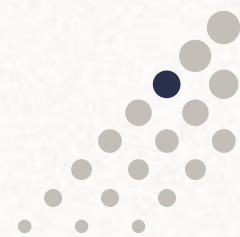


The Year in Review 2006-07



Chairman's overview



The Australian Government has continued to expand and redefine its role in Australian school education. ISCA is now expected to represent a sector view on issues such as reporting to parents and rewarding teachers, which in the independent sector are very much the domain of individual schools.

It has been important to remind governments of the value of diversity in schooling and the need for autonomy so that our schools can continue to make the best possible contribution to the quality of Australian school education.

A further challenge has been the ongoing expansion and restructure of the federal Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) as it responds to and implements the Government's agenda.

There has also been a profound shift in the development of national school education policy. This is no longer the sole preserve of the education community as national and state government central agencies increasingly take an interest in educational outcomes.

These movements, and the tensions in Commonwealth-state relations, have had a significant impact on ISCA's work as it seeks to influence national policy-making in school education.

ISCA's commitment to using sound data about schools in its submissions and publications such as Snapshot 2007 and the Independent Updates proved a solid foundation for its advocacy initiatives.

ISCA met several times with the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Julie Bishop, and welcomes the Government's move to address issues of importance to the sector, including additional funding for indigenous education, rural and remote schools and schools that serve students with high-level needs.

ISCA also represented the sector's position on funding to key Labor MPs, Senators and party officials. The federal ALP has affirmed its commitment to parental choice in schooling and dropped its 'hit list' of funding cuts to independent schools. This major shift in policy is very welcome.

There is now a significant degree of concurrence in the views of the Coalition parties and the ALP on school education issues. No matter who wins government in the coming federal election, the autonomy of independent schools will remain a live issue, and ISCA's role as peak national body will be integral to the strength of the sector.

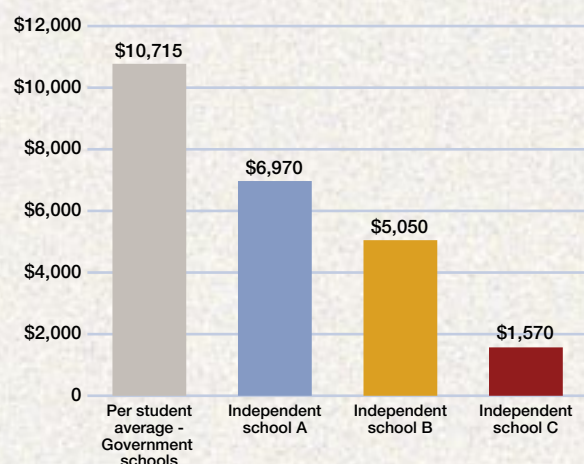
Dr Ken Evans
ISCA Chairman

Government funding

Students in independent schools are eligible for different levels of public support. Most of the available public funding comes from the Australian Government and is allocated according to relative need, which is determined by the socio-economic status (SES) of the school a student attends. Students in independent schools receive considerably less government support for their education than students in government schools.

ISCA welcomed two Australian Government initiatives to address educational disadvantage not recognised by the SES model. Students attending schools for students with social, emotional or behavioural difficulties or who are at risk now attract the maximum SES grant. Students attending schools in rural, regional and remote areas now receive a loading on their SES grants to help meet the higher cost of education in these areas.

Examples of total government funding for students in independent schools



Representing sector interests

The independent schools sector, with some half a million students, is the fourth largest jurisdiction in Australian schooling after NSW and Victorian government systems and Catholic systemic schools. Size alone makes it imperative that full account be taken of the sector in the development of national policy. Further, government agencies need constant reminding that the sector is not systemically organised and it is individual schools and their communities that bear the full administrative burden and cost of any policy changes.

The independent sector contributes to national policy development through representation on national taskforces, committees and working groups. ISCA also seeks through this participation to ensure that government policies do not have an undue adverse impact on independent schools. With the help of AIS and independent school staff, ISCA now provides representatives for around 140 national committees.

Review of SES funding

In late 2006 DEST conducted a review of the SES funding model, the system used to allocate Australian Government general recurrent grants to non-government schools.

