

Australian Government Funding for Independent Schools

Maintenance of funding relativities between government and non-government sectors

- Australian school education is supported by three major funding partners — the Australian Government, state or territory governments and the families of students.
- State and territory governments are the primary funding source for government schools.
- Changing the current proportion of total Commonwealth funding being directed to the government sector relative to the non-government sector at the expense of Independent schools would undermine this partnership.

School system funding arrangements

- The treatment of systems and the capacity to contribute arrangements for the non-government sector need to be applied consistently.
- There is no justification for any change to the funding model which would differentiate between the Independent and Catholic sectors.
- Any changes to the funding model need to be modelled at the individual Independent school level and the impact of these changes on the financial viability of individual Independent schools assessed so that they are not disadvantaged relative to other schools / systems.

Schools 'above the SRS'

- There is a high level of misunderstanding about Independent schools which are 'above the SRS' – commonly referred to as “overfunded” schools.
- There are many different types of schools included in this group, including many special schools serving students with disability, and there are many reasons why this small group of schools have been deemed to be 'above' their SRS entitlement.
- These schools are 'above the SRS' as the result of both historical funding decisions and also due to the complexities of the SRS funding formula, including the interaction of state and Commonwealth funding.
- Schools 'above the SRS' in the Catholic and government sectors are hidden because they are part of systems which, on average, are below the SRS.
- Schools in the 'above the SRS' funding category are sustainably transitioning to their new SRS funding entitlement. A number of schools which were 'above the SRS' in 2014 have now completed this transition.

Students First Support Fund

- The Students First Support Fund (SFSF) has been critical in enabling the Independent sector to assist in the implementation of the Government's reform agenda for school education in Independent schools.
- Most Independent schools are stand-alone schools and the SFSF has provided the opportunity for Independent schools to efficiently and effectively access advice and support in areas such as school improvement, addressing student educational disadvantage, teacher professional development and school leadership from Associations of Independent Schools (AISs).
- The ongoing sustainability of the AIS network will be critical to ensuring the successful engagement of Independent schools in the effective implementation of national school education initiatives and data collections.