



16 August, 2019

Family Assistance Legislation Amendment

(Extend Family Assistance to ABSTUDY Secondary School Boarding Students Aged 16 and Over) Bill 2019

Catholic Schools NSW supports the proposed amendment to the Family Assistance legislation to extend the Family Tax Benefit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students until they finish secondary school.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families rely on the Family Tax Benefit (FTB) to assist with the ongoing costs of their children's daily expenses while they are away at boarding school. When the FTB ceases, families are required to contribute more, placing greater demand on their finances. The added strains of incidentals on families such as clothing, mobile phones, toiletries and allowances can be an obstacle for families to keep their children enrolled in secondary school beyond Year 10.

Whilst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in boarding schools are often supported by other government funding, the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) program requires a reasonable contribution (around \$3000) from families. The Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP) currently covers the gap not met by Abstudy and students on these programs are advantaged. However, those not on these programs would likely be struggling. Certainly, there will always be families who can easily meet the contribution towards boarding and school fees but for most it would be very challenging.

Extending the FTB payment will assist the Government's Closing the Gap target to halve the Year 12 completion by 2020. The boost in financial support will help students' complete school, leading to improved employment opportunities.

Catholic Schools NSW is a strong advocate for the ongoing accessibility and affordability of boarding schools for families and students. We have witnessed some extraordinary successes for students whose lives have been transformed by their boarding experience. The proposed amendment will help ensure this ongoing access and affordability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families.



Aboriginal and Torres Stait Islander Boarding Students Catholic Schools NSW

Data:

<u>Year Level</u>	<u>NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Boarding Students</u>
<u>Grade 7</u>	<u>31</u>
<u>Grade 8</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>Grade 9</u>	<u>34</u>
<u>Grade 10</u>	<u>27</u>
<u>Grade 11</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>Grade 12</u>	<u>28</u>
<u>Grand Total</u>	<u>188</u>