



Independent Schools
Council of Australia

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

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Federal funding of universities and non-government schools

The bulk of federal funding for non-government schools is in the form of per student grants, so there should be no surprises that the sum of these grants is increasing (“Private schools get more than unis”, 6/9). Enrolments in independent schools have doubled since 1986.

The kind of “analysis” undertaken by Professor Marginson, which only considers total funding amounts, is misleading. There are more than double the number of funded students in the non-government schools sector than in universities, so a per-student funding amount is a more honest comparison.

According to the DEST Higher Education Report 2005 there were 395,863 government-funded undergraduate places (EFTSL) in Australian universities in 2005, and 13,530 funded postgraduate non-research places. In the same year there were 1.1 million students in non-government schools in Australia – 429,070 in the independent sector and 672,982 in Catholic systemic schools.

Based on figures in the DEST report, average federal government funding per student for a university undergraduate student in 2005 was \$7,484. The average per student total (that is federal plus state/territory) government recurrent funding for a student in an independent school in 2004-05 was \$5,053 (or \$6,054 for the non-government sector as a whole).

Unlike base operating grants for university students, a student’s eligibility for recurrent grants in independent schools depends on the socio-economic status of their school community. Federal general recurrent grants for students in independent schools range from \$989 to \$5,052 for a primary student, and \$1,277 to \$6,524 for a secondary student.

On average, students in independent schools receive less than half the public subsidy available to students in government schools, and their parents contribute some \$3 billion annually to Australia’s expenditure on school education.

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