the boarding community. ■

AUTHOR:
Joyce Clark
Hostel Manager
Hewett House
Napier Girls High School



Navigating the Evolving Media Landscape: *What You Need to Know*



The Digital Revolution: A Game-Changer for Media

Over the past 15 years, the digital revolution has turned the media world on its head. The rise of smartphones, social media, and 24/7 connectivity has fundamentally altered how people consume news.

Once, media outlets dictated when and how news was delivered. Today, audiences are in control - choosing what they read, when they read it, and on what platform. Mobile devices, in particular, have become the dominant channel for news consumption, pushing traditional media to reinvent themselves or risk obsolescence.

This shift isn't temporary. The rapid pace of digital innovation means that new platforms, formats, and user habits are constantly emerging. To remain effective in a communication role, it's crucial to stay informed about these evolving trends. How people access news directly impacts the way you should respond during a media issue or public event.

From Press Releases to Posts: The New Norm

In the past, a well-crafted press release was the gold standard of official communication. It was how organisations responded to media queries, announced developments, or addressed public issues.

Today, while press releases still serve a role - especially with traditional outlets - they're no longer enough on their own. Public communication now needs to

consider digital platforms where audiences expect real-time updates, shareable content, and direct engagement.

Statements may now be issued via:

- X (formerly Twitter) for breaking updates and official comments.
- Instagram for visual storytelling and personal tone.
- Facebook for community updates and stakeholder communication.
- LinkedIn for professional positioning and thought leadership.

The message may be the same across platforms, but the tone, format, and delivery must adapt to suit the audience and the medium.

Who Is 'The Media' Now?

Traditionally, "the media" referred to journalists employed by newspapers, radio stations, and television networks. But that definition no longer reflects the reality of today's information ecosystem.

Today, in addition to journalists the media also includes:

- Bloggers with large followings in niche sectors.
- Social media commentators who influence thousands or even millions.
- Podcasters and YouTubers with their own production studios.
- Opinion writers who cross over between print, digital, and broadcast channels.

Each of these actors has access to powerful distribution tools. With a single tweet, post, or video, they can shape public opinion, raise questions, or spark a crisis.

At the same time, the traditional media outlets still exist. The nightly national TV news, the daily newspaper, and hourly radio bulletins remain fixtures in the media diet of many Australians. However, they now operate within a broader and more competitive space - often drawing on social media trends or digital commentary in their own coverage.

Understanding the Media Landscape

To engage effectively with the media, it's essential to understand its full breadth and

diversity. Here's a snapshot of the different types of media and how they function:

1. Traditional Media

These include:

- Television news bulletins (e.g. ABC, Nine, Seven).
- Radio news (commercial and public).
- Print newspapers (national and local).

They still hold significant influence, particularly among older demographics and decision-makers.

2. Digital and Online Media

This space has exploded over the past decade. It includes:

- Online versions of newspapers.
- Digital-first publications (e.g. Daily Mail, The Guardian Australia online).
- Live blogs and rolling updates.
- Video streaming channels and news platforms.

These outlets are fast-paced and hungry for content. They often lead the way on breaking news and set the tone for the broader conversation.

3. Industry and Trade Media

These are specialised publications focused on specific sectors such as education. They can be influential within professional communities and are particularly important when targeting stakeholders or peers.

4. Social Media Platforms

Each platform serves a different purpose:

- X: Best for real-time updates, official statements, and crisis responses.
- Facebook: Ideal for building community and sharing organisational updates.
- Instagram: Great for visual storytelling and humanising your message.
- LinkedIn: Useful for thought leadership, professional updates, and reputation management.

Understanding the tone and expectations of each platform allows you to tailor your message and maximise its impact.

5. Current Affairs and Investigative Media

Programs like Four Corners or 60 Minutes, and long-form features in major outlets, remain powerful. These platforms often pursue deeper investigations and give shape to major public debates. Engagement here requires a careful, considered approach and often legal input.

6. Opinion and Letters

Opinion pieces, editorials, and reader letters are traditional but still relevant. They provide an opportunity for organisations to present their viewpoint or shape the conversation - particularly during contentious debates.

7. Specialist Publications and Thought Leadership

These are niche outlets that cater to specific audiences and offer a platform for showcasing expertise. Publishing here can build credibility and demonstrate your organisation's authority on an issue.