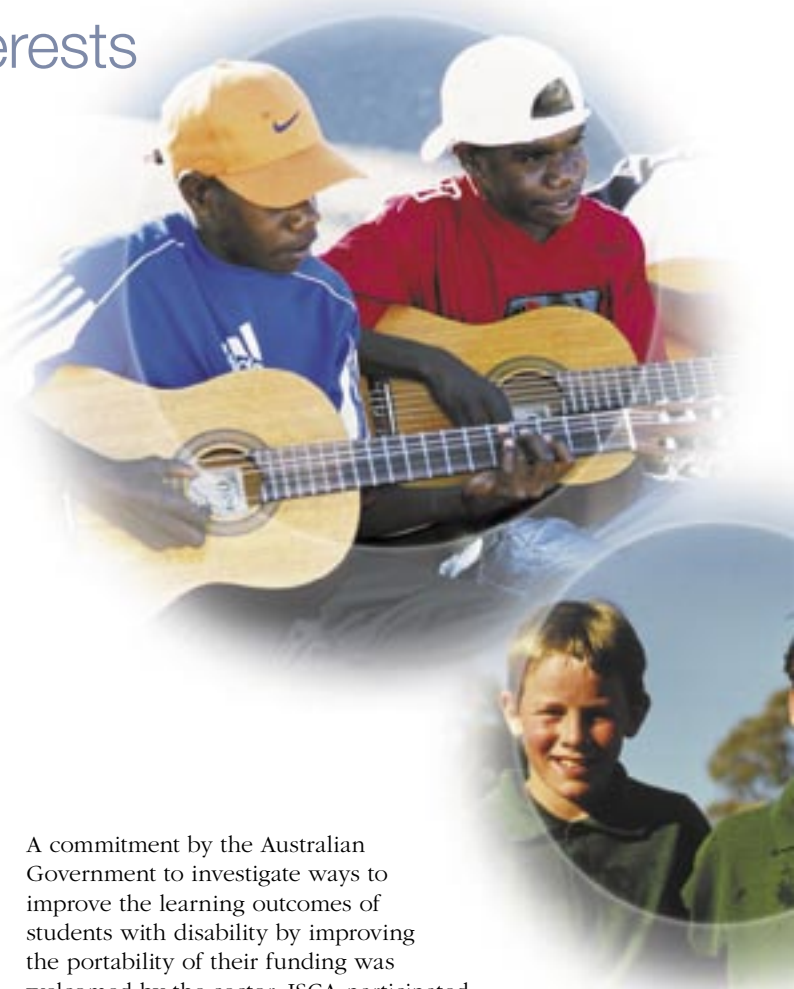
In its submission to the review, ISCA argued that the SES model should remain in place for at least the next quadrennium to ensure stability for schools and their communities.

ISCA welcomes the Australian Government's 2007 Budget initiative that provides a loading on SES grants for students at schools in rural, regional and remote areas.

ISCA also strongly advocates the implementation of measures to allow independent schools that cater predominantly for Indigenous students to be defined as 'special assistance schools', so that students are entitled to receive maximum general recurrent funding.

Students with disability

ISCA advocates that students with disability represent a special case in schools funding and should receive adequate government support to meet their special education needs irrespective of the school they attend.



A commitment by the Australian Government to investigate ways to improve the learning outcomes of students with disability by improving the portability of their funding was welcomed by the sector. ISCA participated in a reference group in the first stage of the Government's initiative, which involved a survey by Monash University of student and family needs.

On behalf of the ISCA National Consultative Committee, ISCA wrote to the federal Minister for Education to request that the funding inequity for students with disability be addressed as a matter of urgency in the 2009-12 quadrennium.

Student attendance

As a condition of their funding under the *Schools Assistance Act 2004*, schools are required to report on student attendance from 2007 through the Annual National

