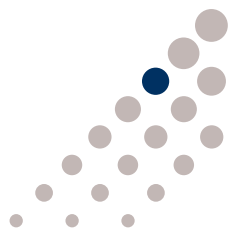




The Year in Review 2005 - 2006



Independent Schools
Council of Australia

Chairman's overview



The independent schools sector has continued to strengthen its position during the past year as an increasingly significant provider of high quality education for young Australians.

This development is reflected in the most recent national figures which show an increase of more than 12,000 student enrolments in 2005 compared with 2004.

The sector now educates 12.8 per cent of all Australian school students – in the junior secondary years this proportion rises to 15.9 per cent, while in senior secondary it has now reached 18.1 per cent.

However, continued enrolment growth is not cause for complacency about the sector's future. The reality is that all schools are about to experience the effects of Australia's declining birth-rate. Projections by the Australian Bureau of Statistics are that the school population as a whole will start to decline by 2008.

So while the independent schools sector's growth is expected to continue, its rate of growth has already started to slow.

The challenge of our declining birth-rate for governments will be to develop education policies that assist all schools to maintain quality schooling for fewer individuals in the face of increasing community expectations of the schooling system and higher costs of provision.

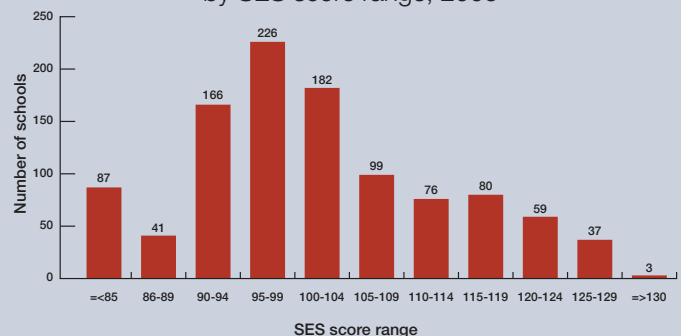
It is becoming more important than ever for education policies to be founded on the following concepts:

- **individual choice of schooling**
- **diversity of schooling options**
- **committed partnerships between schools, parents and governments.**

Real choice of schooling only becomes a reality for families when government funding is sufficient to enable those from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds to attend independent schools. Looking at the graph, **Distribution of independent schools by SES score range, 2005** (above right), it is pleasing to see that this sector is serving

a complete range of families in terms of socio-economic status (SES), with the largest groups of independent schools assessed as having SES scores in the average range.

Distribution of independent schools by SES score range, 2005



Families in the sector already contribute greatly to meeting the total national cost of schooling through paying school fees, over and above their taxation obligations. But the private purse has limits – all these families need a reasonable level of government funding to protect and support their choice of schooling.

ISCA has developed a set of principles for funding of students in independent schools, as well as a list of criteria against which government funding models can be assessed. A summary of these is included opposite. These are discussed in more detail in our publication, *Independent Schooling in Australia 2006-08*.

ISCA's priority is to continue advocating for government funding of all students in independent schools, based on these principles and criteria.

Dr Ken Evans
Chairman



Treasurer commends new issue of publication

The 2006-08 issue of ISCA's publication, *Independent Schooling in Australia*, was launched in June 2006 by the federal Treasurer, the Hon. Peter Costello, MP, at Parliament House in Canberra.

The 80-page publication contains detailed information and discussion about current topics of interest related to independent schools, including an overview of the sector, statistical information, key contact details, and a state/territory-based list of all registered independent schools.

In launching the publication, Mr Costello said the Australian Government welcomed the willingness of parents to invest in the education of their children.

"I would say to the independent sector, you are providing a very, very valuable resource. The wealth of this country in future years will turn on the skills of its population; our human capital will be more important than our natural resources. And you as educators are engaged in creating those skills; nurturing the capital; building the future of Australia," he said.

Mr Costello also commended the publication for providing valuable information about the sector.

Independent Schooling in Australia 2006-08 has been distributed to all independent schools via Associations of Independent Schools (AISs), and to a wide range of organisations and individuals with particular interests in the sector.

It can be viewed on ISCA's website at: www.isca.edu.au. Go to **ISCA Publications**. Copies are free of charge and can be requested from your relevant AIS or from ISCA.

