



Media Release

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AEDI Emphasises Need for Students with Disability Funding

Executive Director of the Independent Schools Council of Australia, Mr Bill Daniels said today that the findings from the first Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) strengthen the case for governments to establish adequate funding arrangements for students with disability.

4.4% of children in their first year of full-time school were identified by the AEDI survey as having chronic physical, intellectual and medical needs (special need status); and 10.5% of children were identified by teachers as requiring more assessment.

“ISCA welcomes the release of the AEDI as it provides a comprehensive national snapshot of early childhood education outcomes. Significantly it underlines the increasing demand placed on government and non-government schools to meet the educational needs of students with disability,” said Mr Daniels.

“The independent sector believes that parental choice of schools must be available for students with disability just as it is for other students. Our schools willingly accept their legal responsibility by making a significant and growing contribution to educating students with disability.”

“However successive governments have not adequately resourced independent schools to meet their increasing obligations. Consequently the level of support given to students with disability is determined by the capacity of individual school communities or parents to meet these costs,” said Mr Daniels.

The AEDI indicates that students with disability are likely to comprise an increasing proportion of independent school enrolments. According to earlier data, students with disability represent 2.2% of total independent school enrolments. This compares with the AEDI survey which shows that 3.7% of independent school students were considered students with special needs.

“The report confirms that the independent schools sector is educating a growing proportion of students with disability. The absence of appropriate government funding exacerbates the financial pressure on families and school communities,” said Mr Daniels.

“Children in independent schools with special needs identified in the AEDI report potentially have 12 years of education ahead of them. It is a serious deficiency in public policy that governments do not provide these students with the funding required to allow them to achieve their educational goals.”

“The nature of a student’s disability does not change according to the school they attend. However, students with disability in independent schools are eligible for significantly less public support for their special needs than if they were educated in a government-owned school.”

“Our proposition is simple – support for students with disability should be based on the level of funding required to allow them to achieve their educational goals no matter which school they attend,” concluded Mr Daniels.

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Media Contact:
James Mathews (Mobile) 0407 416 002

