



The Year in Review 2004–2005



Independent Schools
Council of Australia



ISCA's website

ISCA's website www.isca.edu.au contains information about independent schooling from a national perspective. This includes material about funding of independent schools, statistics, recent submissions on schooling and related issues, as well as ISCA's media releases, publications and key presentations and speeches.

Visitors to ISCA's website are also assisted with a wide range of links to associated websites.

Chairman's overview

I feel fortunate indeed to be taking on the role of chairman of ISCA in an era of continuing vitality, growth and opportunities for independent schools throughout Australia.

As *The Year in Review* reports, significant growth in our sector continues across a range of school affiliations, sizes and locations. Growth is occurring in some smaller, low-fee schools, as well as in enrolments in medium and larger-sized schools with higher fee levels.

This positive situation for independent schools is testament to the importance of school choice and diversity. In today's society parents and students have become much more aware that education varies significantly from school to school, that quality of teaching is essential, and that students need an education that will prepare them for life in a challenging and constantly changing world.

No doubt, a further key ingredient to the sector's growth in recent years has been Australia's buoyant economy in which increasing numbers of parents have the certainty and the willingness to take on the extra financial commitment of school fees.

I took on the role of ISCA chairman in April 2005, grateful for the stewardship of our former chairman, Chris Tudor. Mr Tudor successfully led the sector through the pressures of a divisive *public versus private* pre-election campaign waged by groups hostile to independent schools, particularly to many of the large schools in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

The return of the Coalition government, strengthened further with a majority in the Senate, means that the sector can look forward to a stable environment continuing over the next three years at least in terms of federal funding of its schools.

ISCA is now focusing on a number of issues, including our immediate challenge of responding to the demands of regulation of schools by the federal and state governments. We will also look beyond the immediate issues to the longer-term strategic directions of the sector.

I am committed to ensuring that ISCA, in its role as the national peak body, continues to represent all school groups within the sector while continuing to acknowledge the sector's diversity of views and interests. ISCA will also continue to define itself as a non-aligned organisation, committed to dialogue with all political parties and to providing the best possible quality of schooling for our students.

Dr Ken Evans
Chairman

Enrolment growth varies

For many years, the independent schools sector has registered significant student enrolment growth. In 2004 the sector's rate of growth slowed. However, over the period 1996-2004, the sector's average annual enrolment growth was a healthy 3.4 per cent.

This year ISCA undertook research to more closely identify where growth was occurring within the sector over this period.

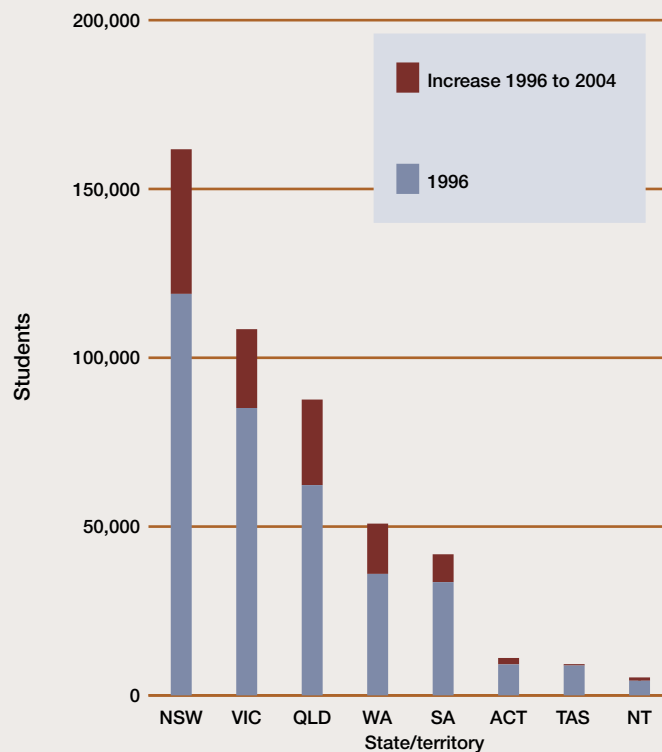
The research showed that enrolment growth has continued in all states and territories, with independent schools in Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales experiencing the highest rates of enrolment growth, at 4.2, 4.1 and 3.5 per cent average annual growth respectively.