The Takeaway: Stay Flexible, Stay Informed

The media landscape is no longer fixed - it's fluid, fast, and multifaceted. This creates challenges, but also opportunities.

To communicate effectively today, you need to:

- Understand where your audience gets their news.
- Tailor your message for different platforms.
- Engage proactively - not just reactively.
- Continuously monitor new media trends.

The tools and platforms will continue to change. But the goal remains the same: to communicate clearly, credibly, and in a way that connects with your audience - wherever they are. ■

AUTHOR:

Julian Brophy
Perception Partners

Learning Without Limits:

Jake's Journey from Homeschool to High School

From Grade One, the vision was clear: Jake should finish school with enough belief in himself to choose any path he wanted, unrestricted by literacy challenges or feeling “less than” in the classroom. His parents wanted him to leave school and pursue a career he was passionate about, not just a job that didn't require reading or writing.

Living in Central Queensland, Jake's options for learning support were limited, and there was no local option for speech therapy. He was enrolled in Distance Education and taught 1:1 by his mother, who created a supportive home learning environment tailored to his unique needs.

But that didn't silence her gut feeling that Jake needed more to finish school

feeling confident, capable and unafraid of learning.

This vision was especially important to Jake's father, whose own school experience was filled with frustration, misunderstanding, and “hating” school. He was adamant that Jake's story wouldn't follow the same path.

Jake's family heard about me at an ICPA

Conference. I was a speech pathologist from the bush who had just started Pop Online Speech Therapy - one of the first video-call speech services in Australia (well before COVID). Though unsure about online therapy, Jake's mother was open to listening when I explained it's about more than learning to talk or read - it's about unlocking confidence.

Therapy that Travels

From Grade One, Jake saw me almost every week via telehealth - from the home schoolroom, during holidays or from Grandma's house. We completed targeted literacy intervention using “The Spalding Method” and played card games and puzzles to break up the tasks of; comprehension, reading, sounding out, spelling, and eventually, writing sentences, paragraphs and narratives!

Discovering the Diagnosis

Early on, we discussed the likelihood of dyslexia, yet the family did not immediately pursue diagnosis. Speech therapy, together with a rare and unique 1:1 classroom setting was proving to be effective in ensuring the gap between Jake and his peers did not get wider. It was decided that the expense of diagnosis would be best spent upon the transition to high school where there would be new challenges: classrooms, multiple teachers, peers, exams and an independence from home.

When the time came, I pulled out Pop's list of trusted educational psychologists and chatted with our growing team of speech pathologists about who would best support Jake's full educational assessment. The goal wasn't just to confirm or rule out dyslexia - it was to look holistically





at other factors like cognitive skills and working memory.

The outcome was a singular diagnosis of dyslexia. While I could advocate for Jake with detailed reports from our sessions and assessments, a formal diagnosis was a stronger tool for high school transition. I also worked with his family to build a checklist of what high school and boarding school would suit Jake best.

Which schools supported bespoke learning programs and flexible subject choices?

What accommodations would be made to support learning difficulties like dyslexia?

They found the right supportive environment and, with the diagnosis, unlocked exam accommodations (such as extra time) and additional learning support that would be essential for high school success.

Transitioning to Boarding School

Six months before Year Seven, I began working with Jake's new school via videoconference. We coordinated seamlessly

with Jake's parents, academic team and boarding house to ensure continuity of care.

Our first sessions after he had settled in weren't just about therapy. They became a safe space to talk, reflect, and stay grounded. Jake knew he had someone in his corner as he breezed his way through Term One. I kept in touch with Jake's mum all along the way to keep her as an integral part of speech therapy, passing on any nuggets of information I could glean from the classroom or boarding house.

From Cricket to Confidence

Jake's transition to boarding school wasn't just academic. He threw himself into the new experiences of boarding life - social groups, cricket, drama. And through it all, weekly therapy targeting literacy continued.

Now, our focus is on equipping him with the tools for high school: note writing, using spell check, managing assignments and applying strategies to support his dyslexia. Therapy also prepares him for confidence-shaking moments. If someone

questions why he visits the learning centre, Jake knows how to respond. He understands his dyslexia and embraces it as part of who he is - he is a great kid with lots of skills who just happens to have some problems with reading and spelling. So what!