Funding principles for our students

ISCA advocates:

- **individual choice of schooling**
- **diversity of schooling options**
- **committed partnerships between schools, parents and governments.**

Government funding policies need to provide:

- **basic entitlement for all students**
- **additional needs-based support**
- **stability for families and schools**
- **annual indexation.**

Public funding systems must enable:

- **equity**
- **incentive**
- **flexibility**
- **transparency**
- **simplicity**
- **predictability.**



ISCA's website

ISCA has recently published on its website www.isca.edu.au a collection of parent interviews from across Australia that explores the reasons for their individual choices of school.

The site also provides a wide range of information related to the sector, including advice for independent schools about Australian Government accountability requirements, as well as articles and opinion pieces published by ISCA.

Stable period affected by increasing regulation



At a national level the independent schools sector has experienced a relatively stable year, at least in terms of funding. Schools are now at the half-way point of Australian Government funding for the period 2005-08. There have also been encouraging signs of improvements ahead for the funding of students with disabilities.

However, the year has not been without challenges for the sector, as ISCA's executive director, Bill Daniels, reports.

Students with disabilities

After years of various studies, reports, submissions and enquiries into the inequitable state of funding arrangements for students with disabilities in the independent schools sector, in May this year there appeared to be a breakthrough on the horizon.

The Australian Government announced in its Budget that it had committed \$5.8 million over two years to look at ways of improving the learning outcomes of students with disabilities through enabling greater portability of their funding and providing more support for parental school choice. The first stage – to investigate flexible funding arrangements for students with disabilities – will commence in 2006.

Representations on behalf of students with disabilities have been one of ISCA's top priorities for some years, hence it has welcomed this innovative move by the government.

The independent schools sector has already provided a substantial body of information to government on students with disabilities, including case studies. It is apparent that the sector needs to press for the new funding allocation to be put to good use. In the light of the existing body of knowledge, ISCA believes the new Budget allocation would be most effectively used by developing and applying policies and programmes that will have a lasting impact on these students.

Ministerial involvement

During 2005-06, ISCA continued its representations on behalf of the sector to the Minister for Education, Science and Training. ISCA enjoyed a constructive relationship with Dr Brendon Nelson during his four years in the portfolio, and continued its communications with the new minister, the Hon. Julie Bishop, MP, who was appointed to the role early in 2006.

Prime Minister John Howard has taken many opportunities to support independent schooling. In an address to Victoria's Beaconhills College in October 2005, Mr Howard said, "Today of course is an opportunity for me again to pay tribute to the hundreds of independent schools around Australia. We have a wonderfully diverse education system in this country. We have government schools, we have independent schools of different kinds and the important thing in all of it is that Australian parents should retain the right to choose the type of education they want for their sons and daughters."

Federal Treasurer, the Hon. Peter Costello, MP, also voiced the Australian Government's continuing support of the sector when he launched the second edition of ISCA's publication, *Independent Schooling in Australia 2006-08*, in June at Parliament House on behalf of Minister Bishop (see **Treasurer commends new issue of publication**).

Development of ALP schools policy

Further cause for optimism, albeit cautious, was the Opposition leader's announcement earlier this year that the Australian Labor Party (ALP) would drop its funding 'hit list' of independent schools, announced in the lead-up to the 2004 election.

While the ALP has yet to announce the all-important detail of changes to its schools policy, Mr Beazley's announcement was a welcome indication that the sector could expect improved communication and policy dialogue with the ALP in the coming year.

2006-07 will be a period of policy development and refinement for the major parties as the next federal election and the 2009-12 schools funding period draw closer. Hence ISCA has already taken the opportunity to present the sector's funding principles to both the Australian Government and the ALP.

These principles are summarised by ISCA's chairman, Dr Ken Evans, with his overview.

Regulation of schools

Administrative pressures on schools arising from an ever-growing list of detailed reporting required as a condition of Australian Government funding (see below, **Current Australian Government reporting requirements**) has been of considerable concern. These regulations follow a general trend of greater regulation at both state/territory and federal levels of government over some years.

The Australian Government's new regulatory framework was introduced with the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004*, but details about how the regulations were to be applied were developed later during 2005-06.