Smaller schools experiencing largest growth

ISCA research shows that smaller independent schools with fewer than 250 students have been leading the sector's growth in the past nine years. The annual average growth rate for these schools over this period was 7.9 per cent, resulting in this group of schools contributing 31 per cent of the sector's total enrolment growth.

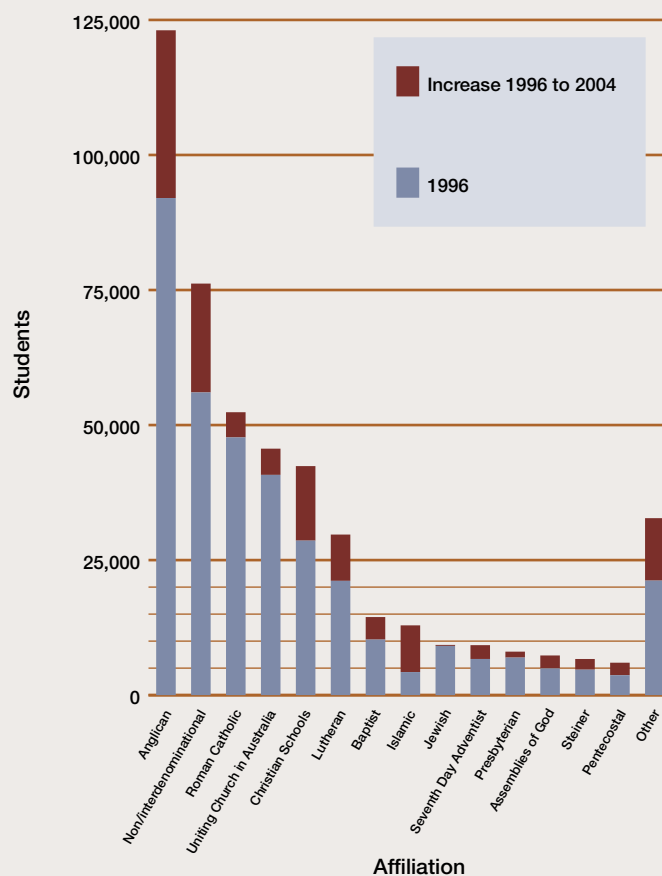
In contrast, the sector's 117 larger schools that each enrolls more than 1,000 students have experienced an annual average growth of 1.5 per cent. Nonetheless, due to their large student numbers, these schools contributed a substantial proportion – 16 per cent – to the sector's total growth.

Growth by state/territory: 1996-2004
Independent school student enrolments



Source: DEST Non-government school census, 2004

Growth by affiliation: 1996-2004
Independent school student enrolments



* Other includes: Special schools, international schools, Indigenous schools, community schools, Greek Orthodox, Brethren, Montessori, other Catholic, other Orthodox, Society of Friends, Churches of Christ, Ananda Marga, Scientology, Hare Krishna.

Source: DEST Non-government school census, 2004

Support for capital needs

The independent schools sector is to receive an additional \$100 million as its share of a \$1 billion Australian Government commitment to small capital projects in schools for 2005-08.

These funds are in addition to the \$1.5 billion that the Australian Government will provide for major capital projects during 2005-08. The independent schools sector allocation is in the order of \$155 million and includes a share of \$17 million in specific additional funds for projects in independent and Catholic schools in the Northern Territory.

Under the *Investing in Our Schools Programme*, about \$33 million will be provided for small projects up to \$75,000 in value. The remaining funds will enable more high priority capital projects to be supported.

ISCA has welcomed these additional funds, noting they demonstrate the government's recognition of significant capital needs in all school sectors.

