The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) welcomes the focus on supporting students with disability (SWD) created by today’s release of the Senate Education and Employment References Committee’s Inquiry, Access to real learning: the impact of policy, funding and culture on students with disability.

ISCA’s Executive Director Colette Colman said today that “it is critically important that students with disability must be adequately and equitably resourced by governments regardless of the type of school they attend.”

Last year ISCA made a submission to the Inquiry outlining the significant contribution of the Independent sector to educating students with disability (SWD). This contribution has increased dramatically in recent decades, with SWD enrolments having been increasing at a higher rate than overall enrolments for many years. In 2014, over 18,000 students with disability were enrolled in Independent schools.

ISCA’s submission highlighted important issues around the training of teaching staff to give them the skills required to effectively deal with SWD. The committee’s report reflects these concerns, suggesting teacher education courses should give all new teachers entering the classroom best-practice skills in the inclusion of SWD as well as working to enhance the skills of established teachers, principals and support staff.

Australian Government funding is a critical element for the resourcing and support of students with disability in Independent schools, yet currently students with disability enrolled in Independent schools do not receive the same level of additional funding as their counterparts in government schools, these extra costs are borne directly by the parent body and school community.

“We welcome any outcomes from the inquiry that will lead to more equitable funding arrangements for students with disability that are based on their individual needs.”

ENDS

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