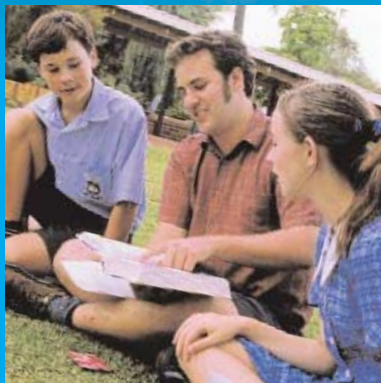


N C I S A

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOLS' ASSOCIATIONS

# The Year in Review



2001–2002

# Chairman's overview

**The Year in Review** summarises NCISA's activities for the year ending April 2002. During this time our National Council, alongside the state and territory Associations of Independent Schools, has been vigorous in advocating on behalf of independent schools in a politically charged environment.

The education policies issued by some parties during the federal election, and the policy since promoted by the opposition parties in relation to establishment grants, show that those in the independent school sector should no longer assume that government funding of a basic entitlement for students in our schools has bipartisan support.

At the same time, two important research reports issued recently have confirmed the success of independent schools in helping to educate Australia's children.

The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study – released in December 2001 – showed that school sector was a significant variable in student performance in reading, mathematics and science literacies, with a positive correlation between independent schools and higher achievement.

A report released in January 2002 by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) on the role of student background and school factors on tertiary entrance performance, also showed that school sector was a significant factor in the tertiary entrance scores achieved by students. On average, students in independent schools achieved the highest tertiary entrance scores. In addition, independent schools can be particularly proud of the fact that on average students with the lowest levels of literacy and numeracy achievement in Year 9 showed the greatest gain in performance relative to students in other sectors.

Together these reports offer strong evidence that independent schools are helping to develop all their students to the best of their ability.

As well, the parents of these students are saving governments more than \$1.2 billion each year in operating costs alone, through their after-tax financial contribution to their children's education.

In spite of these significant contributions to Australian education, independent schools remain vulnerable to political ideologies. The stability now available to independent schools in the remaining years of this funding quadrennium should be grasped as an opportunity to strengthen our sector. It is only by continuing to work together that we can successfully promote the interests of our schools.

*Stephen Newton*  
*Chairman*

## SES funding under way

The phase-in of the new Socio-Economic Status (SES) funding system for independent schools began in 2001 and will be completed in 2004.

The Commonwealth Government's commitment to the phased introduction of the new arrangements should provide independent schools with a stable and predictable federal funding policy environment over this period.

Many independent schools are receiving increased levels of general recurrent funding under the new funding system, based on the relative socio-economic profiles of individual school communities. Other schools in the sector are 'funding-maintained' – receiving funding equal to their previous share of the Average Government School Recurrent Cost (AGSRC).

As the SES funding system is implemented, NCISA will continue to monitor its effects on schools in the sector. This will help strengthen its ability to provide well-informed advocacy on behalf of the sector in any future reviews of funding.

## Establishment grants settled

The Senate finally passed legislation in March 2002 for the appropriation of sufficient government funds to pay all new non-government schools their establishment grants.

The grants formed part of reforms to non-government schooling in 2000 and are a per capita entitlement, applying for the first two years of a school's operation.

NCISA distributed to all senators a document answering many questions raised in the lengthy political debate prior to the eventual passing of the legislation.

# NCISA states the case for school funding

The divisive 'public versus private' debate that was triggered by the introduction in January 2001 of the Socio-Economic Status (SES) model for Commonwealth recurrent funding of non-government schools was unfortunately further exploited in the lead up to the federal election in November last year.

The Australian Labor Party's (ALP) proposal to remove the increases in funding that were allocated under the SES model to 61 former Category 1 independent schools resulted in widespread media references to independent schools that were based on outmoded and misleading stereotypes.

An extensive campaign in support of public education by the Australian Education Union misrepresented government funding of non-government schools, adding to the confusing array of material published about independent schools.

The education policies announced by the Greens and Australian Democrats prior to the election were also of concern. Both parties proposed funding models that effectively abandoned the principle of basic per capita entitlement, by introducing eligibility conditions for Commonwealth Government funding based on the level of a school's fees. This would mean that some schools would no longer receive Commonwealth per capita funding.

