

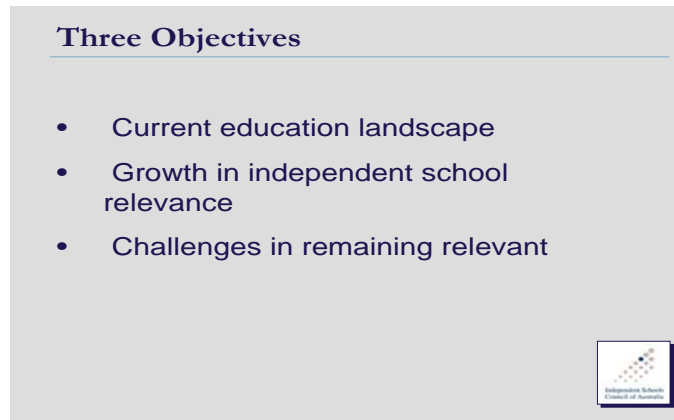
**ISCA Parliamentary Forum
1st September 2008**

**Address and Powerpoint presentation by Bill Daniels, ISCA Executive
Director**

1. I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak about the independent schools sector's place in the education landscape, its contribution to the education of young Australians and some of the challenges that lie ahead.
2. We are very fortunate indeed to have so many high calibre presenters here today and tomorrow. It is a measure of the respect for the independent school sector that we have already heard from the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard and we will hear from the Shadow Education Minister, Tony Smith, later today. No one can be in any doubt that schooling and education are issues of the highest national priority not only in the Parliament but also on the agendas of the ALP Government and the Coalition Opposition.
3. Paul Kelly has also given us an excellent and incisive analysis of schools policy and its role in the national political landscape. I am sure that many of you, like me, always find what Paul has to say to be well worth listening to. He certainly has his fingers on the pulse.
4. From where I sit as Executive Director of the Independent Schools Council of Australia, I am always fascinated to observe how public policy is developed in Canberra. I have been party to lots of public policy development in this city over the years and have seen how important it is for governments to have at their finger tips, national data and analysis as well as an understanding of how new policy will impact on their own

constituencies. Getting the balance right can be a tricky business and ISCA tries very hard to ensure that the key players, political and others, understand the key issues from our perspective **and** at the right time. That requires expertise, communication skills and teamwork across the sector. Where those attributes align, we usually achieve reasonable outcomes.

Slide 2



The slide is titled "Three Objectives" and lists three bullet points. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for the Independent Schools Council of Australia, which consists of a stylized grid of dots forming a square shape.

Three Objectives

- Current education landscape
- Growth in independent school relevance
- Challenges in remaining relevant

5. Today I intend to cover three broad areas.
 - First, the place that the independent schools sector occupies in the current education landscape
 - Secondly, I will give a perspective on how the independent schools sector has managed to remain relevant to the Australian education agenda
 - Thirdly, I will cover some of the challenges for our sector if we are to remain relevant to the educational agenda, and suggest some ways in which the sector as a collective might deal with the national agenda.

First Objective: The Independent School Sector's Place in the Education Agenda.

6. The education agenda has undergone radical change in the last few years. This has been marked by the increased nationalisation of schooling policy. This is now an irreversible trend which has been progressively driven by the enhanced role of successive Federal governments in schools policy. Indeed, if you look at the focus of the workshops tomorrow and the content of the speeches today, we would do well to reflect on the fact that these


issues, which were once the sole preserve of states and territories, are now truly national issues. Further if you examine the shift in the Council of Australian Governments or COAG's agenda we are seeing that the Federal Government is having greater input and influence into the direction and reform of schools policy. I'm sure we will hear more about COAG's agenda from Lisa Paul later this afternoon.

7. All the speakers today and tomorrow have or will talk of education as a national issue. While the day to day activities of individual schools are critically important to ensuring that your students learn and grow in the best possible way, increasingly how a school goes about its business of securing quality outcomes is being measured on a national scale. This Government, just like the previous Government, is intent on using individual student and school data, national and international data as the basis for shaping future directions in its education policy.
8. So what is the education landscape for the independent schools sector in 2008? The landscape is marked by four main developments.

