As a group, Indigenous students face significant barriers to educational achievement. In order to overcome these barriers many Indigenous parents are enrolling their children in Independent schools.

Indigenous student enrolments are spread broadly across the sector. In 2018 there were 13,483 Indigenous students enrolled in 887 Independent schools. 78 per cent of Independent schools in Australia enrolled Indigenous students in 2018.

Growth rates of Indigenous students in Independent sector 2009 – 2018

Enrolments of Indigenous students in Independent schools have grown at an average annual rate of six per cent per year over the last two decades.

There are some Independent schools that provide education to significant populations of Indigenous students, and some Independent schools are entirely Indigenous. A significant number of these schools are located in rural or remote areas.

It is often the case that Independent schools in remote Indigenous communities are the sole providers of education for these communities; 38 schools in the Independent sector have an Indigenous enrolment of more than 50 per cent.

Many Independent schools are involved in community-based programs to provide scholarships to Indigenous students.

Other Independent schools, such as urban and regional boarding schools, also have large numbers of Indigenous students. Many Independent boarding schools provide scholarships to support access to education for Indigenous students or are involved in community-based programs to provide scholarships to these students.

<table>
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<th>Indigenous students in the Independent schools sector, 2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous students enrolments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent schools with 50%+ Indigenous enrolment</td>
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<td>Independent schools with Indigenous enrolments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent boarding schools with Indigenous enrolments</td>
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Independent schools are Australia’s largest provider of boarding schools for Indigenous students.
Indigenous students in rural and remote areas

Independent schools that serve significant or solely Indigenous student populations often have very limited capacity to raise private income through fees and fundraising; in many cases this ability is non-existent. These schools rely heavily on government assistance to maintain their operations.

The majority of these schools face high costs in employment; provision of staff housing; transport; construction; maintenance; and accessing professional, student learning and cultural opportunities, due to their remoteness or distance from large population centres.

Schools frequently need to provide many additional educational, health, recreational, wellbeing and pastoral care services in order to assist students to learn successfully.

Funding for Indigenous Students

Under the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) model school funding for Indigenous students comprises of two components.

- The ‘per student’ component is based on the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) which aims to measure the cost of effective and efficient provision of schooling. Majority Indigenous schools and remote ‘sole provider’ schools are exempt from the ‘capacity to contribute’ requirement and are entitled to the full base amount per student.

- Every Indigenous student in every school also attracts a loading. The loading starts at 20 per cent of the per student amount of the first Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student in a school, increasing up to 120 per cent for school with 100 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Student Indigenous loading parameters

As schools are currently transitioning to the SRS funding model, many will not receive their full entitlement under the loadings until the model is fully implemented. Until then the majority of Independent schools are not yet receiving their full funding entitlement.

In the 2018-19 Budget, the Australian Government recognised the additional costs associated with boarding and educating Indigenous students from remote communities by announcing additional funding for scholarship placements and mentoring opportunities for Indigenous students as well as an extension to Family Tax Benefit eligibility to the families of ABSTUDY student recipients who are aged 16 years and over and are required to live away from home to attend school.

For more about Independent schools visit www.isca.edu.au