Since the 1970s Commonwealth Governments of all political persuasions have recognised the right of parents to choice in the education of their children as well as parents' contribution to education through taxes, by adopting funding models that comprise a basic funding entitlement supplemented by a needs-based component.

Recent parliamentary debate about establishment grants for new non-government schools indicated that the ALP

is now prepared to countenance the abandoning of basic entitlement.

In the lead-up to the election NCISA distributed its statement *Educating Australia for the 21st Century – the Contribution of Independent Schools*. It advocated equitable funding systems, stability in funding for non-government schools and financial support for students with disabilities as part of an active communications program with politicians and the media.

Since the election NCISA has maintained its strong commitment to representing the independent school sector in the Australian community.

Future funding of independent schools continues to be a concern for NCISA, both nationally and in the states and territories.

Firstly, there are indications that several state government-initiated reviews of funding for independent schools could result in winding back the positive impact of the SES model.

Secondly, the Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), is reviewing the resourcing of all schools through its Schools Resourcing Taskforce, established in 2001.

NCISA will continue to affirm the right to choice in education, the benefits of diversity in Australian schooling and the crucial importance of a principled and equitable approach to the funding of non-government schools.

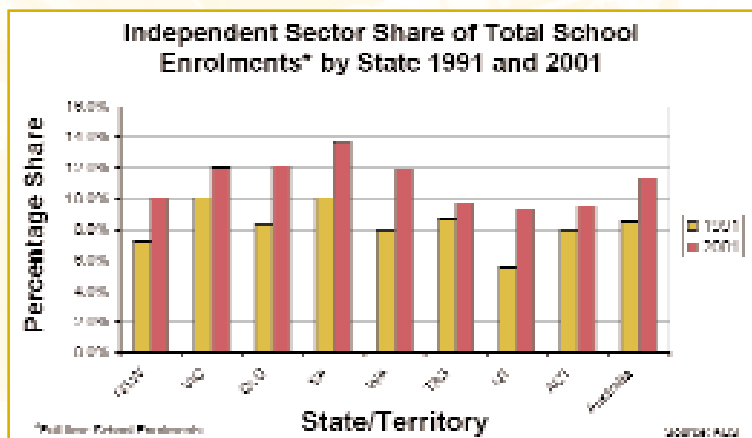
*Bill Daniels*  
*Executive Director*

## Sector growing steadily

The proportion of children attending independent schools in Australia has continued to grow steadily, with 11.4 per cent of students now in the sector. This compares with 8 per cent in 1991 and 4 per cent in 1971.

In 2001 there were 957 independent schools, a net increase of 19 schools over the previous year. Enrolments increased by 13,655 (3.4 per cent), bringing the total full-time student enrolments in independent schools to 371,162.

During the same period enrolments in the Catholic sector increased by 7,129 (1.1 per cent) while enrolments in the government sector were virtually static.





## Targeted programs 'well managed'

Commonwealth funding for educationally disadvantaged students and targeted teaching and learning areas is being managed effectively throughout the independent school sector, according to an extensive review conducted last year.

The review concluded that all state and territory Associations of Independent Schools (AISs) managed the funds effectively. However, it also recommended several measures to improve transparency and reporting.

The review, called by the Commonwealth Minister for Education, was conducted jointly by his Department, the Executive Director of NCISA and the Executive Director of the Australian Association of Christian Schools.

The Minister has confirmed that the programs will continue to be managed by AISs until 2004, with a review of progress in implementing the review's recommendations in mid-2002.

Some \$35 million is available to independent schools through Commonwealth targeted programs during 2002.

## A fair share for students with disabilities

Increased funding to meet the needs of students with disabilities in independent schools will be a high priority for NCISA in the coming year.

NCISA's advocacy for students with disabilities has already included presenting a submission to a Senate inquiry on the education of students with disabilities.

There are currently 6,000 students with disabilities in independent schools. These students receive significantly less government funding than they would if they attended government schools.

NCISA believes students with disabilities should have the same access to independent schools as other students – in fact schools have a legal obligation to students with disabilities under the *Commonwealth Disabilities Discrimination Act 1992*.

