

Media Release

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Independent schools challenge misleading fee portrayal

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) cautions parents about glossy marketing campaigns for education focused financial products that misrepresent the cost of Independent school fees. While ISCA supports using sensible strategies to help provide for their children’s schooling, parents should note that school fee estimates quoted in the marketing material of these products do not reflect the majority of Independent schools.

For example, education contribution fund provider Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) has this week suggested the total national average cost of metropolitan non-government schooling (K-Yr 12) for a child born in 2018 would be close to half a million dollars.

ISCA Executive Director Colette Colman said that “while ASG admit their school fee figures ‘represent the upper ranges that parents can reasonably expect to pay,’ they neglect to show just how small a proportion of Australia’s Independent schools are actually charging the kind of fees that could contribute to those sorts of cumulative costs.”

“ASG’s fee estimates state that the 2018 national metropolitan upper-range figure parents could expect to pay in secondary school fees is \$21,004 per annum”, she said. “However, the most recent official data available shows a median Australian metropolitan Independent school fee of \$6,441 per annum. Nationally, 70 per cent of metropolitan Independent schools are charging below \$10,000 per annum.”

Ms Colman went on to say that “fees in Independent schools vary greatly, with the majority of them much more affordable than modelling like ASG’s suggests. In addition, there are numerous ways parents can save on costs; with many Independent schools offering scholarships, all-inclusive fees, and discounts for siblings or lump sum payments. We would strongly urge parents to do their own research on the fees of schools that interest them.”

ISCA’s school fee information is derived from data of fees collected from all Australian Independent schools in 2016 (the most recent year for which accurate data is available), and reflects the great diversity that can be found across schools and between states and territories.

ASG state their school fee estimates have been derived from a 2017 survey of their parent members, plus CPI adjusted data from similar surveys conducted in 2013 and 2015, which asked parents to estimate various costs that they paid for their children’s schooling. They state these are a guide only and do not guarantee that they will represent actual costs.

Australian Scholarships Group (ASG) estimated metropolitan fees-only Independent school costs for 2017¹

	National	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
Primary	\$11,627	\$13,542	\$12,452	\$9,683	\$9,758	\$9,022	\$11,614	n/a	\$13,852
Secondary	\$21,004	\$24,271	\$24,776	\$15,177	\$16,464	\$18,140	\$17,821	n/a	\$15,634

ISCA overview of fees charged by Australian metropolitan Independent schools in 2016²

Median³ fee per student (Metro only)

	National	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS ⁴	NT ⁴	ACT
Median ³	6,441	6,074	8,947	6,115	5,031	5,754	3,604	3,143	7,797

Ranges of metropolitan Independent school fees (including primary, secondary and combined schools) 2016⁵

	National	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS ⁴	NT ⁴	ACT
\$20,000 and above	11%	13%	22%	2%	3%	10%	0%	0%	6%
\$15,000 - \$19,999	9%	7%	14%	8%	13%	5%	0%	0%	11%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	10%	11%	10%	14%	6%	3%	21%	0%	6%
\$5,000 - \$9,999	33%	29%	29%	38%	28%	45%	17%	15%	50%
\$0,000 - \$4,999	37%	40%	25%	39%	49%	36%	62%	85%	28%

¹ The figures above present ASG's estimates specifically for school fees for 2018, and were taken from their website. They state that costs "represent the upper ranges that parents can reasonably expect to pay" and attribute the source of data to a 2017 survey of their parent members, plus CPI adjusted data from similar surveys conducted in 2013 and 2015.

² ISCA's school fee information is derived from data of fees collected from all Australian Independent schools in 2016, which is the most recent year for which accurate data is available.

³ *Median* denotes the dollar value lying at the midpoint of the range of fees charged.

⁴ For statistical purposes no Northern Territory or Tasmania schools are regarded as metropolitan. Therefore, figures quoted here are for the entire Northern Territory and Tasmania.

⁵ Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

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