His first report card? He was achieving mostly Bs, and more importantly, he was thriving - emotionally, socially and academically.

The Power of Consistency

Pop has been part of Jake's team for nearly a decade. We often joke with his mum that he'll still be doing therapy in Year Twelve, and maybe he will. But not because he's struggling or playing "catch-up". Because consistent therapy has helped build and maintain the confidence and skills he carries into every classroom today.

Jake isn't defined by his dyslexia. He doesn't hate school or even hate English! He is defined by his laid-back personality, his resilience, and his skill on the cricket pitch. I'm so proud to have supported him as he transitioned from a bush schoolroom to boarding school dorm with confidence.

A Note to Boarding School Parents

If you're preparing to send your child to boarding school - or they're already there - and you want them to build confidence in learning (not "hating school" like Jake's dad!) you're not alone.

Visit www.popfamily.au to learn more about our tailored online speech therapy, literacy and learning services. With 50+ speech pathologists, we're here to help your child maintain progress, confidence, and wellbeing at home and at boarding school.

To ensure the privacy of the child and their family, the name and some identifying details have been altered. ■

AUTHOR:

Heidi Trusler

Speech Pathologist and Founder of

Pop Online Speech Therapy

home@popfamily.au

Sustainability and Safety: *Innovative and Chemical Free Cleaning for Boarding Schools*

Innovative, chemical-free cleaning technologies are transforming the way Australian boarding schools protect student health and wellbeing, while actively promoting sustainability and environmental education. Solutions such as the Stabilised Aqueous Ozone (SAO) systems and chemical-free fogging offer a dual benefit: they help curb the spread of viral outbreaks and create greener, safer learning environments for boarding communities, directly supporting the values advocated by the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA).

The Challenge: Outbreaks in Boarding Schools

Boarding schools are uniquely vulnerable to viral outbreaks, with dormitories, dining halls, and

shared facilities creating ideal conditions for rapid transmission. Recent years have shown how serious the impact can be, with influenza-like illnesses and viruses such as COVID-19 causing significant disruption to student life and academic programs. In 2021, Brisbane Grammar School was forced into a two-week closure after multiple confirmed COVID-19 cases spread through the boarding community. In another NSW outbreak, 25 of 600 students developed pneumonia, with influenza-like illness attack rates reaching 27% among Year Eight boarders. Sydney has also seen five secondary school boarding colleges report pandemic H1N1 outbreaks, with attack rates between 10 and 30%. In one documented case, 13% of a single boarding cohort required medical care for influenza-like illness, leading to cancelled events and remedial academic sessions. These examples highlight the scale of the risk and underscore the urgent need for consistent,

proactive, and effective cleaning and infection control protocols.

Chemical-Free Cleaning: Science and Safety Benefit

Traditional cleaning often relies on potent chemical disinfectants, raising concerns about environmental impact, indoor air quality, and the exposure of young people to potentially harmful substances. Chemical-free cleaning methods, most notably the Stabilised Aqueous Ozone (SAO) system, employ ozonated water produced on-site from tap water. This solution acts as a powerful antimicrobial agent, capable of reducing bacteria, such as *E. coli* and *S. aureus*, by more than 99.9%, and viruses including rotavirus and norovirus by up to 99.9% in laboratory conditions, meeting stringent public health standards for cleanliness.

In independent assessments conducted at multiple educational institutions, including comprehensive trials at Middle Tennessee State University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the SAO system demonstrated exceptional performance. At Middle Tennessee State University, a month-long trial in an academic building showed that SAO was on par with or exceeded the performance and efficacy of traditional cleaning chemicals while achieving sustainability goals. The University of Michigan's custodial team received the President's Staff Innovation Award for replacing toxic cleaning chemicals with the zero-impact SAO solution. Most significantly, the University of Wisconsin-Madison reported bacteria levels on cleaned surfaces at or below the limits



of detection, comparable to, and in some cases better than, conventional cleaning using soap, water, and bleach, but without introducing hazardous residues. The university documented savings of over \$25,000 annually by eliminating the need to purchase harsh chemicals while maintaining superior cleaning standards.