The Australian Government has also announced a review of the Block Grant Authorities which administer capital funding on behalf of non-government schools. ISCA has been invited to participate in the review.

A year of contrasts

During the past year the political environment for independent schools at a national level has been through several distinct phases. Potential scenarios for the sector look very different in mid-2005 than they did a year ago. ISCA's executive director, Bill Daniels, reports on the important features of a year full of contrasts.



Federal election 2004

When the October federal election was called late last August, it was both a relief and a serious concern for the independent schools sector. It was a relief, because the uncertainty about funding commitments from the federal government would be resolved by the election result. But it was also a serious concern, because at that stage, little had been announced by the federal Opposition about its proposed schooling policies.

The Coalition government's policy directions on schooling had been spelt out in November 2003 by the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Dr Brendan Nelson, in the *National Education Framework*. These were later encapsulated in the government's schools funding legislation for 2005-08, introduced into parliament in June 2004. Through the legislation, the Coalition government identified specific conditions on its funding for all schools, including a greater focus on reporting of student outcomes and school performance.

Hence, independent schools and their communities were able to clearly see the direction a fourth term Coalition government would take in relation to all schools. In particular, the independent schools sector welcomed the Coalition's promise of continuity of funding to its schools and the inclusion of Catholic systemic schools into the Socio-Economic Status (SES) funding system for the first time.

It was mid-September when the Opposition announced the details of its schools policy. Unfortunately, the ALP had developed this policy with virtually no consultation with ISCA and its eight member state and territory Associations of Independent Schools.

ISCA's challenge was then to analyse and predict the policy's effects on independent schools, and issue a considered response to the ALP and ISCA's stakeholders within the very limited time that remained before the election.

In an open letter to Shadow Minister for Education, Jenny Macklin, ISCA posed 64 questions seeking to clarify the proposed policy. Among ISCA's most serious concerns was the proposal to effectively create 'hit lists' of independent schools that would be targeted for reduced support. At least 40 per cent of students in independent schools would lose public funding if these policies were introduced.

At the time, in a climate where it was not easy to confidently predict the election outcome there were real fears for the future public funding of many independent schools, should the ALP have won government and implemented its schools policy.

Post-election schools legislation

The federal election result saw the Coalition government returned to office. When parliament resumed, the Minister for Education, Science and Training re-introduced the government's quadrennial funding legislation, the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004*. This was passed in December 2004. With it, substantial funding commitments have been made to all schools, including independent schools, for the period 2005-08. The most important of these for independent schools are highlighted opposite.

The sector appreciates the stable funding support of its students by the Australian Government.

Accountability and reporting to government

In the latter part of the 2004-05 year, the Australian Government released its enhanced performance framework for schools for 2005-08, set out in regulations that underline the government's determination that schools funding will be tied to an increased range of conditions. This means substantial increases in reporting and accountability activities for all schools.

ISCA has broadly endorsed the government's quality schooling initiatives. After all, this is an area in which independent schools have long been leaders, providing many examples of best-practice across the schools sector. In this regard, the sector is relatively well placed to accommodate the new accountability and reporting requirements, while still retaining strong school autonomy in areas that are traditionally important to independent schools.

However, ISCA believes accountability reporting to governments should be designed to minimise administrative burdens on schools. There are significant concerns within the sector that particular requirements may cause independent schools increases in their administrative costs. Non-systemic schools and small school systems that do not enjoy the administrative resource benefits of being part of larger systems are likely to be particularly vulnerable to overload.

Given the large scale and range of the government's new requirements, they will take time to introduce across all school sectors. It will be important for the independent schools sector to continue to consult closely with government prior to the introduction of measures, to trial new procedures, to feedback problems as they arise, and negotiate solutions.