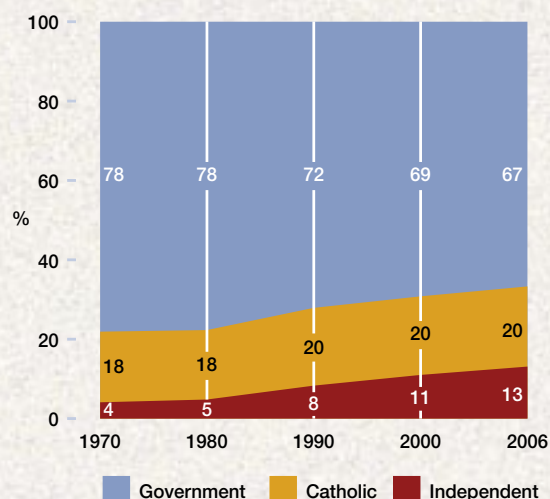
School choice

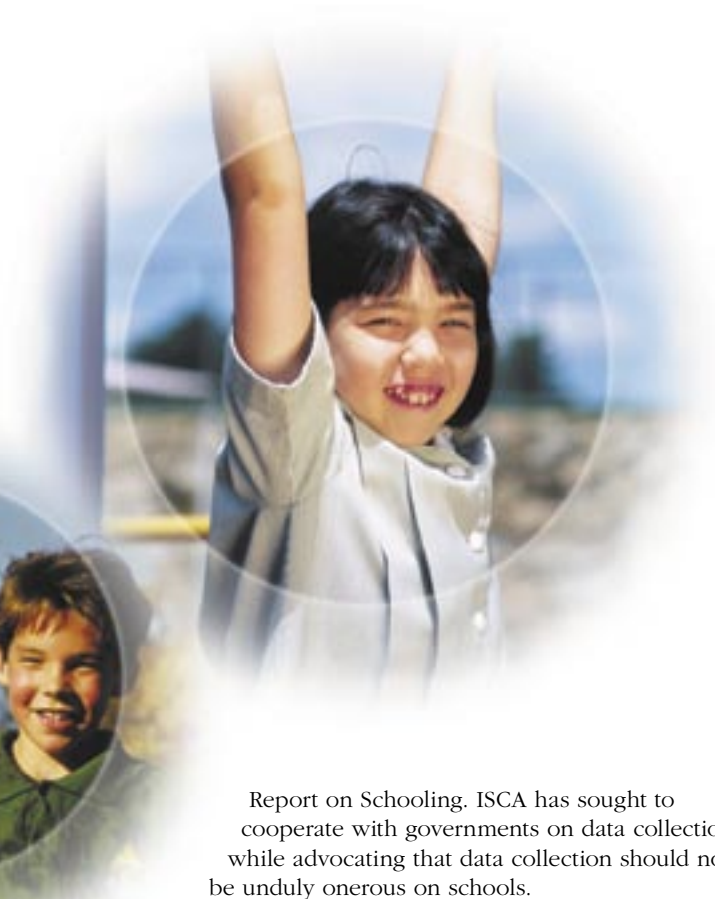
Independent sector enrolments have been growing steadily since 1970. In the decade to 2006, primary enrolments in the sector grew by 52 per cent and secondary enrolments by 38 per cent.

In 2006, enrolments in the sector grew by 2.8 per cent over 2005, taking the sector's share of total school enrolments to 13.1 per cent. The sector now accounts for 10.3 per cent of primary enrolments and 16.8 per cent of secondary enrolments. The independent sector's share of senior secondary enrolments is 18.3 per cent.

Independent and Catholic systemic schools together account for 38 per cent of secondary enrolments, and 40 per cent of senior secondary enrolments. This means that two in every five Australian students will have received at least part of their education in a non-government school.

Enrolment share by school sector 1970-2006





Report on Schooling. ISCA has sought to cooperate with governments on data collection while advocating that data collection should not be unduly onerous on schools.

In response to the Australian Government's recent initiative to link welfare payments to school attendance, ISCA made representations to Ministers that reporting arrangements should not place an unnecessary administrative burden on schools or undermine the relationship of schools with parents.

Copyright

Copyright fees now cost Australian schools around \$70 million per year. On top of this is the significant indirect cost of administration of copyright.

The Copyright Advisory Group of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) last year initiated licensing arrangements for material generated by the schools sector and by

government agencies specifically for educational use (the NEALS agreement). ISCA and AISs are signatories to NEALS, which has already saved schools many thousands of dollars in unnecessary copyright fees.

ISCA also supported representations to a Senate review of the Copyright Amendment Bill 2006, to ensure changes to the law did not adversely affect the freedom of educational institutions to take advantage of technological advances.

Drug testing in school sport

In conjunction with AISNSW, ISCA worked cooperatively with the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) to clarify the protocols associated with drug testing of athletes who are school students and ensure that if drug testing takes place at school events it has regard to the duty of care provisions and operational requirements of schools.