Slide 3

The Current Landscape

- Public V Private
- Cooperative federalism - COAG
- Major new programs that drive change
 - computers, trade training centres
- Transparency



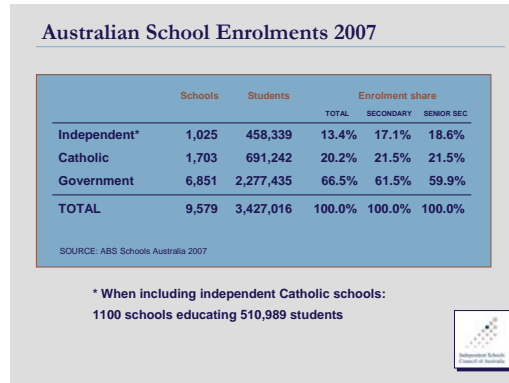
9. **Public vs Private** is no longer an issue – or at least the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister would like to see this divisive issue fade away.
10. The advent of the “education revolution” means that the policies of the two major Federal political parties now recognise that all schools – irrespective of whether they are owned by governments or community groups – make a significant contribution to the education of young Australians. This policy convergence offers a platform for the education debate to move beyond characterising funding for schools as a battle between sectors and to focus

instead on ways of improving educational outcomes for students, regardless of which school they attend.

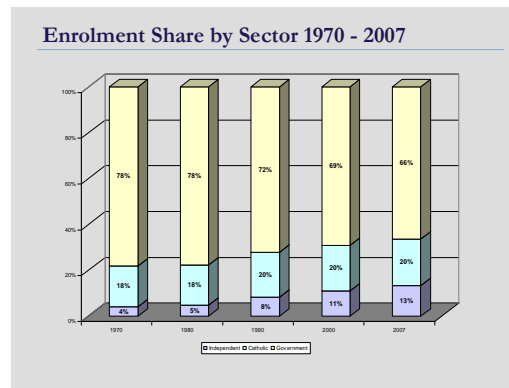
11. **New or cooperative federalism** - The constructive role being played by COAG gives at least a glimmer of hope that there could be an end of the blame game – and a start of the negotiation game. While as the Prime Minister said last week there will be plenty of ‘argy bargy’ over the coming months, it is pretty clear that the COAG process will lead to:
12. Fundamental changes to the financial infrastructure between the Commonwealth and the states. There will be long overdue reforms of SPPs and the introduction of NPPs. This will result in highly targeted spending and increased reporting and accountability by the states. Coincidentally, these developments are also increasing the role of central agencies like Treasury and PM&C in determining educational reforms and a diminished role for the traditional national education institutions, like MCEETYA.
13. Greater nationalisation of aspects such as curriculum, literacy and numeracy and information technology.
14. **Major new programs that drive change.** Two major new programs, the National Computers in Secondary Schools Program and Trade Training Centres Program have already driven change in many schools and as they continue to be rolled out, further change in schools and system priorities will be evident. Access by schools to high speed broadband capacity under the Fibre Connections to Schools Initiative will further influence how schools operate. These major programs are inclusive of the independent sector and other programs like the National Partnership Payments for Low SES Schools will also benefit our sector.
15. **Transparency** - The days of systems being able to minimise reporting at the school and student level are numbered. Not only is the Australian Government committed to an agenda to provide parents and the community with more data and information, but many governments around the world are doing likewise. We are seeing a seismic shift in the quantity and quality of data that will be made publicly available. All schools, whether they be government, Catholic systemic or independent will have to change the way they currently report on performance.

16. Collectively, independent schools represent a significant sector of Australian student enrolments. Before moving to my second theme, let us have a quick look at some of the facts and figures about the sector.