Australian Government commitments 2005-08

- Independent schools to receive a total of \$7.8 billion in general recurrent funding – a 27 per cent increase over four years excluding increases due to enrolment growth.
- The policy of funding maintenance is continuing and a funding guarantee was introduced to ensure that no school had its funding reduced when Socio-Economic Status (SES) scores were updated early in 2005 using the latest Census results.
- Independent schools to receive in the order of \$255 million for capital over the next four years. This amount includes \$155 million under the existing *Capital Grants Programme* and \$100 million under the new *Investing in our Schools Programme* (IOSP).
- Approximately \$33 million of the sector's IOSP funding will be earmarked for small projects of up to \$75,000 in value.
- Cost supplementation for general recurrent grants on the basis of the AGSRC index is to continue.
- Catholic school systems are integrated into the SES system from 2005. Catholic systemic schools will receive an additional \$368 million over the quadriennium, with funding maintenance arrangements to apply.



Teacher training needs school expertise

Widespread debate in the Australian community continues about how best to improve the quality of teaching in schools. ISCA has participated in discussion on this issue through its submission to the federal Inquiry into Teacher Education.

The inquiry is being undertaken by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training. The key points in ISCA's submission were:

- the importance of using school-based research and school expertise (including mentors) in teacher training as part of improving contact between teacher education faculties and schools, teaching within education faculties, and in-school teacher trainee placements
- priority being placed on assessing a trainee's outcomes rather than in-puts
- the importance of flexibility in assessing teaching candidates so that schools could choose to recruit teachers with a wider range of backgrounds
- the need to improve teacher education for vocational education and training (VET), and to recruit trainees for VET teaching with experience in other areas of the workforce
- the need for flexible, ongoing professional development for teachers
- the value of basing teacher training courses on phases of development such as early childhood and middle school, rather than primary and secondary
- the welcoming of the Australian Government's decision to establish the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, which would identify models for a national accreditation system for pre-service teacher education programmes.

Securing child protection

In the wake of greater awareness of child abuse, stronger and clearer measures to protect children in various aspects of daily life are being developed.

At a national level, ISCA has been keen to ensure independent schools are enabled to adequately and appropriately check the backgrounds of staff employed. The sector employs more than 39,000 teachers.

In November 2004, ISCA submitted its response to an Australian Government consultation paper that canvassed model legislation regarding criminal record checks on those seeking work with children in educational settings.

ISCA endorsed the basic proposition that relevant information about individuals should be made available to authorities across Australia. It also endorsed the development of consistent legislation throughout Australia at the state/territory level.



Stability sought for Indigenous schools

Indigenous students were the focus of discussions at ISCA's 2004 collegial seminar involving its board members and executive directors from Associations of Independent Schools. The seminar was held in Darwin and included presentations from key people involved with Indigenous education in the Northern Territory and across Australia.

Progress is being made in talks between ISCA and the Australian Government about the need to provide greater funding stability for independent schools with a significant number of Indigenous students.

This follows the government's recent reassessment of independent sector Socio-Economic Status (SES) scores which resulted in a number of small and Indigenous community schools, mostly in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, experiencing significant changes in their assessed SES scores. Changes in the composition of ABS census data collected have proven to have a significant impact on the measurement of the SES scores of some small schools, creating funding instability.

In 2004 there were 5,567 Indigenous students enrolled in independent schools.



Schools gather student details

The first step towards meeting new national requirements aimed at linking student performance results with family background details has been taken positively by the independent schools sector this year.

The national initiative involves all schools – independent, Catholic and government – as a condition of their funding from the Australian Government. A set of questions has been developed on family and student background to be asked of all Australian parents at the time of student enrolment.

These details will be linked to student results in national testing for literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 and the sample groups of students from Years 6 and 10 assessed every three years in science, information and communication technology and civics and citizenship. It is hoped the linking of these details, with nationally consistent definitions applied to them for the first time, will aid research to better identify the factors which influence student achievement.

The federal Department of Education, Science and Training has provided funding to assist independent schools in seeking the additional information needed in 2005. By 2006 it is expected that schools will be able to incorporate the appropriate questions into their normal information gathering processes.

Planning for the implementation process began between ISCA and Associations of Independent Schools in November 2004 and was followed by workshops for schools throughout Australia.

