

Media Release

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Independent Schools
Council of Australia

Independent Schools Look To the Future

The [2016 ISCA & AHISA National Education Forum](#) was held in Canberra today, bringing together representatives from the Independent school sector, including principals, members of governing bodies, business managers and sector representatives from other national and state based organisations. It featured addresses from the Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham; the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Bill Shorten MP with Shadow Minister for Education, the Hon Kate Ellis MP; Greens Senator Nick McKim; and leading education specialists and social commentators.

Over 300 Independent school sector representatives attended the forum, with the theme this year of *Independent Education: Leading Future Learning*. It was jointly hosted by the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) and the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA), peak body and national member organisations in the Independent school sector. The forum focused on questions of what constitutes a 'quality education' for Australia's young people today and into the future, including examining the obstacles being faced and the steps that should be taken now to ensure this goal is achieved.

"The presence of so many of our education and political leaders at the forum today helps confirm that Independent schools are an integral part of the Australian schooling landscape," said ISCA's Chair Mr Warwick Dean. "This election year presents an opportunity to ensure a stable and predictable future for schools of all sectors. It is essential that schools be given assurances that their goals of providing the very best of educational opportunities for all students can be maintained well into the future."

The Independent sector welcomed the commitment from Minister Birmingham that future funding arrangements will involve consultation with the sector and will be transparent and equitable. The Minister also noted that the government understood the sector's concerns about the real inflationary cost of education.

ISCA Executive Director Colette Colman said, "The critical issues for Commonwealth funding beyond 2017 are, funding will need to continue to address the real costs of school education, meet the significant funding shortfall for educational disadvantage, particularly students with disability, and ensure state and territory Independent school associations are funded to continue to support the sector."

The Independent sector also welcomed the announcement by Mr Shorten of the ALP's \$82 million Teaching and Learning Support Program to non-government school sector associations to support improved educational outcomes.

In addition to Minister Birmingham, Mr Shorten, Ms Ellis and Senator McKim; key speakers at the forum included Professor Ian Chubb, Australia's former Chief Scientist; Professor John Hattie, Director of the Melbourne Educational Research Institute; Chris Richardson of Deloitte Access Economics, and former federal Minister the Hon Amanda Vanstone.

The Independent school sector has nearly 1,100 schools and over half a million students, representing 15 per cent of Australia's total school enrolments. It directly employs more than 85,000 staff, contributes wages and salaries of \$6.4 billion, pays \$1.8 billion in PAYG tax, and makes over half a billion dollars in superannuation contributions.

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