ISCA led representations to the Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator George Brandis, who assisted liaison between ASADA and all school sectors.

Independent schools are supporting ASADA in the development and trial of educational material for school athletes and sporting officials.

Regulatory reform

ISCA welcomes a DEST project that incorporates an evaluation of the Financial Questionnaire instrument used by the Australian Government to collect finance related data from non-government schools. In December 2005, ISCA highlighted the redundancy of the Financial Questionnaire in its submission to the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Reducing the Regulatory Burden on Business. The Taskforce recommended that the data collection be abolished.

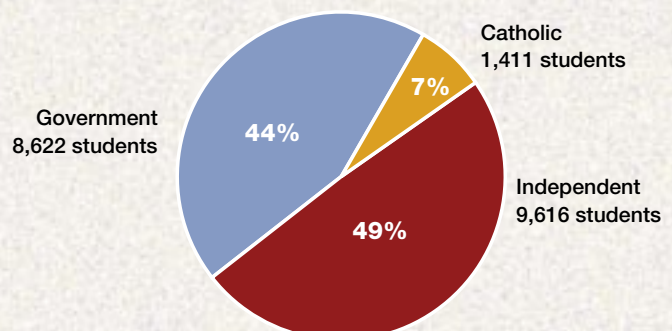
ISCA also welcomes the adoption by governments of a set of principles to guide the discharge of regulatory responsibilities in the schools sector, and a proposed review of national reporting requirements that will encompass all schools.

Overseas students

ISCA consulted with DEST and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship on implications for schools arising from changes to the *Educational Services for Overseas Students Act* and revision of the associated National Code. The Code details regulations for providers of education and training to overseas students.

With funding from DEST, ISCA has prepared a handbook to inform non-government schools about the requirements of the National Code 2007 and assist in their implementation. The handbook is posted on ISCA's website.

Enrolment of full fee paying overseas students in Australian schools, 2006



Engaging with the national agenda

National Assessment Program

The first national tests in literacy and numeracy will be held in 2008 for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in all states and territories. In liaising with governments on the development and implementation of the program, ISCA advocates that:

- independent schools should have a choice of testing provider
- school data should be owned by schools, and formal and consistent protocols should be put in place that recognise data ownership and ensure security and access protection
- only aggregated student data, without school and sector identifiers, should be reported
- the full cost of assessment and reporting programs that are mandated by governments should be met by governments, irrespective of the sector in which students are educated.

Schools reporting

As student and school performance reporting requirements under the *Schools Assistance Act 2004* continue to be developed by the Australian Government, ISCA is working with DEST on how independent schools can comply with the requirements. ISCA continues to argue that the administration and cost burden of reporting for independent schools should be minimised.

ISCA regularly updates the compliance checklist for schools, posted on its website.

National curriculum

MCEETYA has approved the release of a number of national Statements of Learning to be incorporated in syllabus and curriculum documents used to underpin learning programs in all schools. MCEETYA ministers have also agreed to work together with the non-government sector on nationally consistent curricula.

Parallel to this movement the states and territories, meeting as the Council for the Australian Federation, committed to the development of a national curriculum with a set core content and achievement standards.

ISCA supports high standards and national consistency in core content across the eight key learning areas and advocates that any national curriculum initiative should include the option for schools to follow other recognised curricula such as the International Baccalaureate.

Senior secondary assessment

Governments are examining the feasibility of a common scale for reporting all senior secondary subject results; a quality assurance mechanism to ensure consistency of results of senior secondary certificates across Australia; and the feasibility of a national Year 12 certificate.

In the 2007 Budget the Australian Government announced that external examination of Year 12 students would be a condition of funding for the 2009-12 quadrennium. ISCA advocates that Australian Government funding of independent schools should not be adversely affected if state and territory governments fail to meet this or any other condition.

Indigenous education

ISCA advocates that Indigenous students attending independent schools should be supported at a level similar to Indigenous students in government schools. Independent schools which cater predominantly for Indigenous students also require special consideration in relation to their capital needs, in recognition of their very limited capacity to raise private funds.

The 2007 Budget brought welcome additional Australian Government capital funding support for non-government boarding schools that accommodate Indigenous students. The Government also announced it would expand the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program from the current 250 scholarships to 1,000 over four years.

