

AHISA MEDIA RELEASE

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Leading Future Learning Forum: 'School autonomy underwrites innovation'

Addressing the National Education Forum in Canberra today, the National Chair of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA), Mrs Karen Spiller, called on governments and policy makers to recognise the capacity of schools to be innovative and entrepreneurial.

Mrs Spiller, who is Principal of St Aidan's Anglican Girls' School in Brisbane, told delegates that in discourse on the role of schools in helping to create future innovators and entrepreneurs, 'schools are generally regarded as little more than instruments of government policy'.

'What is little recognised is the capacity of schools themselves to be innovative and entrepreneurial,' said Mrs Spiller.

Mrs Spiller said innovation and school autonomy were interdependent and reminded delegates of the history of innovation delivered by Australian independent schools.

'Many aspects of school life taken for granted in Australia today were first launched or modelled by independent schools,' said Mrs Spiller, who referred to careers advisers, school counsellors, outdoor education programs, pastoral care programs, school chaplains, service learning, internationalism and global student exchange, positive education and the use of technology in education.

Mrs Spiller also noted more recent innovations in learning spaces, 'maker' laboratories, the use of virtual reality and models of provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The National Education Forum was hosted by AHISA and the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA). Delegates from the independent schools sector were addressed by the Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham, the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Bill Shorten MP with Shadow Minister for Education, the Hon Kate Ellis MP, Australian Greens spokesperson for education, Senator Nick McKim and leading education specialists.

'The Forum welcomed the commitment of the Coalition, Labor and the Australian Greens to funding support for Australian schools,' said Mrs Spiller. 'We also welcomed the recognition by such senior politicians of the contribution of independent schools to Australian education.'

AHISA launched the [third in its series of infographics](#) on the value of independent schooling at the Forum. The infographic highlights research on what parents say about quality education and independent schools.

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AHISA is a professional association of 420 Heads of independent schools. Its members lead schools that collectively account for over 11 per cent of total Australian school enrolments and 20 per cent of Year 12 enrolments.