The cost to schools of meeting the specific education needs of students with disabilities can be very high, and NCISA believes it is reasonable that the community as a whole, rather than the families of an individual school, meet these costs.

NCISA will continue to press for the same level of government funding for students with disabilities, regardless of the school sector in which they are educated.

## 'Public benefit' test for charities?

A Commonwealth Government inquiry into charities has called for all organisations seeking charitable status, including non-government schools, to demonstrate that they also operate for the public benefit and are altruistic.

If adopted, the recommendation – made in August 2001 by the Independent Inquiry into the Definition of Charities and Related Organisations – could adversely affect the liability of independent schools for various Commonwealth and state and territory taxes and charges.

The inquiry recommended a legislative definition of charities which would define a charity as a not for profit entity that has a dominant purpose or dominant purposes which are charitable, altruistic and for the public benefit. It proposed that the provision of schooling continue to be considered a charitable purpose, and that charitable purposes be extended to include the provision of childcare.

The Government has made no announcements of further policy development, including any changes in taxation, since it released the report.

As well as keeping the independent sector informed about the inquiry's outcomes, NCISA is seeking to play an active role in influencing related policy development.



# Providing a national voice

NCISA is a national body with eight member state and territory Associations of Independent Schools. Together, they represent the interests of some 370,000 of Australia's children in more than 950 schools across the nation. In total, the independent schools sector employs nearly 50,000 staff with an annual turnover of more than \$3.3 billion.

As the peak body for Australia's independent school sector, NCISA has a major role to play in bringing the unique needs of the sector to the attention of the Australian Government. In doing so, it has regard for the education of all Australian children.

In order to fulfil this role, NCISA continues to liaise with the many diverse groups within the independent sector through the National Consultative Group. This forum represents schools of various educational philosophies and religious affiliations.

NCISA plays an increasingly active role in providing input from the sector to Commonwealth Government policies that affect schools. This includes frequent representations to all major political parties. To support this, NCISA undertakes research and statistical analysis.

In addition, NCISA also represents the sector in national forums that develop education policies, including all the taskforces of the Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), other non-Commonwealth forums, the Curriculum Corporation, Departmental Committees and educational research bodies.

## Visit NCISA's website

To find out more about NCISA and national issues in the independent schools sector visit NCISA's website at: [www.ncisa.edu.au](http://www.ncisa.edu.au). The site provides links to NCISA's member associations and other national groups.



# Taskforces tackle many national issues

It is a major strategic priority for NCISA to play an active role as a member of all the taskforces of the Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). During the past year NCISA has participated in the following taskforces.

## **Indigenous and Targeted Initiatives of National Significance**

This taskforce was established in July 2001 to enhance outcomes for young indigenous people and other students who are educationally disadvantaged.

## **Information Communication Technologies (ICT) in Schools**

The efficiency and transforming capacities of ICT are a focus of this taskforce which has a national role to ensure that the benefits of ICT are incorporated into teaching and learning.

## **Performance Measurement and Reporting**

This taskforce concentrates on how best to strategically report on activities and outcomes of schools and schooling systems.

## **Schools Resourcing**

Established in 2001, this taskforce provides a focus for Ministers on key factors that influence the nature of resourcing for all Australian schools.

## **Student Learning and Support Services**

This taskforce focuses on enhancing teaching practices and learning to improve student outcomes and achieve the National Goals for Schooling.

## **Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership**

Established in July 2001, the first phase of this taskforce's work includes developing a National Standards Framework, including Educational Leadership Guidelines.

## **Transition from Schools**

Known formerly as Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Schools, this taskforce has prepared an extensive implementation strategy entitled the *New Framework for Vocational Education in Schools: Policy Directions*.

**For further information about the terms of reference and work of these taskforces please refer to NCISA's website at: [www.ncisa.edu.au](http://www.ncisa.edu.au)**

# National literacy testing and reporting

Advice to independent schools about the testing and reporting requirements for literacy and numeracy testing of students in Years 3, 5 and 7 is now being coordinated nationally following the signing of an agreement between NCISA and the Commonwealth Government.

