



Independent Schools
Council of Australia

**Speech at the launch of the AISNSW Institute,
by ISCA Acting Executive Director Colette Colman
Sydney 29/10/15**

Minister Birmingham, Institute members and guests

I am delighted to be here at the launch of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW Institute. I am very pleased that ISCA will be part of the Institute and I look forward to engaging with the work of the Institute.

Going forward I anticipate that the work of the Institute will be an important contribution not only to Independent schools in NSW, but Independent schools nationally and indeed all Australian schools.

The role and work of ISCA is, of course, in many ways different to that of the AISs. ISCA's members are the state and territory Independent school associations rather than the schools themselves. And our focus is very much on working with the Australian Government and its Department of Education and Training and other agencies.

But a close and effective working relationship with the state and territory AISs, many of whom are represented here today, is critical to our success as an organisation.

Nationally, the Independent sector is major contributor not only to education in Australia, but to the nation's overall economic and social well-being. The Independent sector each year:

- Saves governments \$4.2 billion through parental and school community contributions to the cost of education in Independent schools
- Directly employs more than 85,000 staff
- Contributes wages and salaries of \$6.4 billion
- Pays \$1.8 billion in PAYG tax
- Makes more than \$0.5 billion in superannuation contributions.

For many years the Independent sector has been the fastest growing education sector in Australia.

A significant issue for the sector will be whether it is desirable to sustain this growth and if so – how is this growth to be achieved.

This is an issue that the Institute may wish to consider in its work.

Based on ABS data, the Australian Government Department of Education and Training estimates that by 2023 there will be an additional almost 500,000 students needing to be accommodated in Australian schools.

Based on average school sizes ISCA estimates that this equates to an additional 1,215 schools.

How to meet the demands of future enrolment growth will be a critical issue for governments into the future.

For many years Independent schools have been doing a significant share of the heavy lifting in dealing with enrolment growth. In the last thirty years the average size of an Independent school has doubled.

However, apart from a modest increase in the absolute number of Independent schools in the ten years from 1997 – in recent years, there has been no overall increase in the number of Independent schools.

This is very much a reflection of the significant expense in terms of cost, administration and bureaucracy in establishing a new school. Particularly in a sector which for the most part does not have a system to support the growth of new schools.

It makes sense to governments financially to support Independent schools. Independent schools are making a major contribution to the public good through educating around 16 per cent of Australian students.

Independent schools can play an important role in driving the quality schooling agenda. Not only does the autonomous nature of the sector mean schools have the capacity to promote innovation, choice and responsiveness to parent and student needs, the sector is financially efficient.

On average 60 per cent of recurrent funding in Independent schools comes from private sources of funding (mainly parents) – while an impressive 80 per cent of capital funding comes from parents and donors.

A key factor in the recent and future success of the Independent sector is its direct funding relationship with the Australian Government. As the major provider of public funding to the non-government school sector, the Australian Government is a critical partner in the provision of Independent schooling.

Stable, predictable Australian Government funding is vital for Independent schools going forward to enable financial planning both in terms of existing schools and in determining the scope of the sector to help governments meet the challenge of accommodating future enrolment growth.

ISCA in association with the Independent sector as a whole looks forward to working with government to secure a quality education for all Australian students and meeting the challenges of educating those students into the future.

I also look forward to the role that the AIS NSW Institute will play in looking to the future of the sector.

For more on the AISNSW Institute see AISNSW's press release at:

<http://www.aisnsw.edu.au/Publications/AISMedia/Documents/Education%20ministers%20launch%20Independent%20schools%20think%20tank.pdf>