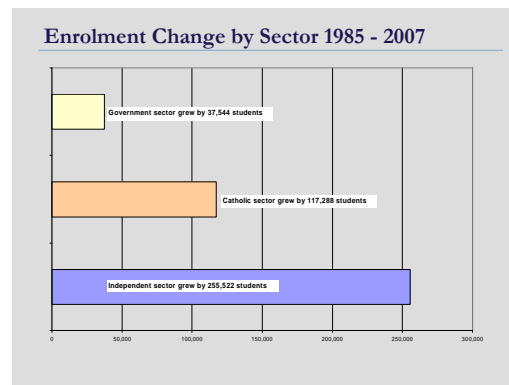
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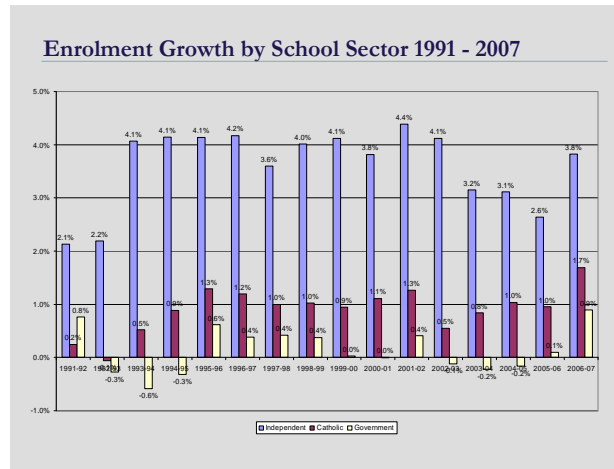
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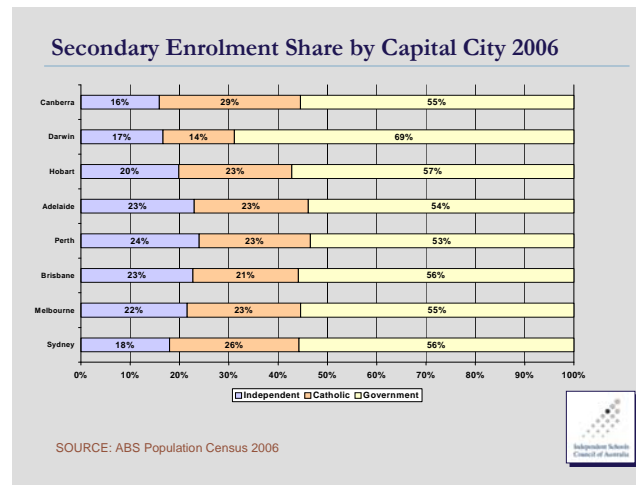
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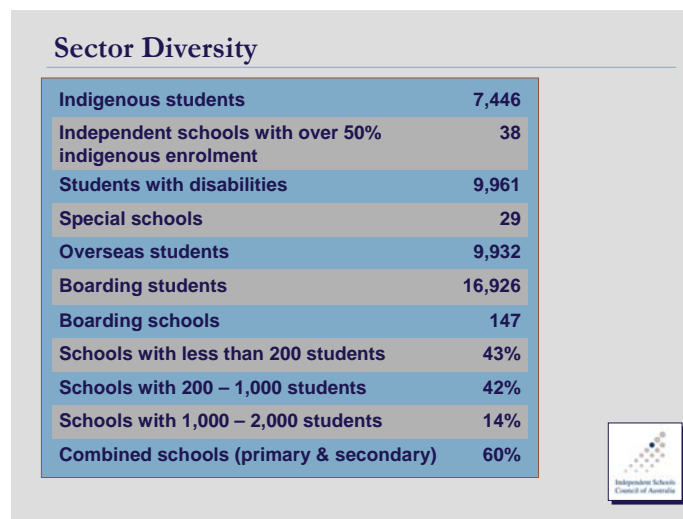
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Slide 9




17. Our schools offer parents considerable choice and diversity. They cater for the education needs of students from diverse social, economic, scholastic and cultural backgrounds, whose families and communities hold different moral, religious and philosophical values.

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Independent School Affiliations

Affiliation	Number of schools	Percentage of students
Anglican	151	25.4%
Non-Denominational	196	13.7%
Roman Catholic	75	10.4%
Uniting Church in Australia	41	9.1%
Christian Schools	130	9.0%
Lutheran	84	6.4%
Inter-Denominational	23	3.3%
Baptist	43	3.3%
Islamic	30	3.1%
Presbyterian	15	2.1%
Seventh Day Adventist	56	2.0%
Jewish	20	1.7%
Steiner School	43	1.4%
Pentecostal	18	1.3%
Assemblies of God	15	1.3%
Greek Orthodox	8	0.8%
Montessori School	36	0.7%
Brethren	8	0.7%




18. Further, through private investment in independent schools, mostly through fees and family contributions, independent schools represent significant savings to Federal and state governments. This contribution is projected to continue to grow steadily as more parents place a high priority on schooling and are willing to pay for choice.

