well as health, academic, social and behavioural supports and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders see improved school and employment outcomes as a result.

In Independent schools, overseas boarders make up approximately 0.5 per cent of boarders and these students contribute significantly to both the boarding culture and the culture of the wider school community. Access to a globally-renowned education, excellent student outcomes, pathways to further study and a politically stable, safe, welcoming multicultural society are all reasons overseas families choose to send their children to an Independent boarding school in Australia.

The viability, quality and sustainability of Independent boarding schools is dependent on adequate resourcing. Australian Government recurrent funding is only available to support the recurrent costs of education and not the costs associated with boarding although there are some limited targeted Australian Government and state/territory government grants.

There is also government assistance available for families through the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Study Assistance Scheme (ABSTUDY), some state allowances and privately through scholarships. These payments are available to eligible families to support the costs associated with boarding such as fees and transport.

All Independent boarding schools are therefore highly dependent on fee income. In 2019, most boarding schools (53) charged an average boarding fee of $20,000 to $25,000 per boarder. However, per school, boarding fees vary significantly with average fee income ranging between $2,200 to more than $40,000.

In 2019, 30 per cent of boarding schools and/or the boarding facilities in a school (42 boarding schools) ran at a loss in that year with 55 per cent of these boarding schools being in regional areas. While these schools may run at a loss in any single year, they would be relying on savings and other assets to support their on-going operations.

Concerns exist over the adequacy of available funding to ensure boarding schools thrive, particularly for regional and remote and Indigenous boarding schools.

Independent boarding schools have identified several challenges for the sector, and all are connected to funding pressures:

— workforce including attracting, recruiting and training sufficient, high-quality staff

— student support including responding to student wellbeing 0.00 1 -3(d)-230100392 0 RG[s)-3(tu)-3(d)-2(e)-2(n)-5

— Opportunity 3: Introduce incentives to improve the qualifications and skills of the boarding workforce

— Opportunity 4: Increase the number of scholarships available to regional, rural and remote

2. OVERVIEW OF BOARDING

In 2020, of the 210 boarding schools in Australia, 155 were Independent boarding schools – approximately 74 per cent of the total number of boarding facilities in Australia. While only 2.2 per cent of Australian schools have a boarding facility and only 0.6 per cent of Australian students attend a boarding school, for many families having children board away from home is the only practical, and sometimes preferred, way to access learning, social opportunities and preparation for employment.

In 2020, the Independent schooling sector had 15,901 boarding places compared to 4,415 in the Catholic sector and 2,809 in the government sector and provided boarding for 14,565 students. Approximately 13 per cent of Independent schools within Australia had boarding facilities, with almost 41 per cent of the 155 Independent boarding schools located in regional or remote locations. These regional and remote boarding schools enrol 24 per cent of all boarding school students and 62 per cent of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who attend boarding schools.

In 2020, 30 per cent of Independent schools in Northern Territory had boarding facilities, the greatest percentage in any state/territory.

Conversely, in South Australia only 9 per cent of the Independent schools in the state offered boarding, the lowest in a state/territory. The state with the most Independent boarding schools is NSW with 48 boarding schools and 4,947 boarders. The ACT has the least number of Independent boarding schools; 2 with only 144 boarders.

Of the total number of Independent boarding schools in Australia, 59 per cent (91 schools) were located within major cities. Similarly, major cities had by far the largest number of boarders at Independent boarding schools (9,102 students).

In 2020, the average Independent schools boarding facility had approximately 94 boarders and was connected to a school with an average of 966 enrolments.

TABLE 1: NUMBER AND SIZE OF INDEPENDENT BOARDING FACILITIES AND SCHOOLS BY STATE, 2020

	No.	% of Independent schools	No. of boarders	Average size of boarding facility	Students at boarding schools	Average size of boarding schools
NSW	48	12%	4,947	103	47,364	987
VIC	27	12%	2,403	89	34,058	1,261
QLD	34	15%				

3. BENEFITS OF BOARDING

3.1 Benefits to families and boarders

While choosing to send a child to boarding school is often difficult for parents and carers, one of their main concerns is whether their child has educational opportunities and access that is equal with other students.[3]

Parent/s and carers choose boarding schools based on several factors that are connected to the wellbeing and educational progression of their child. A survey conducted by the AEC Group on behalf of ISA in 2022, showed the following reasons play a critical part in choosing to board children away from home.

TABLE 2: REASONS FOR ATTENDING A BOARDING SCHOOL – AEC GROUP SURVEY RESULTS

Reason for attending a boarding school	% of respondents
Access to higher quality education	71%
Access to education	42%
Access to desired / specialist subjects and co-curricular activities	33%
Ease of managing participation in extra-curricular commitments	29%
Geographical isolation of place of usual residence	33%
Family relationship / history with school or community	18%
Stability of schooling (i.e., avoid changing schools)	14%
Change in family circumstance / family disruption	7%
Family based overseas	5%
Parent / caregiver employment location / relocation	4%

Research also identifies the opportunity to access specific living arrangements (co-educational, dormitory, catering for additional needs, independent of family) or better post-school options, safety and security, peer relationships and pastoral care as further reasons families chose boarding for their children[4].