Importantly, the ozonated water method also eliminates the logistical and environmental burdens of handling, storing, and disposing of chemical cleaning agents while reducing workers' exposure to harsh substances. The SAO system requires only water, oxygen, and electricity to create the cleaning solution on-site, with the added benefit that unused ozone safely converts back to oxygen and water, posing no harm to aquatic life and allowing safe disposal down the drain.

Measurable Outcomes in Boarding School Settings

Studies in educational facilities show that when surfaces are cleaned with SAO chemical-free systems, bacteria levels drop to near zero – with results matching traditional bleach under real-world conditions. In other words, boarding schools can achieve hospital-grade sanitisation without harsh chemicals.

When managed correctly and applied within optimal use times, SAO provides reliable antimicrobial protection that keeps environments safe for students. International boarding schools using SAO have even reported faster recovery after outbreaks, with sports and social programs resuming more quickly thanks to reduced transmission risk.

Promoting Environmental Wellness and Education

Boarding schools today are expected to deliver not only academic excellence but also leadership in sustainability. One practical step is adopting chemical-free cleaning solutions like Stabilised Aqueous Ozone (SAO). Recognised by Green Seal, GECA, and the Green Clean Institute, SAO offers clear environmental benefits, non-toxicity, and minimal impact on air and water quality.

Beyond reducing a school's carbon footprint, chemical-free cleaning turns a routine task into a daily lesson in



sustainability. When students see their own living spaces maintained with green technologies, it reinforces eco-conscious habits and shows that sustainability isn't just taught, it's lived. The impact is two-fold: schools provide healthier, safer environments while inspiring students to make responsible choices that extend well beyond the boarding house. In this way, green cleaning becomes both a health investment and an educational tool.

Integrating Cleaning Innovations Into School Wellness Strategies

The introduction of chemical-free fogging and SAO cleaning complements other health and safety practices, such as hand hygiene and vaccination programs, to form a holistic defence against viral outbreaks. These strategies enable boarding schools to maintain robust infection control while upholding their commitment to healthy, sustainable campus life.

Partnering for a Safer, Greener Future

As ABSA's dedicated cleaning and facility services partner, our tailored solutions empower boarding schools to confidently address the growing risks of viral outbreaks, without sacrificing environmental values or student wellbeing. Whether implementing the SAO system, integrating chemical-free fogging solutions, or delivering staff training in sustainable cleaning practices, we ensure that every school has the tools and expertise to safeguard its community.

By partnering with AFS, ABSA members are not only protecting their students – they're leading the way in environmental responsibility and public health, providing a model for safe, sustainable educational practice for all. ■



AUTHOR:

John Paul
Marketing & Bid Coordinator
Austral Facility Services

Stronger Together: *Indigenous Boarding Students Launch Connection Committee*



Boarding school life brings incredible opportunities but also challenges, especially for Indigenous students navigating life away from country, family, and community. Recognising this, the Indigenous Boarding Student Connection Committee has been launched - an initiative designed to foster cultural pride, connection, and belonging among Indigenous boarders across Sydney.

The vision for the committee is simple: one Indigenous student representative from each boarding school, coming together to share experiences, support one another, and lead events that celebrate culture and community. The group is supported by myself and Lilli-Grace McDermott (Indigenous Student Coordinator at SCEGGS

Darlinghurst), with the group designed to be student-led, collaborative, and culturally grounded.

On Wednesday 20 August, the committee held its first gathering at St Vincent's College, bringing together Indigenous boarders from St Gregory's College, St Scholastica's, Loreto, Pymble Ladies' College, Ascham, Abbotsleigh, and St Catherine's.

The evening began with boarders from St Vincent's transforming the hall into a welcoming circle. As buses arrived, visiting schools were greeted and escorted inside by Vinnies boarders, while Lilli and the team welcomed everyone into the space.

The night was officially opened by Savannah Ryan and Nylea Gordon, two proud Wiradjuri girls from SCEGGS Darlinghurst, who shared their excitement about the launch of the committee. Following their introduction, Malyn and Naylise delivered a heartfelt Acknowledgement of Country, paying respect to the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land.

Yindi, a St Vincent's boarder, proudly welcomed back Kodie and Tarli Mason, former Vinnies boarders and the founders of



Malima, a social enterprise dedicated to preserving and sharing Aboriginal culture through weaving, native plants, and storytelling. Kodie shared her journey and explained the importance of weaving as both an art form and a connection to culture.

