

Warwick Dean. OPENING ADDRESS 2016 ISCA AHSIA National Education Forum

Good morning everyone,

Before we begin today's proceedings, I would like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal (NUN-A-WALL) and the Ngambri (NE-GAHM-BREE) peoples, who are the traditional custodians of the land in this Canberra area, and pay respect to their elders, past and present, and to all Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

My name is Warwick Dean, and I am the Chair of the Independent Schools Council of Australia. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to and open the 2016 ISCA & AHISA National Education Forum.

I would like to acknowledge acting Secretary of the Australian Department of Education and Training, Mr Tony Cook; ISCA and AHISA Board members; AHISA's National Chair, Karen Spiller, and AHISA Chief Executive Officer Beth Blackwood; ISCA Executive Director Colette Colman; representatives of Associations of Independent Schools; representatives of State and National education organisations; and representatives from an extensive range of Independent schools across Australia.

We are a diverse group gathered here today; a true reflection of the great diversity of our Independent schools' sector.

This is the third National Education Forum ISCA and AHISA have presented together. Our respective organisations have a successful tradition of collaboration and partnership... of playing different, yet complementary roles in promoting Independent schooling in a coherent and consistent manner, of promoting quality educational outcomes, and being positive partners in matters such as the quality of teaching & learning programs and the quality of teachers, as examples of a wide range of shared national schooling issues.

Since the National Council of Independent Schools (NCIS), was established in 1970, Australia's educational landscape has undergone significant change. The NCIS is now of course ISCA, and the expanded role of the federal government in school education and the sustained growth of the Independent sector are major developments which have influenced the nature of schooling and education outcomes for children in this nation.

Forty six years ago the Independent sector consisted of 400 schools and 114,000 students; four per cent of total school enrolments.

Today, the Independent sector has nearly 1,100 schools and well over half a million students representing 15 per cent of total school enrolments. And today our students are considerably more diverse... the sector provides for students of all abilities, including students with special needs, and serves a wide range of communities from remote and disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, through to socially, culturally and ethnically diverse communities in capital cities.

The Independent school sector is today a major contributor not only to education in Australia, but to the nation's overall economic and social well-being. For example, the sector each year:

- Saves governments \$4.2 billion through parental and school community contributions to the cost of education in Independent schools
- Directly employs more than 85,000 staff

- Contributes wages and salaries of \$6.4 billion
- Produces \$1.8 billion in PAYG tax
- Provides more than \$0.5 billion in superannuation contributions.

The Independent sector is an integral part of the Australian schooling landscape... and ISCA enjoys a major consultative role in the development of national education policy objectives, and does this in a collaborative and considered way through our secretariat in Canberra and through member Associations of Independent Schools in every State and Territory.

It is our specific hope that all future Governments continue to recognize the economic and educational diversity of our schools and the role of Independent schools in offering choice to parents and in the delivery of quality education to a wide and diverse range of students.

This election year presents an opportunity to ensure a stable and predictable future for Independent schools. It is essential that schools be given assurances that their goals of providing the very best of educational opportunities for all students can be maintained well into the future.

Which brings us to the theme of this year's forum, "*Independent Education: Leading Future Learning*".

How is the Independent sector leading future learning? The benefits of autonomy, Independence and parental partnership, allow Independent schools to provide an environment that fosters choice, innovation, creativity and diversity... allowing us to better confront the challenge of preparing students as highly capable participants, as complex problem solvers with a global perspective built into their willingness to serve their ever-more complex and demanding community, nation and wider world.

Today we have a program of excellent speakers: thought leaders in education, economics data and science. And I am particularly looking forward to our panel discussion this afternoon examining what constitutes a 'quality education' for Australia's young people today and into the future. We also greatly appreciate the presence of some of our respected political leaders in what is for them a busy time.

I look forward to some robust and insightful discussion today, and listening to colleagues from the many areas of our diverse sector.

It's a pleasure to see so many of you here, thank you for coming. I welcome you all on behalf of ISCA and AHISA... and trust that you will find this Forum provocative, enjoyable and stimulating.

To introduce our various speakers through the day, guide you through some of the practicalities of this Forum and facilitate the panel discussion this afternoon, our Master of Ceremonies is Richard Morecroft.

Richard is perhaps best known for his twenty years as the presenter of the ABC's nightly TV news in Sydney— and more recently as the host of SBS's popular quiz show, *Letters and Numbers*.

We're delighted that he's joining us today, so let me hand over to him now... Richard Morecroft