ISCA is represented on the reference group for the program, which gives young Indigenous people the opportunity to attend Australian schools and universities that offer a wide range of educational choices and experiences.

Digital teaching and learning

In September 2006 ISCA conducted a survey of ICT infrastructure in independent schools. The survey showed that while there is an increased level of connectivity since a similar survey in early 2005, many independent schools have a connection speed that is less than the recognised minimum required to fully engage with online learning.

Through representation on The Le@rning Federation online curriculum initiative, and in cooperation with AISs, ISCA continues to facilitate access for independent schools to digital materials. The Australian Government's strong financial commitment to this initiative, assisted by the state and territory and New Zealand governments, has seen the development so far of over 6,000 digital items for schools.

ISCA submissions 2006-07

ISCA responds on behalf of the sector to parliamentary and other inquiries.

- Review of the SES funding scheme (September 2006)
- Senate inquiry into provisions of the Copyright Amendment Bill 2006 (October 2006)
- 2009-12 quadrennium funding submission (November 2006)
- Joint submission with National Catholic Education Commission to the review of Commonwealth privacy laws (January 2007)
- Senate inquiry into academic standards of school education (May 2007)
- Review of the World Anti-Doping Code (July 2007)

Providing a national voice

ISCA is the national peak body for the independent schools sector in Australia. Its eight member associations represent 1,078 schools and 491,000 students.

ISCA's role as peak national body is supported by consultative structures that take account of the full diversity of the sector.

ISCA's policy-making is the responsibility of its Board of Management, which is made up of a Chairman and one delegate from each of the eight state and territory Associations of Independent Schools (AISs).

The Executive Directors of the AISs, together with ISCA's Executive Director, constitute the ISCA Executive Directors' Council (EDCO). EDCO provides advice to the ISCA Executive Director.

ISCA also consults regularly with other national independent school bodies individually and through the ISCA National Consultative Group, which comprises Adventist Schools Australia, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, Australian Anglican Schools Network, Australian Associations of Christian Schools, Australian Council for Islamic Education in Schools, Australian Parents Council, Christian Parent Controlled Schools Ltd, Christian Schools Australia, Greek Orthodox Schools, Islamic Schools, Jewish Day Schools, Lutheran Education Australia, Montessori Association of Australia, Montessori Australia Foundation Ltd, National Independent Special Schools Association, National Network of Anglican Systemic Schools, Rudolf Steiner Schools, and Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly. ISCA also liaises regularly with the National Catholic Education Commission.

ISCA maintains links with international independent school organisations in New Zealand, USA, Canada, UK, Europe, South Africa and the Pacific region, through sharing of materials and reciprocal attendance at conferences and meetings.

Member Associations

Association of Independent Schools of the ACT Inc

www.ais.act.edu.au

Mr Jeremy Irvine
Executive Director

The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales Ltd

www.aisnsw.edu.au

Dr Geoff Newcombe
Executive Director

Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory Inc

www.aisnt.asn.au

Ms Gail Barker
Executive Director

Independent Schools Queensland

www.aisq.qld.edu.au

Dr John Roulston
Executive Director

Association of Independent Schools of South Australia

www.ais.sa.edu.au

Mr Garry Le Duff
Executive Director

The Association of Independent Schools of Tasmania

www.aist.tas.edu.au

Mr Tony Crehan
Executive Director

Association of Independent Schools of Victoria Inc

www.ais.vic.edu.au

Ms Michelle Green
Chief Executive

Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia Inc

www.ais.wa.edu.au

Mrs Audrey Jackson
Executive Director

ISCA Board of Management



Chairman

Dr Ken Evans

Board Member
John Septimus Roe
Anglican Community
School, Perth



AISACT

Ms Christine Harrison

Principal
Canberra Montessori
School, Canberra



AISNSW

Mr John Ralston

Board Member
Wenona 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

Ms Christine Harrison joined the board in 2007 to represent AISACT, replacing Ms Susan Just. Mr Peter Kempen finished his term as AISV's representative on the board in July 2007 and will be replaced by Mr Alan Frees. ISCA thanks Ms Just and Mr Kempen for their contribution to the independent schools sector through membership of the Board.

Independent Schools Council of Australia

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