



20 August 2012

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS FORUM LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

A national education forum focussing on key trends and issues affecting independent schools was opened in Canberra today by the Prime Minister the Hon Julia Gillard MP, and featured an address by the Leader of the Opposition the Hon Tony Abbott MHR.

The Prime Minister said “Every independent school in Australia will see their funding increase under our plan”.

“As Prime Minister of this country, I feel a deep responsibility to ensure every child in Australia has the education they deserve. I feel accountable to every Australian parent and child to do everything I can to make sure their school is a great school. We govern for all and when I worry about standards and work to improve them I do that for all”, she said.

“Independent Education: Influencing a Complex Future” is jointly hosted by the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) and the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA), national member and peak body organisations in the independent education sector. This year, the forum has a focus on technology, innovation and opportunities in education, teacher quality and other initiatives influencing the teaching profession. Research-based evidence of the emerging impact of pastoral care policies and practices to student wellbeing in schools is another strong focus for the forum.

Key speakers at the forum include leading social researcher and commentator Mark McCrindle, Chair of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership and CEO of the Centre for Strategic Education Anthony Mackay, internationally recognised children’s advocate Professor Donna Cross and CEO of Lateral Economics Dr Nicholas Gruen.

“It’s a real mark of her continuing interest in education that the Prime Minister agreed to open our forum today”, said AHISA’s National Chair Mr Andrew Barr. “Our members share a critical interest in the future direction of the profession, national education policy and leadership in schools. It was reassuring to hear the Prime Minister’s words endorsing a basic entitlement to government funding for all school students as a citizenship entitlement.”

The independent sector educates more than half a million students in some 1,100 schools.

“The emphasis at today’s forum on choice, diversity and innovation in education demonstrates that independent schools will continue to deliver high quality outcomes for Australian students, and make an important contribution to influencing the direction of education in Australia”, said the Chairman of ISCA, Mr John Ralston OAM.

AHISA and ISCA welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement at the forum that every independent school in Australia would see funding increase under the Government's plan. In a joint statement, the Chairs of both organisations said : "This decision recognises the diversity and uniqueness of the Australian school system and supports the choices that parents make about the best schools for their children. It is a recognition that non-government schools are providing a quality education to nearly 40 per cent of young Australians."

Over 300 principals and other independent school leaders including school board members are attending the forum in Canberra today. As a reflection of the trends identified by speakers in the use of new technology in education, conference delegates are experiencing real-time interaction with conference presenters through twitter and a chat room facility, and receiving conference materials through a portal accessible on smart phones, tablets and laptops.

MEDIA CONTACTS

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