Overall, independent schools have responded in a cooperative way to the new regulations. However, it is fair to say that this increase in government scrutiny and its associated administrative burdens is poorly targeted given that the government's major drive is to improve reporting to parents and school accountability within the government schools sector. Independent schools are already highly accountable to their parents and communities.

ISCA has represented the sector's interests during development of the fine print of the regulations, with the aim of minimising their impact on schools. While this approach has led to better understanding within government of the particular circumstances of independent schools, there is often a mistaken assumption that ISCA, Associations of Independent Schools (AISs), and school associations will act in place of school systems. This is not compatible with the philosophy of autonomy and independence within the sector, nor is it feasible in terms of the roles and resources of these organisations.

At the same time ISCA has played a central role in conveying information to schools, through AISs, about the new requirements and assisting with processes to fulfil them.

Given the significant impact of these processes on schools – especially the sector's smaller, non-systemic schools – ISCA would like to see the government move to restore a healthier balance between its regulatory requirements and the independence of schools to self-regulate.



Current Australian Government reporting requirements

In order to receive Australian Government funding, in 2006 all schools are required to:

- participate in common national literacy and numeracy testing of students in Years 3, 5, and 7 (Year 9 students to be included from 2008)
- achieve performance targets in relation to national benchmarks
- participate in wide-ranging sample assessment programmes
- provide 'plain English' student reports to parents, within a required framework
- make individual school performance measures publicly available
- implement the National Safe Schools Framework and provide annual reports
- comply with a large number of specific national reform initiatives.

In addition, independent schools are required to:

- demonstrate that monies for each funding programme have been expended appropriately
- provide extensive data for the National Report on Schooling in Australia, and the annual Financial Questionnaire for Non-Government Schools.

Representation of the sector

- The issue of increasing regulation of schools was taken up by ISCA with the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Reducing the Regulatory Burden on Business in December 2005.

In its submission, ISCA identified the existing high number of and wide-ranging accountabilities that already apply to independent schools and, in the light of these, challenged the need for governments to continue increasing regulation of schools. ISCA also highlighted:

1. duplication and inconsistency between regulatory regimes at federal and state/territory levels
2. over-regulation in some areas
3. the redundancy of the Financial Questionnaire for Non-Government Schools following changes to assessment methods for school communities
4. the cost of regulation falling on parents of students at independent schools.

In its report, released early in 2006, the taskforce acknowledged ISCA's concerns and made three specific recommendations addressing these. At the time of writing, the Australian Government had yet to respond.

- Teaching students about civics and citizenship varies in each school within the independent schools sector, and is often most effectively taught through practical application that encourages students to be active and informed citizens.

This was one of the key representations made by ISCA in June 2006 to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters Inquiry into Civics and Electoral Education. ISCA's submission highlighted the difficulty in making general comment about the teaching of civics and citizenship in the sector due to the diversity of approaches within schools.

- ISCA's key message to the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy in July 2005 was that governments should not be prescriptive about the methods used in schools for teaching literacy because individual student needs demand a comprehensive range of approaches and assessments.



Reducing copyright costs

Minimising the costs and impact of copyright laws on schools has become a significant issue and is being addressed by ISCA through its membership of the MCEETYA Copyright Advisory Group.

Schools are permitted to copy and communicate certain materials for educational purposes, as long as they pay licence fees to the relevant copyright owners.

However, between 1998-2004 school costs for copyright rose more than 250 per cent. In 2004-05 schools paid \$39 million of the total licensing revenue of \$86 million received by the Copyright Agency Ltd (CAL). In addition, schools paid \$10 million in 2004 to the agency, Screenrights, for copying and communicating television and radio broadcasts.

Photocopying and electronic use, such as printing from the Internet or scanning, are costly activities for schools. To assist them, a smart copying programme has been developed. Part of this programme is an agreement between all education authorities to negotiate to grant free licences to each other for their own material.

Federal Attorney-General Phillip Ruddock has also intervened following a claim made by CAL that reading from and browsing on the Internet was remunerable. As a consequence, legislation will be amended to disallow the claim.



Strategic approach for overseas students

Competitive pressures and a drop in the number of overseas students studying in Australian schools have prompted the development of a schools sector strategy to boost overseas student numbers.

