

Media Release

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Independent Schools
Council of Australia

Independent Sector will Partner with Government to Improve School Outcomes

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) has today commended the Australian Government for setting the high, but achievable goal of making Australia's schooling system amongst the best in the world by 2025.

ISCA Executive Director, Mr Bill Daniels welcomed the Government's response to the Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling which was presented by the Prime Minister as based on a goal, a plan and improved funding arrangements.

ISCA Executive Director, Mr Bill Daniels, welcomed the Prime Minister's commitment to include independent school representatives in the Government's discussions over the details of the plan saying that "independent schools are important partners in delivering high quality schooling outcomes for all students and the sector appreciates this recognition by Australian Government".

"The sector also recognises the significance of the proposed Australian Education Act, which will ensure that the education of all Australian children is an entitlement of citizenship. This is a positive step and important recognition of the role and contribution of independent schools," he said.

"The sector generally supports the objectives of a student based funding model with additional support for disadvantaged students. The independent sector has been highlighting the need for recognition from government of the additional costs of educating students with special needs, particularly those with disability for decades. A key outcome will be appropriate funding for these students."

The Government is proposing to transition the funding arrangements in over the period 2014 to 2020. Mr Daniels said that "six years is a long phase in period and whilst it is not ideal, is understandable given the substantial cash injection and to allow the school sector time to put in place the necessary policy settings, such as more high quality teachers, to ensure the achievement of the 2025 goal."

"Whilst acknowledging the need for a phase-in period, the critical short-term issue for independent schools is funding certainty to allow schools to responsibly plan for the future. While the Government's announcement that funding will be determined not by sector but by need is welcomed, what was missing from today's announcement was detail."

In order to effectively enter into discussions with the Government, the independent sector will need to understand the impact of the changed funding arrangements on all 1,100 independent schools across Australia. Mr Daniels also stressed that the timeline outlined by the Prime Minister today for the negotiation process would need to be progressed as a priority.

The timeline made it clear that the Australian Education Bill when introduced later this year will not contain any details around funding arrangements which will not be finalised until early 2013. The current timeline is not ideal for those planning the needs of independent schools.

The detail and impact on independent schools of the Government's National Plan for School Improvement will be important. The independent sector recognises the Australian Government's strategic objectives from this funding reform but would not wish to see a reduction in the autonomy of independent schools. Mr Daniels said all conditions attached to funding by the Government should be evidence-based and clearly linked to improving educational outcomes.

The independent school sector's concerns for the future include:

- Seeking certainty through a stable, predictable and robust school funding model.
- The extent of Australian Government's financial commitment.
- The extent of States/Territories financial commitment to a model.
- Details about indexation.
- The impact of the new model on every independent school.

ISCA looks forward to entering into discussions about the details of the funding model.

ENDS

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