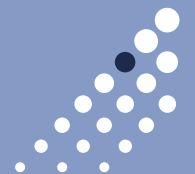




The Year in Review 2003–2004



Independent Schools
Council of Australia

ISCA's website

Our website regularly includes summary and detailed information about school funding, useful statistics on independent schooling, and a range of material such as published ISCA comment in the national media.

ISCA will track major party policies on schools released in the lead up to the federal election. You will find this material at www.isca.edu.au/election2004.

Chairman's overview

Over the past two years I have travelled extensively to meet representatives of independent schools in every state and territory. I listened to principals, teachers, administrators, bursars and school governors and, without exception, all were passionate about education and about their freedom to pursue their particular vision of education through independent schooling.

Passion is at the heart of so much that is distinctive about independent schools. No-one visiting an independent school can fail to be impressed by the enthusiasm they will find there for developing individual students – intellectually, physically, ethically and spiritually – and preparing them to contribute to Australian society.

But what we have all seen this year is a countervailing passion among some interest groups to undermine independent schools. This has manifested most noticeably in a campaign to reduce government funding to some non-government schools. While directed primarily against schools, this campaign also poses a very serious threat to the freedom of parents to shape the education of their children.

In this environment, with schools funding legislation and an election looming, the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) has focused significant efforts in communications and research activities to present the best possible case for the sector to the wider community and to government. This included a submission to the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, on schools funding legislation for the 2005-08 period and, most recently, a submission to the Senate Inquiry on schools funding.

A misinformation campaign on government funding of independent schools has been counteracted with the production of a series of **Independent Updates** that have been distributed throughout the sector and beyond.

I want to take this opportunity to assure everyone in the independent schooling community that ISCA continues unequivocally to support all independent schools. The Council acknowledges the diversity of schools in our sector and advocates for the right of parents to be free to choose them for their children. We advocate for the right of **all** school students to receive reasonable government support for their education, no matter which school they attend.

It is vital in this crucial election year that the sector stands united on these core principles. No school, or group of schools should be undermined, isolated by or lack support from others within our sector. United, our diversity is a strength and cause for celebration. Divided, our diversity becomes our point of political vulnerability. Your commitment to unity will help all your colleagues and their students in independent schools throughout Australia to thrive in these challenging times.

Chris Tudor, AM
Chairman



Sector share grows marginally in 2003

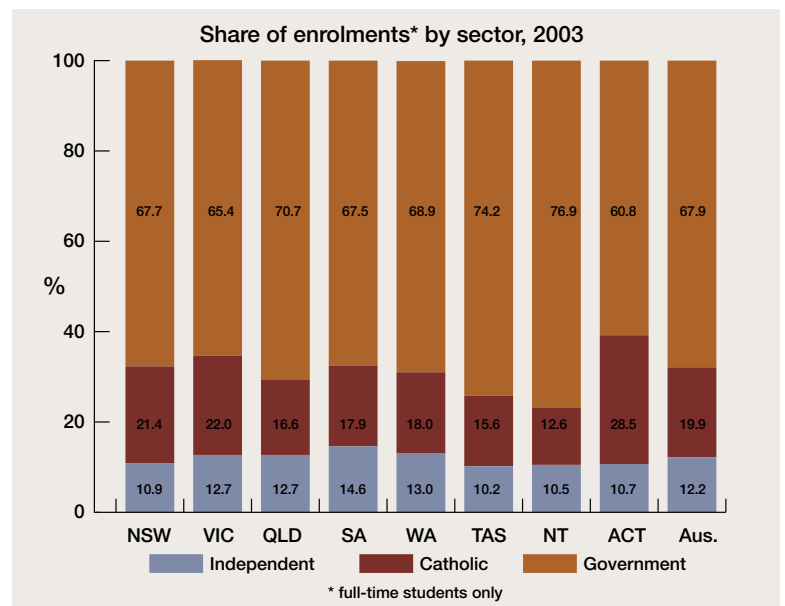
The number of Australian school students enrolled in independent schools increased slightly during the past year, so that the sector's share reached 12 per cent, up from 11.7 per cent in 2002. There were 15 new independent schools established last year.

In all Australian capital cities, except Darwin, the sector's share now ranges between 16-20 per cent of secondary school students.