Schools have also been supported with the development of data entry programmes, software solutions to coding programmes and website information materials for schools and AISs.

ISCA will monitor progress on the matching of student testing results to family background data, and will discuss this within the sector and with the Australian Government.

Changes follow a rewarding year

It was a focused and rewarding year for the ISCA board during the period 2004-05.

The board's chairman, Chris Tudor, completed his third and final year in the role. Mr Tudor remains a board member for AISNT, while Stephen Kinsella has resigned from the board, having undertaken the role for AISNT during Mr Tudor's term as ISCA chairman.

Dr Ken Evans, who has been the AISWA board member since 2002, was welcomed as ISCA's new chairman in April 2005. Heather Yeates, a board member of Guildford Grammar School, now represents AISWA.

Simon Murray stepped down from the board in April 2005 after five years of valued service. Paul Browning now represents AISACT.



Chairman

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



AISACT

Mr Paul Browning
Principal
Burgman Anglican
School, Canberra



AISNSW

Dr Peter Macarthur
Board Member
International
Grammar School,
Sydney



AISNT

Chairman until April 2005
Mr Chris Tudor, AM
Headmaster
St Philip's College,
Alice Springs



AISQ

Dr Roger Hunter
Council Member
St Peters Lutheran
College, Brisbane



AISSA

Mr Mark Porter
Headmaster
Woodcroft College,
Adelaide



AIST

Mr Tim Waley
Principal
Fahan School,
Hobart



AISV

Mr Peter Kempen
Chairman
Ivanhoe Grammar
School, Melbourne



AISWA

Ms Heather Yeates
Board Member
Guilford Grammar
School, Perth

Conference with a difference!

Three keynote speakers will each tackle the theme *What makes the Difference* from the perspective of their individual expertise at ISCA's biennial conference to be held in Hobart from 20-22 April 2006.

The three keynote speakers are Professor Richard P. Chait, Professor of Higher Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education; Ian Schubach of Pride Power in South Africa, and Bishop John Harrower, Anglican Bishop of Hobart. Together, they will range across the themes of school governance and management, the care of students and their preparation for the future.

Dr Brendan Nelson, Minister for Education, Science and Training will also address delegates.

Those interested in registering their interest in the conference can do so at www.isca.edu.au

Networks overseas

The unique qualities of independent schooling in Australia and throughout the world will be supported through new and growing international links being forged between ISCA and similar organisations overseas.

Initially, increased information sharing and contact will be the direct benefit for Australia's independent schools sector, following a series of meetings between ISCA representatives and like overseas organisations in February 2005.

ISCA's then chairman, Chris Tudor, and executive director, Bill Daniels, met with representatives of the independent schools sector in the USA – attending the National Association of Independent Schools annual conference, as well as sector representatives from the UK and Europe, and OECD education directorate officials.



More Snapshots for schools

Since its first issue in May 2004, ISCA's *Snapshot* publication has received such positive feedback that ISCA now produces this pocket guide of key sector statistics and funding information annually.

Its distribution has been extended to include all independent schools. More than 70,000 copies of the second issue of *Snapshot*, covering the most recently available national figures regarding independent schools, were distributed through Associations of Independent Schools (AISs) in May 2005.

ISCA recommends *Snapshot* as an easy-to-read document for all school board members, executive staff and school heads of departments, as well as a range of important ISCA and AIS contacts within and beyond the education sector.

The aim of *Snapshot* is to provide an annual source of reliable facts and statistics about independent schools and their funding arrangements of use to school communities and other interested parties.

Copies of *Snapshot* are available directly from all AISs and ISCA. The publication is also available to download and print in a single A4-page format from ISCA's website at www.isca.edu.au

Jan Churcher

The ISCA board and its staff were deeply saddened by the tragic death of their colleague, Jan Churcher, in April 2005. Jan, who had worked for the organisation since 1992, was killed in a gliding accident while on leave in Queensland.



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