

Media Release

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Further work required to determine feasibility of SES changes

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) has stressed that the recommendations of the National School Resourcing Board (NSRB) Report on its Review of the SES will require rigorous trialling and validation before it can be implemented.

ISCA Executive Director Colette Colman today said that, “The Board recommendations would be a significant change from the present methodology. The current approach took three years to model, trial and validate prior to its introduction, and we’d expect the same rigour prior to any move away from the existing arrangements.”

Ms Colman went on to say that, “ISCA acknowledges the work of the National School Resourcing Board and thanks them for their careful consideration of the complex issues examined in the Review. However, as part of moving away from the current indirect measure of *capacity to contribute*, the Independent sector must be assured that any direct measure will be significantly more accurate and will be consistently applied to all non-government schools.”

The Independent sector strongly supports the Board's decision not to use fees as a measure of capacity to contribute. The analysis outlined in the report clearly demonstrates that fees are not an accurate or consistent measure of a school community's capacity to contribute.

Regarding the Board's recommendation that *capacity to contribute* for a school is determined by the median income of parents and guardians of the students at the school, Ms Colman said that, “The proposed methodology will require significant work to determine whether it would produce accurate and valid information at the individual school level. As the majority of Independent schools are stand-alone entities, it is critical that any methodology is valid not only at the sector or system level but also at the individual school level.”

The NSRB's Report provides a high-level overview of a possible alternative methodology utilising personal income tax data to enable the calculation of a direct measure of median parent and guardian income for a school. Significant clarification is required regarding how this methodology could work in practical terms including:

- How to ensure sufficient data is available for an accurate assessment of parental income for all schools, particularly those which would be highly disadvantaged by missing data, such as small schools, rural schools, schools serving high numbers of disadvantaged students and boarding schools. It should be noted that currently the modelling in the Report is based on household income rather than the proposed methodology of a direct measure of parental income;
- whether the recommended approach will provide a stable and predictable funding environment for Independent schools;

- assurance regarding any privacy implications;
- the likelihood of additional administration burdens for schools;
- a suitable timeframe for development and validation prior to implementation;
- the development of appropriate transition arrangements to any new model;
- assurance that the proposed new arrangements can be introduced in a rigorously consistent manner across all non-government schools.

Ms Colman added that, “It is now up to the Government to apply its own consideration and rigour to the Board’s recommendations. The Independent sector would welcome the opportunity to work with the Government to further examine the recommendations and ensure their appropriateness and applicability for determining capacity to contribute for Independent schools.”

ENDS

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