

Media Statement

26 May 2017



Consistency and equity comes at a cost

The Independent Schools Council of Australia believes that Australian government funding for all non-government schools should be allocated on the same basis.

School funding within the Independent sector, and across the non-government sector generally, is currently a hodgepodge of historical arrangements, the legacy of decades of special arrangements and decisions made by both sides of politics.

Addressing the current confusion without a huge impact on government outlays will not come without an adverse impact on some schools and school sectors. This impact on schools and sectors also comes with potential political pain, hence the decades without a genuine effort from governments to address this situation.

Recent media coverage and statements from Catholic school system leaders give the impression that Catholic systemic schools are the only schools adversely impacted by the proposed changes. ISCA modelling shows that around 420 Independent schools, or nearly 40% of the sector, will be worse off under the proposed arrangements than the current legislation. That such a large proportion of Independent schools are impacted by the proposal clearly dispels any perception that the government is targeting one section of the non-government sector over another.

However, ISCA believes that the opportunity to establish a consistent and equitable funding baseline for all non-government schools should be our highest priority. Continuing to seek to protect inconsistently applied funding arrangements that distort the non-government school relativities is no longer in anybody's interests, particularly not Australian school students.

ISCA acknowledges that particularly for stand-alone Independent schools, the transition to the proposed new funding arrangements will be extremely difficult and challenging for those schools' communities.

However, on the whole, the majority of Independent schools will be better off under the proposed arrangements. This reflects the genuine profile of the Independent sector with its large number of medium to low fee schools. The median fee level for Independent schools is around \$5000, far less than is frequently portrayed in commentary.

This also demonstrates a needs based funding model in action, reflecting the significant increases in students with disability and Indigenous students in Independent schools over the last decade.

Unlike some schools in other sectors, a clear majority of Independent schools are currently below their funding entitlement under both the current and proposed funding arrangements.

Consistency and equity comes at a cost. As long as that cost is shared by all who need to make adjustments and the benefits flow according to educational need, then this is a goal worth pursuing.

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