According to Australian Bureau of Statistics data, the independent schools sector had 180,423 primary students and 222,974 secondary students in 2003 – making a total of about 403,400 students in 979 schools.

However, ABS data do not include independent Catholic schools – when these are included, there was a total of 456,700 students in 1,057 independent schools.

Government school students numbered 2.25 million and Catholic school students numbered 660,600 in 2003 – this represented sector shares of 68 and 20 per cent respectively.



Source: ABS Schools 2003

Parents provide most for capital: analysis

During the past year, ISCA has increased its research and analysis activities, with a focus on resourcing issues faced by independent schools. One of the results has been the release of new analysis about capital funding of independent schools.

Independent schools across Australia spent almost \$700 million on capital development in 2002 – the vast bulk of which was provided by parents, the ISCA analysis showed.

Parents and donors in independent school communities contributed more than 85 per cent of funds for the construction, development and maintenance of school buildings, grounds and equipment. Australian governments combined provided the balance.

This degree of self-reliance within the sector was highlighted for school communities in issue 5 of ISCA's **Independent Updates**, distributed to schools through Associations of Independent Schools.

Schools raised nearly all the money they needed for capital development through fees charged to parents and donations to school building funds. School communities also raised additional funds for capital development through fundraising activities.

The analysis provided a national view of capital spending in the independent schools sector, and revealed the high degree to which independent school communities are self-reliant.

Debt servicing across the sector was estimated by ISCA's analysis to be about three per cent of total annual school expenditure, with an average total school debt of \$4,213 per student.

The Australian Government provides about 10 per cent of funds received for capital development, with monies allocated strictly according to need. State and territory governments contributed about four per cent.

Biennial conferences

More than 300 delegates attended the ISCA biennial conference, with the theme *Learning and leading in a culture of innovation*. The conference was organised by the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland and held on the Gold Coast from 20-22 May 2004.

ISCA's next biennial conference will have the theme *What makes the difference*. It will be held in Hobart, from 20-22 April 2006.

Election year: national schools agenda is defined



As the 2003-04 year draws to a close, with federal parliament's consideration of schools funding legislation and an election to follow, ISCA's executive director, Bill Daniels, outlines the Australian Government's extensive reform agenda for schooling and reports on ISCA's ongoing advocacy for independent schools at this critical time.

The past year has seen a strong consolidation of the Australian Government's agenda for school education, and a greater drive by the government to use its spending power to achieve its goals for schools and encourage adoption of its policies. The government has committed record levels of expenditure to schooling – some \$31 billion for the 2005-08 funding period – and has made explicit what it expects in return.

In broad terms, the government's policy directions entail increasing the quality of schooling to achieve better student outcomes and greater national consistency in schooling. These were formally announced in November 2003 by the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, in his 10-point *National Education Framework*. They are also reflected in the schools funding legislation for 2005-08, introduced into parliament in June 2004.

Moves to national consistency include a uniform school starting age by 2010 and a common national tertiary entrance scheme. The government has also focused on multiple pathways for school leavers, investing in research, and programmes that ease the transition from school to further education, training and work.

Conditions on funding

The government also gained state and territory agreement to standardised testing and benchmarking in literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5 and 7. As a condition of funding, all school systems and schools must commit to common outcomes testing in Maths, Science, English, and Civics and Citizenship. These measures are a means of implementing educational accountability.

Teacher quality is being promoted by the government through initiatives such as the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership and the National Centre for Mathematics, Information Technology and Science Teaching. It has also expanded national literacy and numeracy programmes, and introduced targeted programmes for at-risk groups. Boys' education has been addressed through programmes such as the lighthouse schools project.

The government is also exerting indirect pressure on all schools to lift their performance, by introducing a measure of competition in schooling. There has been a deliberate empowerment of parents, including supporting parental choice in schooling through reasonable funding of non-government schools and making this funding conditional on better reporting of student results.

Significantly, payment of the government's \$700 tuition credit for students failing to meet the Year 3 national reading benchmark in 2003 goes to parents, not schools, and is contingent on state and territory education authorities reporting student ranking against the benchmark to parents.

Continued next page.