The same AEC Group survey identified the following eight benefits of boarding school for students. They include academic and non-academic advantages.

[3] Andrew J. Martin et al., "Boarding and Day School Students: A Large-Scale Multilevel Investigation of Academic Outcomes Among Students and Classrooms," Frontiers in Psychology 11 (2021), https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.608949.

[4] Independent Boarding Schools, Boarding in the Independent sector - consultation with boarding schools.

  - Generating turnover (or revenue), including revenue from student fees and charges.
  - Provision of education services (tuition and boarding) for boarding students.
  - Purchasing goods and services for operational activities, for example food and beverages for provided meals, and building and grounds maintenance.

— Capital investment by Indepen

4. BOARDERS

Boarding school students come with different backgrounds, interests, needs and wants. Boarding schools in the Independent sector are mostly combined (K-12) schools (75 per cent) or secondary (25 per cent) schools with only one primary boarding school. This means that the students attending boarding schools are mostly secondary students (70 per cent) with primary students making up 30 per cent. Forty-six per cent of boarding schools are single sex schools with 54 per cent being co-educational schools.

Maintaining the right balance of boarders and day students is important to preserve the status quo of the school population.[10] Boarders make a significant contribution the culture of the school and without boarders these schools would lose their distinctive characters as well as support for students from a range of backgrounds.[11]

There are three particular cohorts of boarders that are distinctive:

— Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander boarders

— boarders from regional and remote locations

— international boarders.

4.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders

In 2020, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders made up 15 per cent of all boarders in Independent schools. They attended metropolitan, regional and remote boarding facilities.

Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attend boarding schools for a range of reasons including a lack of secondary education options or subject choice at their local school, to gain access to financial, social, health, b

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5. RESOURCING BOARDING SCHOOLS

All Independent schools receive their income from a combination of government funding, parent fees, donations, investments and borrowing. The majority of their government funding comes from the Australian Government. The amount of funding available is different for each school depending on the school's size and characteristics, student attributes, parents' capacity to contribute and school fees and donations.

Australian Government recurrent funding is only provided for the purposes of supporting the recurrent costs of the school and does not cover costs associated with boarding.

In the majority of boarding schools, every 841.92 reW*nBT/F9 24 Tf1 0 0 1 519 737.62 Tm0.153 0.208 0.569 rg0.153

  - Behaviour management
  - Preventing and dealing with addiction
  - Duty of care
  - Mental health
  - Boarders with special needs
  - Cultural competency
  - Managing social media.

- Maintaining and funding appropriate student to staff ratios to cater for boarders with disability[39] and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarders[40] including employing sufficient supervisors, as well as tutors and specialists, when no additional funding is available.

- Attracting high calibre heads of boarding and managing the workload of those staff who often have a teaching load in the school in addition to their boarding leadership role. The significant gap in salary between male and female heads of boarding[41] as well as between schools, adds to the challenge of attraction and retention for some smaller schools.

- Managing staff wellbeing by prioritising quality relationships, including peer relationships and enhancing training opportunities to support students and manage conflict and behaviour difficulties. Boarding schools had a particularly challenging time during COVID-19 supporting students through lockdowns and periods of mandatory isolation due to infection. Schools had to balance managing health mandates as well as staffing requirements. Research commissioned by ISA shows that schools can overcome these barriers if they have access to the right resources for their school's particular needs and the capacity to invest and sustain their commitment.[42]

6.2 Student Support

The fundamental role of the boarding schools is to provide continuity of care and nurture the intellectual, physical, social and emotional wellbeing and growth of boarders, ensuring they feel safe at all times. A rich boarding experience provides boarders with scheduled rest, exercise, study, recreation and opportunities for holistic development, and builds the dispositions, knowledge and skills boarders need to be successful and participating members of society.

This is a hugely complex task with the needs, wants and interests of individual boarders varying significantly. The cost and staff expertise required to provide 24-hour support to each student is proving a serious and increasingly critical financial and workforce challenge for all boarding schools.

In particular, challenges are experienced in the following areas during COVID

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All are complex to organise, sustain and fund.

learning environment, a number of regional boarding schools cross subsidise boarding through fee income. This is unsustainable.

These financial concerns are often exacerbated by the economic hardship faced by some families as a consequence of unpredictable income from agriculture and fluctuating livestock and produce market prices.[53] In the instance of an adverse natural event, many boarding schools initially bear the costs of supporting families.[54] One example of this in recent years is the provision of fee remission and relief provided by Queensland schools for drought relief.

[53] Independent Schools Council of Australia, "Inquiry into the Education of Students in Remote and Complex Environments," 2020, https://isa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/ISCA-submission-Inquiry-into-the-education-of-students-in-remote-and-complex-environments.pdf.

[54] Independent Boarding Schools, Boarding in the Independent sector - consultation with boarding schools.

— pay scales which recognise training and qualifications.

Opportunity 4: Increase the number of scholarships available to regional, rural and remote students, disadvantaged groups and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to improve access to boarding

Scholarships funded through private and public sources play a significant role in supporting many students to access boarding schools. A campaign to attract and support scholarship providers and promote and simplify access to scholarships may enable disadvantaged groups greater access to boarding.

Opportunity 5: Consider