



HAILEYBURY  
RENDALL SCHOOL

## Submission to the Inquiry into the Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Extend Family Assistance to ABSTUDY Secondary School Boarding Students Aged 16 and Over) Bill 2019

Submission is made on behalf of Haileybury Rendall School (HRS) by the Principal, Mr Craig Glass.

### Background

Haileybury Rendall School commenced in January 2018 after Haileybury (Melbourne) acquired Kormilda College, Darwin which was going to close. HRS is located in Berrimah a suburb of Darwin. HRS has a boarding house that currently contains 75 boarders, of which 72 are indigenous children from the remote parts of the Northern Territory including Torres Strait Islands. All of our indigenous boarders are on ABSTUDY. The School also has 500 day students.

When HRS acquired the boarding house from Kormilda College it was poorly operated with low expectations and accountability for staff and students. This included the boarders having poor attendance and low education achievement. In the past 20 months there has been a dramatic change in the culture brought about by strong leadership and clear expectations of staff and students. This is highlighted by attendance rates for indigenous boarders shown in Table 1.

Table 1: 2019 attendance rates for indigenous boarders

Year level	Possible School Days	Attendance Days	Attendance Rate
7	1461	1338.34	91.6%
8	911	780.15	85.64%
9	1249	1080.57	86.51%
10	1117	994.6	89.04%

The number of Indigenous students who attended at least 90% of the time has increased from 18% in 2017 when Kormilda operated the school to 47.67% in 2018 under HRS and further to 65.23% in 2019. -

From a curriculum perspective we are delivering the explicit model of instruction to the students to try to improve the literacy and numeracy as quickly as possible. When we tested the Indigenous students at the beginning of 2018 there were a handful of students in years 7 to 12 with literacy levels above Year 5 standard with the majority operating between Years 1 and 5.

### Student Background

HRS students largely come from the top half of the Northern Territory and the Torres Strait Islands. Many come from either troubled families or poorly functioning remote communities. It is common for the students to have been the victims of trauma, have witnessed trauma or both, leaving them with social and emotional issues that have to be addressed once they attend HRS. It is also common for the students to arrive at HRS with physical wellbeing issues ranging from heart issues to hearing loss. The School has to put in place extensive support structures to ensure that the students are in a physical and mental state to be ready to access the learning program.

### Cost of Education for Indigenous Boarders

It has been acknowledged in a number of reports that the ABSTUDY funding for indigenous boarding and education does not meet the cost of provision. KPMG in its report *Non-*

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*Government Indigenous Boarding School, Review of funding arrangements* commissioned by the Northern Territory Government, Department of Education (9 November 2016) and found at [https://education.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/384153/Non-government-Indigenous-boarding-schools\\_KPMG-report.pdf](https://education.nt.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/384153/Non-government-Indigenous-boarding-schools_KPMG-report.pdf) noted:

*Finally, KPMG has sought to quantify the shortfall in funding if the services were delivered with an improved focus on social, emotional and physical wellbeing of students which subject schools identified as representing a more appropriate standard of care applicable to students from remote parts of the Northern Territory. The results are shown in the following table and should be taken as being indicative only, in light of the data limitations on which they are based:*

### **Levels of funding shortfall per student**

<i>Current level of service delivery</i>	<i>\$10,437</i>
<i>Service delivery in line with NBS</i>	<i>\$11646</i>
<i>Service delivery at a standard appropriate to context in the NT</i>	<i>\$13146</i>

### **Indicative shortfall funding**

A further report was being commissioned by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet from Grant Thornton Australia in 2018. I understand it has been delivered to PM and C but to date the report has not been made public. This report was commissioned as a result of the *Study Away Review* (available at [www.pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/indigenous-affairs/study-away-review](http://www.pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/indigenous-affairs/study-away-review)) and is an evaluation of investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding services. It is believed it comes to similar conclusions as the KPMG Report

The reason for the shortfall seems to be that the ABSTUDY funding does not take into consideration the extensive “wrap-around” services in welfare and remedial education that are necessary to give Indigenous students any chance of success. In recent years Woolaning Homeland Christian College in NT and Shalom Christian College in far north Queensland have closed. Kormilda College would have closed if not for Haileybury Melbourne acquiring it and opening HRS. Most other indigenous boarding facilities are under extreme financial stress with further closures likely.

### **Family Contribution to the Schooling and Boarding Cost**

It is the norm in indigenous boarding facilities for parents to make no or little contribution. There is an expectation that ABSTUDY will fund the schooling and boarding. At HRS the uniform and school textbooks are provided by generous donations from our supplier. It is not unusual for students to arrive without adequate leisure clothing and footwear. Again, a source of funds needs to be found to cover this cost. A contemporary education requires students to have access to a personal computing device. If this is not provided by the School, the students’ families don’t seem to be able to meet this cost. In short, a contribution to the cost of education and boarding from indigenous families who are covered by ABSTUDY doesn’t occur and this places increased financial pressure on the schools.

**The Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Extend Family Assistance to ABSTUDY Secondary School Boarding Students Aged 16 and over) Bill 2019**

The extension of the Family Tax Benefit (FTB) to the families of ABSTUDY secondary school students aged 16 and over who study away from home would be appropriate if a significant portion of this was to come to the schools to cover the cost of boarding and education of the students. We currently have many boarders who are under 16 and receive the FTB and yet we see no contribution of this to the School. It is almost certain that this pattern will continue with the introduction of FTB for students 16 and over.

In an environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait boarding facilities and associated schools are running at significant loss, which has been confirmed by the aforementioned KPMG Report, and is likely to be confirmed by the Grant Thornton Australia report, it seems inappropriate to direct additional funds to the families through FTB when it is unlikely to be used for part of the intended purpose. The purpose being that FTB *supports families through assisting with the ongoing costs of their children's daily incidentals while they are away at school.*

HRS believes that in the absence of adequate funding for boarding and education of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait boarders then the limited resources available should be predominantly directed to the schools and boarding facilities supporting and educating the children so that the money is used for its intended purpose. This is likely to have the most positive outcome for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Yours sincerely

Craig Glass  
**Principal, Haileybury Rendall School**  
12 August 2019