

Media Release

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Independent School Sector Gathers for Education Forum

The 2018 ISCA & AHISA National Education Forum was held in Canberra today, bringing together representatives from the Independent school sector, including principals, members of governing bodies, business managers and sector representatives from other national and state-based organisations. It featured addresses from the Minister for Education and Training, Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham; the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Bill Shorten MP; Shadow Minister for Education, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP; and leading education specialists and social commentators.

Over 300 Independent school sector representatives attended the forum. With the theme this year being *A National Perspective*, the forum focused on schooling issues such as current and future funding arrangements, governance, effective teaching and leadership, and the impact and influence of social media on schools and their communities.

ISCA Board member Mr Philip Grutzner speaking on behalf of ISCA's National Chair, Mr Steven Bowers, said in his opening address that, "It is our objective 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 the delivery of quality education to a wide and diverse range of students."

In his address to the forum Minister Birmingham congratulated the Independent sector for its principled approach to last year's changes to Commonwealth school funding arrangements. He added, "I look forward to continuing to work with you to help deliver the fair, consistent, needs-based funding that we promised, but most importantly the best possible education outcomes for our kids."

The Leader of the Opposition, the Hon Bill Shorten MP, highlighted Labor's commitment to fair and equitable investment in all education sectors, saying that, "I fundamentally believe that funding schools according to need is the right way forward."

Shadow Minister for Education, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, acknowledged Independent schools as an important part of Australia's school system, saying that Labor, "Will work closely with the Independent sector as we develop our new schools funding model going forward."

ISCA Executive Director Colette Colman commented that the Independent sector, "appreciates so many of our political leaders making their time available today, and we welcome their assurances that all major parties are committed to fair, equitable, and consistent funding for all non-government schools."

Other key speakers at the forum included Mr David Gonski AC; Ms Lisa Rogers, CEO, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership; and social media specialist Trevor Young. The forum was closed by AHISA's National Chair Dr Mark Merry.

The Independent school sector is not only a major provider of quality education, it is also a significant contributor to the country's social and economic wellbeing with over 1,100 schools and over 600,000 students, representing 15 per cent of Australia's total school enrolments. It directly employs 91,000 staff, contributes wages and salaries of \$6.5 billion, pays \$1.4 billion in PAYG tax, and makes \$0.7 billion in superannuation contributions.

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