Further conditions of school funding for 2005-08 include a commitment to the *National Safe Schools Framework*, at least two hours a week of physical activity for primary and junior secondary students, and flying the Australian flag. The latter is part of the government's push on values education. The May Budget committed almost \$30 million for values and drug education during the period 2005-08, including values education forums in all schools.

These reforms represent a significant shift of power in school education to parents. However, in a year where schools funding legislation and an election coincide, their full significance has risked being overlooked as a revival of the old 'public versus private' debate focused attention on funding, and on the socio-economic status (SES) funding scheme. While the introduction of Catholic systemic schools into the funding scheme will strengthen it, some interest groups have attacked the scheme on the grounds that it has delivered funding increases to the non-government sector.

Advocating funding for all students

As a non-party political organisation and peak national body for the sector, ISCA has consulted with the major political parties, as well as presenting the sector's perspective to all parliamentarians. In doing so, we have aimed to highlight the interests of parents and students as part of our advocacy role.

Nonetheless, this role continues to be challenging. The Australian Labor Party announced this year it intends to reduce per student public funding for some schools on the basis of individual school fees and resources. ISCA continues to advocate for **all** students to be funded by governments with a basic entitlement, no matter what school they attend. This entitlement should total at least 25 per cent of the funding provided to students at government schools.

This position is made clear in ISCA's enclosed statement, *Funding principles for students in independent schools*, which is being distributed to all parliamentarians, the national media and independent schools. The statement has been accompanied by considerable ISCA comment and opinion in the national media and distribution of new publications (see **Sector Updates and Snapshot**, back page).

As we draw closer to the election, there are signs that these advocacy initiatives are proving effective. Whatever the outcome of the election, ISCA has demonstrated its commitment to work constructively with the new government on behalf of independent schools, irrespective of its political persuasion.

Bill Daniels
Executive Director



National Education Framework

1. Supporting the professional standing of teachers.
2. Attracting the best to the profession.
3. National consistency in schooling.
4. Giving more autonomy to school principals.
5. Intolerance of poorly performing schools.
6. Providing meaningful information to parents.
7. Making values a core part of schooling.
8. Creating safer schools.
9. Accelerating indigenous education outcomes.
10. Creating smooth transitions from school to career.

Key submissions focus on 2005-08 funding

Schools funding legislation for 2005-08 has been the focus of two key submissions prepared by ISCA for the independent schools sector during the year. In October 2003, a major submission was made to the Minister for Education, Science and Training on the funding arrangements. Recently, a second submission was made to the Senate Inquiry on schools funding, which is summarised below.

ISCA also represented the sector in a number of additional formal policy reviews, in particular on charities, and students with disabilities.

Senate Inquiry

A Senate Inquiry into schools funding was announced earlier this year, prior to the introduction to parliament of the schools funding legislation for 2005-08. A short timeframe was given for submissions, and at the time of writing the inquiry was still underway.

In its submission ISCA took the opportunity to reiterate a number of key funding principles. These emphasise the role of the independent schools sector in providing additional choice and diversity in schooling options, the sector's growth, and, in particular, the importance of stability in the funding partnerships between parents and governments for independent schooling. The submission calls for funding arrangements to recognise the major financial contribution of parents to the cost of education in the sector.

The submission also identifies funding pressures on parents and the Australian Government caused by state and territory government funding cuts to independent schools. Firm agreements between governments that promote a stable and secure funding environment for all schools would be supported by the sector.

Submission on charities to Board of Taxation

In July 2003 the Treasurer released an exposure draft of the Charities Bill 2003. ISCA prepared its submission after meeting with representatives from the Board of Taxation who undertook a consultation process on the draft Bill.

ISCA's submission highlighted concerns that provisions in the draft Bill could result in independent schools being moved from a position of certainty about their charitable status, under the long-developed common law definition of a charity, to a position of uncertainty.

Under the draft Bill, schools could have their charitable status determined on a case-by-case basis. Depending on interpretation, some schools may not have met the public benefit test as outlined in the draft.

The Australian Government announced in its May 2004 Budget that it would not proceed with the Charities Bill.

Students with disabilities

ISCA provided comment on four government recommendations made in response to a Senate committee report on the education of students with disabilities. These related to training teacher aides, teacher exchange programmes for 'lighthouse' special schools – including a mandatory unit on the education of atypical students in teacher training courses – and research on the changing role of special education teachers and current consultation models.