Students gathered around food and weaving circles, laughing, sharing stories, and creating together. The weaving workshop not only taught practical skills but also gave students a chance to slow down, connect, and feel grounded in culture.

Students departed with new friendships, strengthened pride in their identities, and excitement for the future of the committee.

The launch of the Indigenous Boarding Student Connection Committee marks an important step in celebrating culture and amplifying Indigenous voices within boarding schools. Through regular connection, shared experiences, and student-led initiatives, this committee promises to build a community where Indigenous boarders feel supported, empowered, and proud.

We are looking forward to our committee discussing their next event and what we can achieve together in the future. ■



AUTHOR:

Scout Symons
Dean of Boarding
St Vincent's College

South Australia *Reach Workshop and Social Evening*



Safeguarding Futures: *Navigating Risk and Compliance in the Boarding School Community*

Australian boarding schools are facing an increasingly complex array of risks. Rather than reacting to issues as they arise, a proactive and holistic approach to risk management is essential for safeguarding students, staff, and your school's reputation.

Understanding the Risk Landscape

In a boarding school context, being "boarder-centric" is fundamental to effective risk management. There are several key categories of risk that schools must address:

- **Strategic risk:** Threats arising from long-term planning, decision-making, and external changes. This could include declining enrolments, competition, or shifting expectations from students and parents.
- **Financial risk:** Potential threats to the boarding house's financial stability, such as unpaid fees, rising operational costs, or poor budgeting.
- **Child Safety and Wellbeing risk:** Threats that could compromise the physical, emotional, or psychological safety of students. This is a critical area, encompassing everything from physical safety to safeguarding and child protection.
- **Operational risk:** Failures in day-to-day activities, including staff and HR issues, system failures, and IT and data security.
- **Regulatory compliance risk:** Adverse consequences from failing to comply with legislative and regulatory obligations.
- **Reputational risk:** Negative public perception resulting from incidents or mismanagement, which can impact enrolments, parental trust, and staff retention.

Partnering for Compliance Excellence

Mitigating risk requires a multi-faceted approach, and staff training is a cornerstone of any effective strategy. At GRC





Solutions, we understand the unique challenges faced by boarding schools and offer comprehensive eLearning solutions to help you navigate this landscape with confidence. Our suite of purpose-built eLearning courses is tailored for the unique environment of boarding houses and schools.

Our courses empower your staff with the knowledge and tools they need to foster a safe and secure community.

Relevant courses for schools include:

- **Child Protection for Schools:** This course provides an overview of child protection regulations in Australia, including mandatory reporting laws and employment screening. It equips staff with the tools to protect the safety and wellbeing of children and understand their 'duty of care'.
- **Schools Camps and Excursions:** This training helps staff identify and manage risks associated with off-site activities, reinforcing the legal concept of a "duty of care" and outlining proper planning procedures.
- **Privacy for Schools:** With a focus on the Australian Privacy Law, this course emphasises the importance of properly securing the personal information of students, staff, and stakeholders.
- **Work Health and Safety for Schools:** This course addresses the essential elements of the national harmonised Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act, ensuring staff understand their duties and obligations to prevent incidents and create a safe workplace.
- **Workplace Behaviour for Schools:** Going beyond standard sexual harassment and anti-bullying training, this course provides tools for staff to recognise and prevent unacceptable behaviour, while also exploring the importance of diversity and inclusion.
- **Psychosocial Hazards:** This course complements WHS training by providing learners with the tools to identify and manage psychosocial hazards,



which are aspects of work design or social context that can negatively affect psychological or physical health.

Strengthening Controls and Innovating with Technology

Identifying risks in education is the first step; but schools must also continuously strengthen their controls. This includes designing and operating effective controls and regularly reviewing them. Our eLearning platform, Salt Compliance LMS, is a game-changer, offering a streamlined approach to compliance. It supports job specific course assignment, management reporting, professional development point tracking, policy distribution and acknowledgement, and is a repository for external qualifications.

The future of risk management in boarding schools will also involve innovative technologies, such as sign-in and sign-out apps for better monitoring of student activities and the use of AI to manage operations. By embracing technology, schools can operate more efficiently and demonstrate their commitment to compliance.

