

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, 28 November 2016



Independent Schools
Council of Australia

Devil is in the detail of school funding arrangements

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) today responded to the Grattan Institute's report *Circuit breaker: A new compact on school funding* by acknowledging the temptation to propose seemingly quick and easy solutions to school funding issues, however the reality is that the complexity of the current school funding arrangements makes this impossible.

ISCA Executive Director Colette Colman said that, "While we believe the Grattan Institute should be commended for bringing ideas to the funding debate, many of the underlying assumptions and suggestions in the report do not recognise the complexity of the current funding arrangements or acknowledge the diverse nature of the Independent school sector."

The Grattan Institute's report suggests that Independent schools that are funded above their SRS entitlement should have their funding frozen, and in many cases reduced. However, the report does not acknowledge the fact that there are schools in other sectors which also attract funding in excess of their entitlement.

Ms Colman said, "Why does the Grattan Institute single out Independent schools as the only schools being funded above their SRS entitlement? Presumably because they are the only transparent recipients of government funding as a result of not being part of a school system. Unless you look at all schools in all systems and sectors you are not addressing the full funding picture."

She added that, "With no system support to fall back on, increasing costs for individual Independent schools are a very real issue. Many families and school communities simply could not manage with the shock of a sudden funding freeze. There are complex reasons why some Independent schools are deemed to be funded in excess of their entitlement and this is apparent from the diversity of Independent schools which the report recommends for funding reductions, including a large number of Independent special schools and a range of low fee community schools. It should be noted that this situation has not resulted from anything these schools have done themselves.

The Grattan report also suggests that the current legislated Commonwealth indexation rate for school funding increases of 3.6% per annum is too high, due to the projected wage price increase in schools being the lower amount of 2.5% per annum.

Ms Colman said that, "Once again the issue is more complex than just looking at wages, and requires a closer analysis of the cost drivers in Independent schools. While wages are a major cost for schools, all school sectors have seen substantial growth in additional staff due to the increasing number of specialist support and administration personnel required to deal with increasing regulation, compliance and data collection. Other significant costs borne directly by individual Independent schools include insurance and maintenance.

Contact: Barry Wallett 0411 278 612