ISCA restated the sector's view that all students with disabilities should be funded in the same way, regardless of the school they attend. It also expressed disappointment that the Senate committee's report was based on a flawed analysis of resourcing in non-government schools, which the government had already acknowledged.

ISCA's submissions are available in full on our website at www.isca.edu.au.



International links strengthened

The sector's links with independent school organisations overseas and its understanding of the issues faced by independent schools internationally have been strengthened this year through a number of visits, both to and from Australia.

Visits and/or presentations to independent school conferences during 2003-04 in New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and Thailand have been made by ISCA's chairman, Chris Tudor; ISCA's executive director, Bill Daniels; and AISQ's executive director, John Roulston.

During the same period, the sector has received visits and/or briefings from the executive director of Independent Schools of New Zealand, Joy Quigley; the president of the National Association of Independent Schools in the USA, Patrick Bassett; and the chairman of the European Council of National Associations of Independent Schools, Carlos Diaz Muniz.

MCEETYA Taskforces

ISCA continues to represent the independent schools sector and contribute to the development of national education policy through its involvement in eight taskforces of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), listed below:

- **Indigenous Education, Employment, Training and Youth**
- **Information and Communication Technologies in Schools**
- **Performance Measurement and Reporting**
- **Schools Resourcing**
- **Student Learning and Support Services**
- **Targeted Initiatives of National Significance**
- **Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership**
- **Transition from School.**

Taskforce subgroups and other national committees with ISCA representatives now number more than 105 and include nominees from all Associations of Independent Schools, as well as ISCA staff. ISCA representatives on these groups are listed on ISCA's website at www.isca.edu.au

ISCA National Consultative Group

Members of the ISCA National Consultative Group, who represent most national non-government school organisations, have considered a range of issues for the sector this year such as schools funding proposals for 2005-08, students with disabilities, and changes to reporting student outcomes.

Through the National Consultative Group, ISCA meets regularly and consults with these organisations, including the Australian Parents' Council, on issues of national significance.

Dynamic year for board

The past year has been dynamic and challenging for the ISCA board, which has been cohesive in its approach to the sector's preparations for schools funding legislation and a federal election.

ISCA's representative from the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Stephen Newton, retired from his position in June 2004 after many years service, having commenced as a board member in 1995. He was chairman from 1999-02. Mr Peter Kempen, Chairman of Ivanhoe Grammar School, replaces Mr Newton on the board as Victoria's representative.

The board comprises the chairman and eight representatives, one from each state and territory Association of Independent Schools. Mr Chris Tudor will continue as ISCA's chairman in the coming year.



Chairman

Mr Chris Tudor, AM
Headmaster
St Philip's College,
Alice Springs



AISACT

Mr Simon Murray
Headmaster
Canberra Grammar
School



AISNSW

Dr Peter Macarthur
Board Member
International
Grammar School,
Sydney



AISNT

Mr Stephen Kinsella
Principal
Kormilda College,
Darwin



AISQ

Dr Roger Hunter
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Mr Mark Porter
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AIST

Mr Tim Waley
Principal
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Hobart



AISV

Mr Stephen Newton
Principal
Caulfield Grammar
School, Melbourne



AISWA

Dr Ken Evans
Board Member
John Septimus Roe
Anglican Community
School, Perth

Sector Updates and Snapshot

Important information for independent school communities, especially parents, and others interested in the sector has been published by ISCA this year.

A new publication series, titled **Independent Update**, has been published to provide independent school communities with information on key issues for schools from a national perspective. They are designed as single page briefs in preparation for this year's schools funding legislation and the federal election. Issues printed to date cover:

Issue 1: Australian Government funding for schools

Issue 2: How schools are funded

Issue 3: Public funding: our principles

Issue 4: Choice and diversity need support

Issue 5: Capital funding for our schools

Further issues will cover accountability, and the major federal party policies for independent schools. Schools are strongly encouraged to circulate the Updates.

Also, a handy pocket-sized publication, ISCA's **Snapshot**, provides vital facts and statistics about the sector in an easy-to-read format. The **Independent Updates** and **Snapshot** are available through Associations of Independent Schools, or on ISCA's website at www.isca.edu.au/iscapublications



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