Proactive investment in your school's future

Commitment to the safety and wellbeing of your students and staff is paramount. By partnering with GRC Solutions, you're making a proactive investment in your school's future. Our eLearning solutions are designed to make compliance simpler, smarter, and more effective, allowing you to focus on your core mission of providing exceptional student outcomes. ■



To learn more about how we can help your school, contact us today.
 Phone: +61 2 8823 4100
 Email: contactus@grc-solutions.com
 Website: www.grc-solutions.com



AUTHOR:
 Kim Ramsay
 Head of Marketing
 GRC Solutions



From the Chair

This time of year always feels ‘bittersweet’ to me as we farewell our Year Twelve students after what has been, for many, a very long journey in our schools.

This is especially so in boarding. The time is ‘bitter’ because we will really miss our students and they will really miss each other, the younger boarders (their ‘little sisters and brothers’), and the incredible boarding staff that many of them have grown up with from a very young age. On the other hand, the time is ‘sweet’ because we can literally feel their excitement for their new adventures. Also we can see just how far these young people have come; how they have grown and matured; how they have become resilient and more and more independent, and how they developed into young people of fine character ready to take on the world - and be leaders. The world is certainly their oyster, and it is probably an understatement to say that the world absolutely needs leaders like our boarders!

I can distinctly remember our students coming into boarding when they were in Year Seven - they were so young (little), bright eyed - full of excitement and terror at the same time (it’s really hard leaving home when you are Eleven or Twelve, let alone those who left home to go into boarding when they were in primary school); full of hopes and dreams, ready to make new friends and gain as much as possible from their great adventure - only for their experiences to be completely disrupted in 2020 and in 2021, due to COVID and shutdowns.

Yet they survived, and, with the incredible resilience they developed, are possibly all the better for the setbacks that so many experienced.

Boarding in our schools across Australia and New Zealand provides so much for our boarders - whether they come from remote regions (as so many do), and not so remote areas (especially where schools provide weekly boarding), or, overseas. The experiences living with so many other students - younger and older - is pure gold and remains with them for the rest of their lives.

As our Head Boarder Prefect said during National Boarding Week which celebrated the strong connections made in boarding: “The theme - ‘Threads of Connection’, is so pertinent, ‘as boarding allows us to create bonds which hold our boarding community together like threads which weave together and hold a tapestry together. These bonds and connections