ISCA has been actively involved in the development of the schools sector strategy and has worked closely with the international division of the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), Australian Education International, which is responsible for its development. The new strategy will focus on helping schools attract students to study in Australia, but will also look at the changing nature of international education globally and how Australian schools can be supported to engage students in many ways, not just in on-shore provision.

ISCA represents independent schools on national policy matters related to international education. As such it has made a number of written submissions during the past year in regard to the evaluation of the *ESOS Act (Educational Services for Overseas Students)*. Much of this work relates to the revision of the national code of practice for providers of international education.

Funding from DEST has been made available for ISCA and Associations of Independent Schools to produce a handbook for independent schools to assist them in meeting the revised code.

In 2005 more than 9,600 overseas students were enrolled in independent schools, a 3.2 per cent decrease over the previous year. Ninety per cent of overseas students in independent schools are in the secondary years, with senior secondary accounting for two thirds of these enrolments.

Board farewells longest-serving member

The ISCA board's longest-serving member, Dr Peter Macarthur, retired in mid-2006 after many years of commitment to representing independent schools at both state and national levels.

A board member of the International Grammar School, Sydney, Dr Macarthur played a significant part in supporting the role of the national peak body in representing independent schools, and in advocating the benefits of all states and territories being equal partners in the organisation.

Dr Macarthur joined the board of AISNSW in 1982, and later became a delegate to the national board. He was chairman of NCISA (now ISCA) from 1989-1992. Mr John Ralston, chairman of AISNSW, now represents AISNSW on the ISCA board.

Ms Susan Just, principal of Canberra Girls' Grammar School, joined the board in April 2006 to represent AISACT. She replaced Paul Browning, principal of Burgmann Anglican School.



Chairman

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



AISACT

Ms Susan Just
Principal
Canberra Girls' Grammar
School, Canberra



AISNSW

Dr Peter Macarthur
Board Member
International Grammar
School, Sydney



AISNT

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



ISQ

Dr Roger Hunter
Council Member
St Peter's Lutheran
College, Brisbane



AISSA

Mr Mark Porter
Headmaster
Woodcroft College,
Adelaide



AIST

Mr Tim Waley
Principal
Fahan School,
Hobart



AISV

Mr Peter Kempen
Board Member
Ivanhoe Grammar
School, Melbourne



AISWA

Ms Heather Yeates
Board Member
Guildford Grammar
School, Perth

Global connections

Further initiatives have been taken by ISCA during the year to consolidate the sector's contacts with like overseas organisations, and to ensure the interchange of ideas and information at significant industry conferences.

ISCA assistant executive director, Kathryn Edwards, was seconded to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) staff in London for three months in 2005 where she attended a number of conferences and visited independent school organisations throughout the United Kingdom. ISCA has extended an invitation to ISC to take up a reciprocal placement in Australia.

In 2005 ISCA representatives also attended the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) conference in Boston, the Independent Schools New Zealand (ISNZ) conference, and presented a paper entitled 'Freedom of Private Schools and Public Funding of Educational Expenditures' at the Pan Pacific Association of Private Education conference in Tokyo.

Representatives from NAIS, ISNZ and the Independent Schools of Southern Africa attended ISCA's 2006 biennial conference in Hobart.

ISCA conferences

About 300 national and international delegates attended ISCA's 2006 biennial conference in Hobart in April, which focused on the theme *What makes the difference*. Keynote speaker, Professor Richard P. Chait from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, gave a well-received presentation on the topic of 'Governance as Leadership in Principle'.

Principals, school board members and senior staff from all independent schools in Australia, as well as international delegates, are invited to attend the next ISCA biennial conference, to be held in Canberra in 2008.

The conference, which is being hosted by the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT Inc (AISACT), will be held from 19-21 April and will have the theme *Balancing Independence and Accountability*.



Vital schooling statistics

Are you interested in receiving the vital statistics about Australia's independent schools sector in an easy to read format?

The 2006 issue of ISCA's annual mini publication, *Snapshot*, is available free of charge to anyone interested in independent schooling facts and figures. To obtain a copy, contact the Association of Independent Schools in your state or territory or ISCA. *Snapshot* is also available on ISCA's website at: www.isca.edu.au in a single-A4 page format for ease of printing. Go to **ISCA Publications**.



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