School Funding Model Clarification Welcomed

ISCA welcomes further public clarification about total costs and proposed cost sharing arrangements between the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments of a new national school funding model.

ISCA acknowledges Prime Minister Julia Gillard’s confirmation that the arrangements the independent sector has been negotiating with the Australian Government for the past 7 months will form the basis of the proposed future funding arrangements and also the basis of continuing negotiations with the independent sector.

ISCA appreciates the complexity of the objective to have a consistent national model for funding of all schools from all sources, both public and private.

However, the success of this funding model depends heavily on the response from State and Territory Governments to this offer by the Prime Minister and the sector will wait with interest on the outcomes.

Negotiations to date have highlighted the enormous complexities of the proposed model and the difficulties in implementing a stable, predictable and credible funding model for all schools from 2014.

While considerable progress has been made in transparency and data quality over the past few years through the MySchool website, much of the current data required to support the proposed new model is still inadequate, unreliable, volatile and inappropriate for funding purposes.

The concerns of the independent sector are reinforced by the complexities that are introduced because parental contributions are so fundamentally important to the sector’s schools and are entirely different to fully publicly funded government schools.

Additional school funding is welcomed, however unlike school systems, independent schools are the only school sector that will be directly funded by the new model due to their inability to move funds from one school to another. This factor creates unique requirements for independent schools to assess funding impacts at a direct individual school level.

ISCA nevertheless appreciates the inclusive approach taken by the Prime Minister during the negotiation phase to date and is committed to working with the Government over the coming months as final details are debated and hopefully resolved.
The sector also acknowledges the preparedness of the Prime Minister to understand and recognise the legitimacy of the views of the sector and in particular the importance of our fundamental belief that parents should be supported & not penalised financially and that no school should lose financial support in real terms.

We will examine the Prime Minister's statement in detail over the coming days and prior to COAG on 19 April and make our own assessments of the adequacy of the proposals outlined.

Schools are also being encouraged to review the details of the National Plan for School Improvement for the Plan’s impact on the ongoing operations of school communities.

Independent schools around Australia have been provided with current modelling data over the last week. ISCA will encourage the 1,100 independent schools to carefully consider the impact of these announcements and to ensure that their elected representatives understand their views before the COAG meeting on 19 April.

ENDS

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