

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Independent Schools
Council of Australia

Parents want choice in schooling

Australian Bureau of Statistics data released today show enrolments in the independent schools sector were 416,115 in 2004, representing a national average enrolment growth of 3.2 per cent over 2003.

Mr Bill Daniels, Executive Director of the Independent Schools Council of Australia, said the growth in enrolments in the independent schools sector reflects a wider demand by parents for choice in the schooling of their children.

‘There is no one-size-fits-all solution to education provision,’ said Mr Daniels. ‘Parents must be free to choose from among a diverse range of schooling options, and independent schools play an important role in contributing to that diversity.’

There are now 1,057 independent schools in Australia serving a range of different communities. There are schools affiliated with large and small Christian denominations; non-denominational Christian schools; Islamic schools; Jewish schools; Montessori schools; Rudolf Steiner schools; indigenous community schools; schools that specialise in meeting the needs of students with disabilities; small and large day schools, metropolitan and regional boarding schools, co-educational and single-sex schools. A defining characteristic of the sector is the predominance of combined primary-secondary schools.

‘There is an increasing interest among parents to choose a school that best meets family circumstances and the individual needs of their child, even if that choice involves fees,’ said Mr Daniels.

The latest Productivity Commission data show that for students in government-owned schools, average government recurrent expenditure was \$9,605 per student in 2002-03. For students attending non-government schools, government recurrent expenditure was on average only \$4,980 per student.

Mr Daniels said the gap in government support for students in the different school sectors is widening. ‘Parents of students in non-government schools have to make up this gap from their after-tax income,’ said Mr Daniels. ‘The contribution of parents to their children’s education in non-government schools represents a saving to the Australian taxpayer of some \$4.9 billion a year.’

Mr Daniels said research undertaken by the Independent Schools Council of Australia showed there is a range of reasons parents choose an independent school for their children’s education.

‘Factors parents cite as important in school choice are teacher quality, disciplinary code, school values that reflect those taught at home, responsiveness to students’ individual needs and a safe, stable school environment,’ said Mr Daniels.

ENDS. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND STATE AND TERRITORY CONTACTS FOLLOW.

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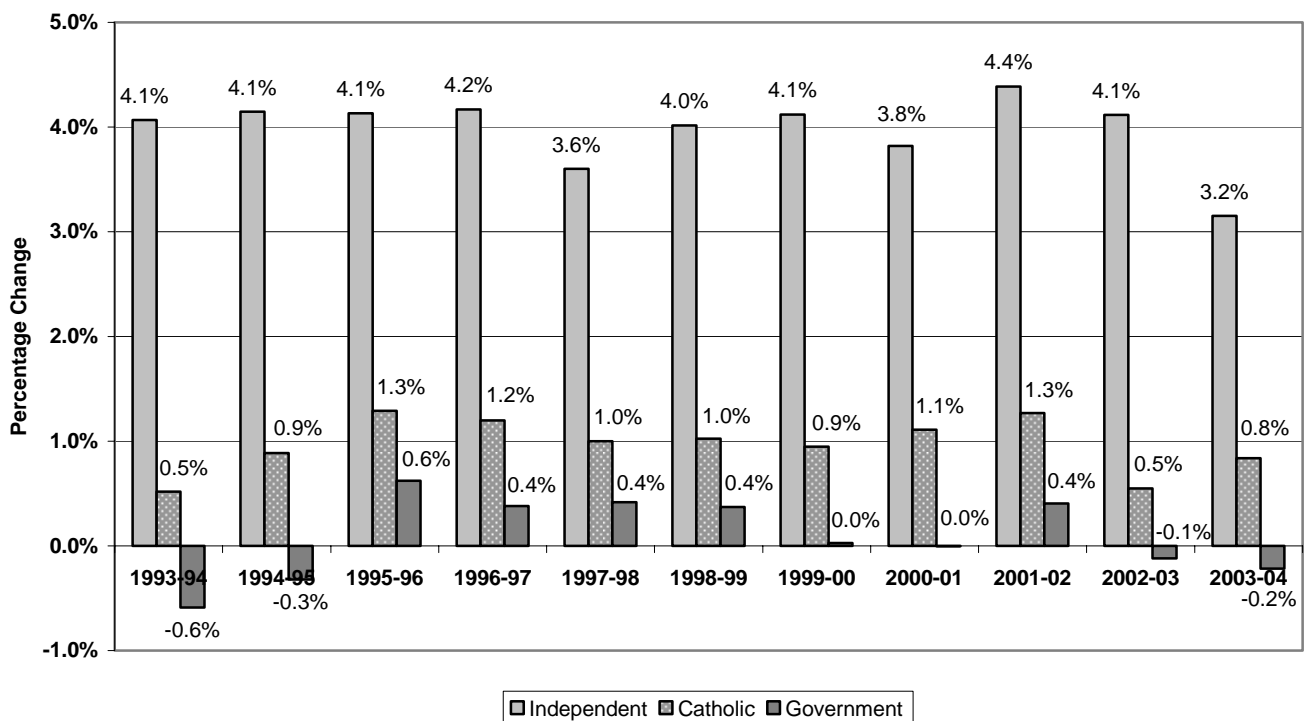
Independent Schools 2004

Full-time School Enrolments 2004

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUST
Independent school students 2003	120,802	103,840	80,162	36,325	43,572	8,389	3,868	6,439	403,397
Independent school students 2004	124,610	106,108	83,189	37,492	45,333	8,530	4,082	6,771	416,115
Percentage enrolment growth 2003-04	3.2%	2.2%	3.8%	3.2%	4.0%	1.7%	5.5%	5.2%	3.2%
Per cent of total school enrolments	11.3%	12.9%	13.0%	15.1%	13.5%	10.4%	11.0%	11.3%	12.5%
Per cent of total secondary enrolments	13.7%	17.9%	17.9%	18.0%	19.0%	13.5%	17.3%	13.7%	16.4%
Per cent of total Year 11, 12 enrolments	14.6%	20.1%	19.7%	20.0%	19.6%	15.4%	10.3%	10.8%	17.9%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Schools Australia 2004

Enrolment Growth Rates by School Sector Full-time Students 1994 to 2004



Number of Independent Schools 2003-2004

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Australia
2003									
Primary only	94	62	47	43	45	6	9	3	309
Secondary only	24	17	14	10	11	2	5	1	84
Combined	178	120	103	39	71	21	4	8	544
Special	25	10	3	1	1	1	0	1	42
Total	321	209	167	93	128	30	18	13	979
2004									
Primary only	91	56	46	42	43	4	9	3	294
Secondary only	21	16	15	8	10	np**	4	np**	76
Combined	184	124	104				7		570
Special	25	10	3				0		42
Other*				44	78	np**		np**	
Total	321	206	168	94	131	29	20	13	982

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Schools Australia 2004

*Includes combined primary/secondary schools and special schools.

**Not available for publication but included in totals where applicable, unless otherwise indicated.

ABS data show a net increase of three schools in the independent sector in 2004.

Note that in ABS statistical data independent Catholic schools are categorised with Catholic systemic schools. Independent Catholic schools are a significant part of the independent sector and when included bring the total number of independent schools to 1,057 in 2004 and the number of students to 467,810 (full-time equivalent students).

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