

Media Release

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Independent Schools
Council of Australia

Independent school sector stresses need for stable and predictable funding

Following the COAG Education Council meeting in Adelaide today, the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) stressed the critical nature of certainty of funding for all Independent schools.

ISCA Executive Director Colette Colman said that, "As school funding is debated by government, and in the public arena, it is important to note that stable and predictable funding is particularly critical for Independent schools and the more-than half a million students attending them. Nine hundred of the Independent sector's schools are the only schools in the country that receive their Commonwealth Government funding directly, according to the Commonwealth's funding model, while other school sectors, being systemic, all have the capacity to redistribute their funding across schools. For these 900 stand-alone schools, effective financial and operational planning depends on certainty of future funding mechanisms."

The Independent school sector supports the continuation of a needs-based approach to funding for all schools, however community debate frequently overlooks the application of the 'capacity to contribute' formula that applies to non-government schools but not to government schools.

Ms Colman said that, "The 'capacity to contribute' formula anticipates the ability of parents enrolling their child in a non-government school to contribute financially to the operation of the school. Schools with parents with a higher estimated capacity to pay receive less public funding per student, which has a significant impact on the level of base funding for non-government schools provided by governments."

Independent schools reflect the social, economic and ethnic diversity of Australia. In fact, 90% of Australian Independent schools are low to medium fee establishments, with the median fee of an Independent school in 2015 being less than \$4,800.

Independent schools also cater to specific groups of disadvantaged students including: high needs students with disability attending special schools; Indigenous students attending remote 100% Indigenous schools in Western Australia and the Northern Territory; and highly disadvantaged urban youth who have been excluded from both government and non-government schools attending Independent special assistance schools.

The Independent sector has seen significant increases in the numbers of students with special educational needs over the past decade, with numbers of students with disability enrolments in Independent schools growing at 8% per year and the number of Indigenous students enrolments in Independent schools growing at 5% per year.

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