

Media Release

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Low and middle-income families choose Independent schools

Analysis of the 2016 Census of Population and Housing shows a continuing trend of strong Independent school sector growth for medium-income families, demonstrating that both Independent and Catholic schools are now predominantly attended by middle-income families.

The Executive Director of the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA), Colette Colman, today said that, "The release of the results of the 2016 Census of Population and Housing brings an opportunity to analyse robust and reliable data that highlights genuine demographic trends and changes in the ever-evolving makeup of Australian schooling."

ISCA's analysis of the Census data, [The Changing Face of Australian Schooling](#), examines trends across all school sectors in areas including enrolment share and growth, family income, dependent children, students recently arrived in Australia and religious affiliation.

In addition to showing an increasing similarity between Independent and Catholic schools in serving mainly medium-income communities (family income of \$52,000 to \$155,999), the analysis shows the proportion of low-income families (below \$52,000) in both sectors is identical at 13 per cent. Government schools show a distinctly different pattern, with 26 per cent of their students from low-income families.

Ms Colman said that, "The idea that all Independent schools are high-fee schools serving high-income families is a myth. For the last thirty years most of the growth in the Independent sector has been in low to medium-fee schools, and this is confirmed by Census data."

Enrolments in the Independent, Catholic and government sectors have all grown since 2011. The Independent sector has grown by 9 per cent, the Catholic sector by 8 per cent and government schools by 10 per cent.

Ms Colman said that, "Despite reports of a shift in enrolments to government schools in recent years, the 2016 Census shows that since 2011 the Independent sector enrolment share has remained unchanged at 15.2 per cent."

When it comes to the religious affiliation of students across the three sectors, probably the most notable trend is the continued growth of the *No Religion* category, which since the last Census has increased from 30 per cent to 37 per cent.

Ms Colman said that, "It would be fair to say that all three school sectors are, on average, becoming increasingly non-religious."

In Independent schools the *No Religion* category grew from 24 per cent in 2011 to 31 per cent in 2016. In Catholic schools families selecting *No Religion* went from 10 per cent to 14 per cent, and in the Government sector it grew from 38 per cent to 45 per cent.

The Changing Face of Australian Schooling, An ISCA Analysis of the ABS 2016 Census of Population & Housing is available at: http://isca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/The-changing-face-of-australian-schooling_FINAL_web.pdf

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