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School Sectors: Projected Relative Shares

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Australia								
Independent	13.9	14.3	14.7	15.1	15.5	15.9	16.3	16.6
Catholic	18.2	18.3	18.3	18.4	18.4	18.5	18.5	18.5
Government	67.8	67.4	66.9	66.5	66.1	65.6	65.2	64.9



Second Objective: how the independent schools sector has managed to remain relevant

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19. Independent schools in Australia predate Federation and many have their roots in religious schools established in the early years of the Colony. These schools and the independent sector more broadly have grown into a vibrant sector because they have remained relevant to the educational needs of their students and their communities. The sector has been built on partnerships that continue to evolve. These partnerships exist between
 - a. The student and his or her teacher
 - b. The school and its community
 - c. The independent schools sector and other schools sectors
 - d. The sector and governments
20. **The sector's partnership with governments.** In the 1960's, a decision made by the Menzies government to allocate public funds to resource non government schools' science and library facilities signified the beginning of Federal government funding to non-government schools. This decision, which given all probability was made in an office somewhere in this building, marked the start of a solid partnership between the Federal government and non government schools that continues today. The Cabinet Room is just down the corridor. The House of Representatives and the Senate Chambers are just a few metres away – and in this room, the Members Dining Room, I am sure these issues were the subject of frequent conversations over long meals.
21. This partnership has now progressed to a stage where today the Federal Government is the main provider of public funding to independent schools. As Julia Gillard said, the Government intends to introduce a new Schools Assistance Bill into the Parliament some time during the next few weeks.

This will serve to continue the partnership for at least another four years. The Bill will ensure that the existing SES funding arrangements will continue, including indexation, funding guarantees and funding maintenance. This is very welcome news from ISCA's perspective as it will provide independent schools with certainty and surety of funding for the next four years enabling schools to plan and deliver their education programs to students.

22. As this evolving partnership has progressed, it has been important to carry forward key characteristics of a solid partnership, including;
 - a. respect for difference
 - b. acknowledgement of the contributions of the other sectors
 - c. understanding of the value or contribution our own sector makes.
23. These characteristics don't just happen. They need constant reassessment, attention, good will and commitment by each of the parties.

Third Objective: Our Relevance for the Future

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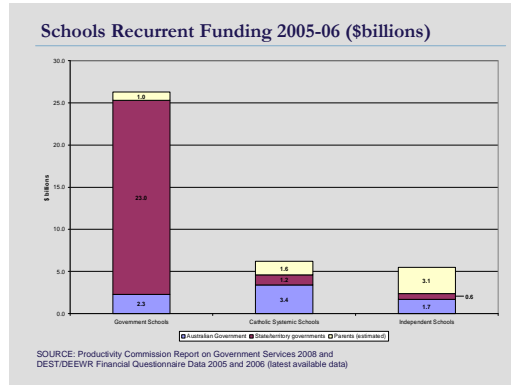


24. Over the coming months and the next couple of years, the sector will face significant challenges as we endeavour to remain solid partners with the Government. The Federal Government is committed to undertake an extensive review of schools funding policy during 2010 and 2011. While the review will clearly encompass the funding arrangements for independent schools, it would be unfortunate if the review does not focus on the public funding policies for all schools. If the public/private debate is to be buried, this review provides the Government with an opportunity to

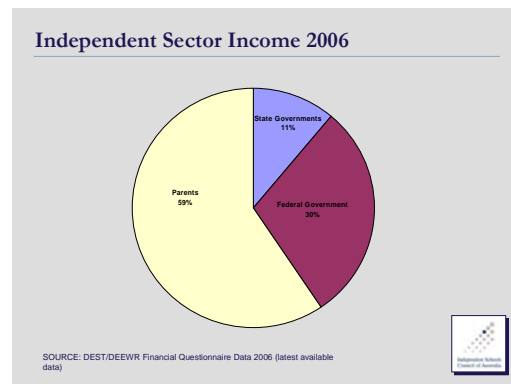
shift the focus off one sector and demonstrate that it is serious about its rhetoric on moving forward and leaving the past in the past.