NCISA appointed a Project Officer in June 2001 and part of this role is to ensure that Associations of Independent Schools and their member schools are fully briefed about their accountability and reporting requirements.

The Project Officer also coordinates the sector's contribution to developing nationally comparable benchmark data for literacy and numeracy. This takes place through the appropriate MCEETYA taskforces and other collaborative forums.

The project is helping develop formal processes at the state and territory level for data aggregation between school sectors. A resource folder for schools will be produced about available assessment instruments, as well as school reporting obligations.

## School facilities pass the test

Facilities in most non-government schools are at least adequate and reasonably well maintained, according to a Commonwealth Government sample survey of schools in the sector.

Nonetheless, the survey indicated that many aspects of the infrastructure in independent and Catholic schools require improvement, with the most pressing need for funding to construct new basic and specialist facilities.

This includes new schools and facilities to cater for growth and movement of students, replacement and refurbishment of old stock; and construction, conversion and upgrading of specialist areas to meet new building regulations or curriculum requirements. The survey also identified a need for increased spending on maintenance.

NCISA represented independent schools through its membership of the survey working group that examined capital facilities in non-government schools.

The random sample of 436 schools used in the survey provided a snapshot of the sector's infrastructure, providing valuable information for the Government when considering future directions for its Capital Grants Program.

NCISA will continue to advocate for more funds for facilities and a more equitable share of the funds available.

## Overseas student enrolment slows

Growth in overseas student enrolment in Australia has slowed since the Asian economic crisis, with an increase of 2.4 per cent in 2000 compared to the previous year.

Overseas student numbers had risen nearly 17 per cent in 1996, prior to the crisis.

Most overseas students study in independent schools – there were close to 7,000 in this sector in 2000, which represented 54 per cent of overseas students in all school sectors.

There were large increases in visas issued in the latter half of 2001, particularly for students from China, Hong Kong, Korea and Malaysia. The increase in visa applications was partly due to reaction to the introduction of a new student visa system.

During the past year NCISA represented the sector in a number of ways in regard to overseas students. As well as being a member of the Affiliation of Education Peak Bodies, NCISA monitored the impact of the revised legislation, the *Educational Services for Overseas Students Act*, and participated in a working group assessing the new Student Visa Program.

## Protecting student privacy

Non-government schools are now required to take specific measures to protect the privacy of their students following the passing of Commonwealth Government legislation, which came into effect in December 2001.

NCISA, in conjunction with Catholic education authorities and consultants, Minter Ellison, has produced a Privacy Compliance Manual to advise non-government schools about the requirements. The manual outlines changes to existing school policies that should be considered to ensure compliance with the law.

The manual is available on NCISA's website at: [www.ncisa.edu.au](http://www.ncisa.edu.au)

# Setting directions

NCISA'S Board of Management (pictured below) comprises a Chairman, and one representative from each state or territory Association of Independent Schools. Board members are principals or governors of independent schools.

The Executive Director of NCISA reports to the Board and also draws on advice from the Executive Directors of the state and territory associations, who together form the NCISA Executive Directors' Council (EDCO).

In July 2001 Fergus Thomson retired as NCISA's Executive Director. At his retirement the Board acknowledged Mr Thomson's very significant contribution to independent schools, which spanned more than 13 years. The Board also welcomed NCISA's new Executive Director, Bill Daniels.



**Chairman**  
Mr Stephen Newton  
Principal  
Caulfield Grammar  
School, Melbourne



**AISACT**  
Mr Simon Murray  
Headmaster  
Canberra Grammar  
School



**AISNSW**  
Dr Peter Macarthur FRCS  
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International Grammar  
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**AISSA**  
Mr Ken Webb  
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Woodcroft College,  
Adelaide



**AIST**  
Dr Lyndsay Farrall  
Principal  
The Friends' School,  
Hobart



**AISNT**  
Mr Chris Tudor  
Principal  
St Philip's College,  
Alice Springs



**AISQ**  
Dr Roger Hunter  
Council Member  
St Peters Lutheran  
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**AISV**  
Mr Bill Tuckwell  
Council Member  
Plenty Valley  
Christian School,  
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