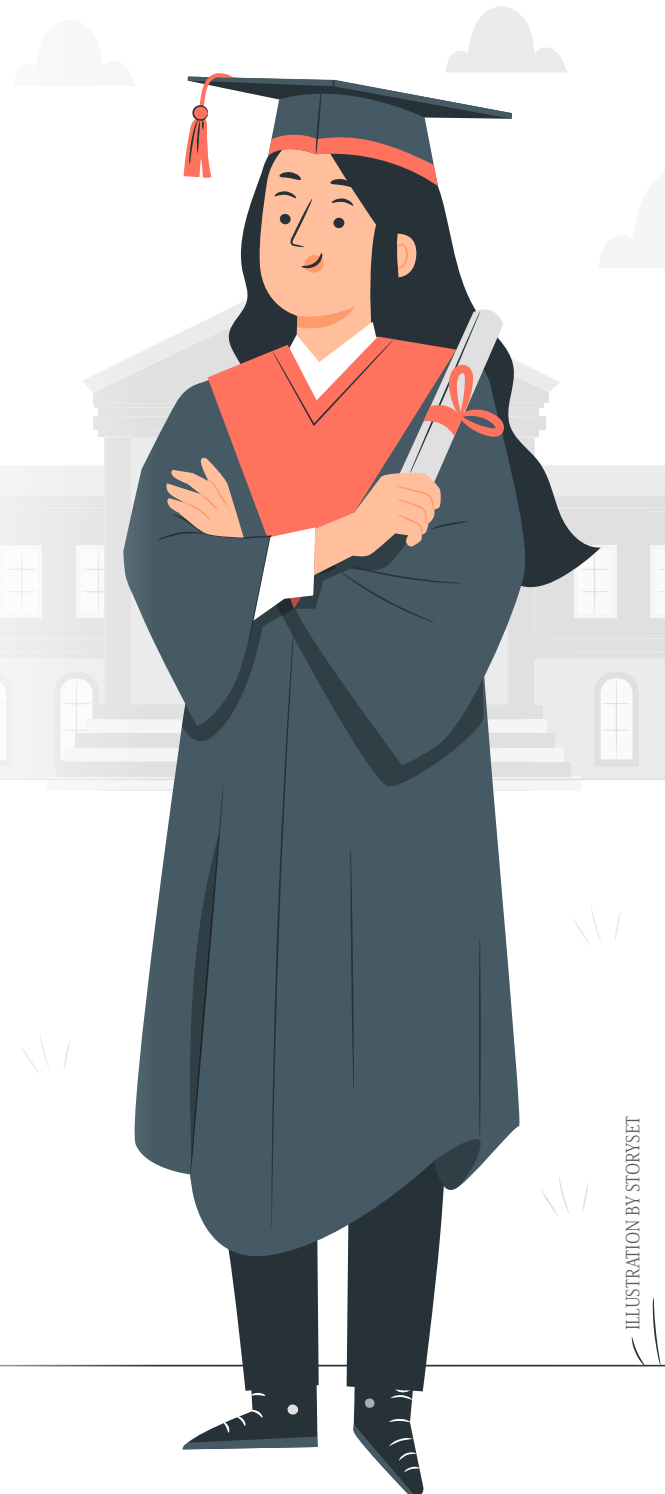


ILLUSTRATION BY STORYSET

help create boarding as not only a place to live but also a place that can feel like home.

Boarding ... is really special for all of us because it gives us so many incredible opportunities that otherwise might feel impossible. Because of boarding we have access to not only great education, but also the opportunity to try countless co-curriculars, and make connections with people from ... Australia and the world. Boarding is something that I am so grateful for every day."

I am sure that these sentiments are echoed throughout boarding schools across Australia and New Zealand, and, they are able to be echoed because of the phenomenal and tireless work, 24/7, that all our dedicated and talented boarding staff do in every single school. I know that all our schools, our boarding parents, and our boarders are very grateful for all that you do. Thank you.

We also are very grateful for the great work that Richard Stokes and his team do for boarding. The myriad professional

learning opportunities provided both face-to-face and on-line are so important to ensure that we can all provide the best possible and safe boarding experiences and facilities for our boarders. The Child Safety and Boundary on-line training course is an apt example and one that has received strong support from the Federal Education Minister, The Hon. Jason Clare MP. This is such a critical area for all of our schools, and I urge you to undertake the course if you have not yet had the opportunity to do so.

Richard Stokes, also has been appointed Drafting Chair for the committee tasked with updating the Boarding Standard for Australian Schools and Residence by Standards Australia. Abiding by the Standards will continue to ensure that we are providing the best and most professional environments for our boarders.

Professionalism also is at the forefront of the new ABSA Constitution. Our new governance structure means that each member of the ABSA Board of Directors has specific professional knowledge and skills for ABSA to be governed effectively

and to ensure that ABSA continues to provide such essential services and professional learning for our schools. I am very grateful for the manner in which Richard Stokes and his team have set up functional Regional Committees and how these committees are able to feed vital information into the Board. Members for the First Nations Advisory Committee also are being finalised; this committee too, will be fundamental to the ongoing professional work of ABSA.

As we move towards the end of what has been a busy and I hope very fulfilling year for all members of ABSA, I wish you a well-deserved and relaxing holiday break over the Christmas period. ■

AUTHOR:

Megan Krimmer
Chairperson
Australian Boarding
Schools Association

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A conference for those taking on leadership roles in boarding communities

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Venue: Bond University - 14 University Drive, Robina, QLD.

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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
by 15th March 2026

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Australian Boarding Schools Association

P + 61 7 3205 4940 E absa@boarding.org.au
Office: Unit 6, 26 Navigator Place,
HENDRA, QLD, 4011 AUSTRALIA
Postal: PO Box 148,
NORTHGATE, QLD, 4013 AUSTRALIA



www.boarding.org.nz

Aotearoa Boarding Schools Association

P + 64 21 222 8483 E dee@boarding.org.nz
Postal: PO Box 1659,
Christchurch, 8140 NEW ZEALAND