25. Funding is a serious business. Let's have a brief look at a few facts.

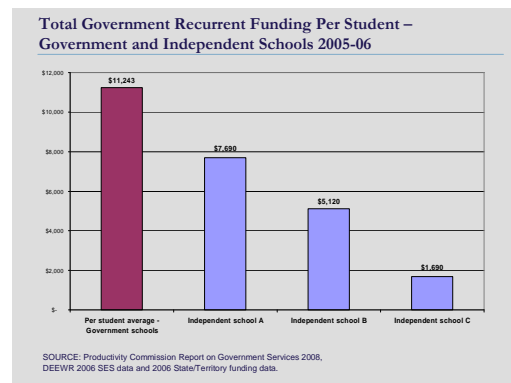
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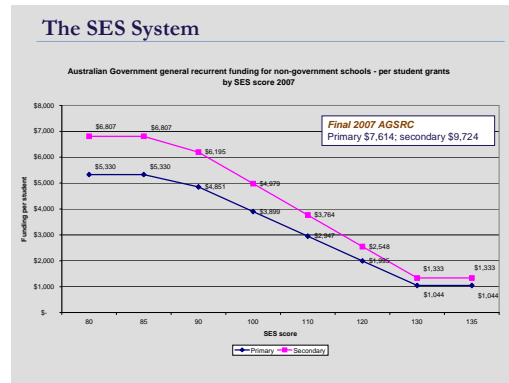
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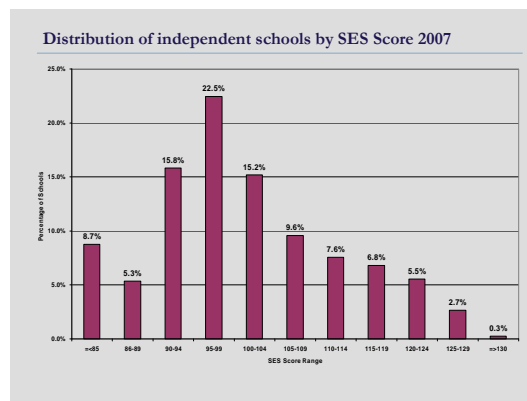
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Slide 18




26. While funding is critically important, there are other big challenges in remaining relevant.

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Challenges in Remaining Relevant

- Students with disability
- COAG
- Partnerships with other school sectors
- Transparency



27. **Students with disability.** ISCA has endeavoured for the last decade to try to convince governments to treat students with disability with the respect they deserve and provide reasonable resources to them. Regrettably, very little has changed. The proposition is simple – support for these students

should be based on the level of funding required to allow them to achieve their educational goals. Why should a child with disability be penalised if the parents decide to enrol the child in a non-government school? Solving this problem will require a greater concerted effort from all of us to convince governments to give these kids a fair go.


28. **COAG** and the role of non government organisations in a new intergovernmental agreement. There is no doubt that the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister envisage that the independent school sector should be beneficiaries of the new COAG arrangements, including having access to National Partnership Payments. It is unclear at this stage how we can be a genuine partner in these initiatives which are dominated by governments. ISCA and AISs will need to work very hard over the coming months to be treated as genuine partners in these initiatives particularly when it comes to decision making on resources.
29. **Partnerships with other school sectors.** The Rudd Government has made it clear that it values cooperation and partnerships. It is already evident from some of its major funding programs that schools that demonstrate that they can work cooperatively with other schools, irrespective of the sector, will benefit from government funding. There are plenty of practical difficulties to achieve meaningful sharing and cooperative arrangements, but there will not be much sympathy for those who choose to ignore the opportunities.
30. **Transparency.** School outcomes and performance is being measured with renewed emphasis on transparency and accountability. School outputs are also being measured in economic terms as the Rudd Government has linked what we do in the class room with the nation's productivity agenda. The quality of our students' education is seen to have the economic value of training the future workforce. Some independent schools will find it difficult to adjust to the growing demands for transparency and accountability. However, these demands are not just those of the Rudd Government, they will be made regardless of the colour of the party that is in government. They are here to stay.
31. Finally, I think we should recognise that our sector will be judged by changing criteria. We no longer have to be drawn into debates about class or social warfare, to justify our existence. The din of old sector warriors wishing to continue this obsolete battle is distracting, but in truth our sector

has to consider other school sectors as partners. The other sectors contribute to the same diversity and choice for school provision that remains a central tenet for us and it is important for us to respect their difference as well as their contribution.

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Recognise and Celebrate the Value of

- independence
- autonomy
- innovation and flexibility



32. At the same time we should never forget our contribution and significance. ISCA will continue to ensure that decision makers recognise the benefits of supporting parents in their choice of schooling. We will also reinforce our case for independence, autonomy and innovation in schooling, balanced by reasonable reporting and accountability to governments.

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