

# Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Independent Schools  
Council of Australia

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## Demand for choice and diversity in schooling

Australian Bureau of Statistics data released today show enrolments in the independent schools sector continue to grow strongly, said Mr Bill Daniels, Executive Director of the Independent Schools Council of Australia.

There were 440,399 students enrolled in independent schools in 2006, representing a national enrolment growth of 2.6 per cent over 2005.

Mr Daniels said the snapshot provided by some of the ABS data shows the degree to which the school education sector has changed since 1986.

‘Australians appear to value a school education far more today than 20 years ago,’ said Mr Daniels. ‘Student retention rates have improved, with nearly three-quarters of all students staying in school to Year 12, and class sizes are smaller in all school sectors.’

ABS data show that since 1986 the independent schools sector has more than doubled in size.

‘This growth in the independent schools sector and in the non-government sector as a whole shows that families have become far more willing to invest their after-tax dollars in their children’s schooling,’ said Mr Daniels. ‘Parental contribution to Australian schooling through the independent sector is now worth over \$3 billion annually in operating and capital costs.’

Mr Daniels said that Australian families value choice and diversity in schooling.

‘The independent sector serves the full spectrum of the Australian community,’ said Mr Daniels, ‘and plays an important role in providing the diversity in schooling options that families want.’

There are now 1,007 independent schools in Australia, including 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.

ENDS. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND STATE AND TERRITORY CONTACTS FOLLOW.

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### Full-time Student Enrolments in Australia 1986-2006 by Sector

	FT Student Numbers			% of Enrolment Share at Level of Schooling			Percentage Increase	
	1986	1996	2006	1986	1996	2006	1986 - 2006	1996-2006
<b>Independent</b>								
Primary	78,549	130,871	199,033	4.6%	7.1%	10.3%	153.4%	52.1%
Secondary	134,016	175,015	241,366	10.3%	13.5%	16.9%	80.1%	37.9%
Total	212,565	305,886	440,399	7.1%	9.7%	13.1%	107.2%	44.0%
<b>Catholic</b>								
Primary	331,361	349,892	370,826	19.5%	18.9%	19.2%	11.9%	6.0%
Secondary	249,662	265,680	308,582	19.2%	20.5%	21.6%	23.6%	16.1%
Total	581,023	615,572	679,408	19.4%	19.6%	20.2%	16.9%	10.4%
<b>Total Non-Government</b>								
Primary	409,910	480,763	569,859	24.1%	26.0%	29.4%	39.0%	18.5%
Secondary	383,678	440,695	549,948	29.4%	34.0%	38.4%	43.3%	24.8%
Total	793,588	921,458	1,119,807	26.4%	29.3%	33.2%	41.1%	21.5%
<b>Government</b>								
Primary	1,288,277	1,367,406	1,366,259	75.9%	74.0%	70.6%	6.1%	-0.1%
Secondary	919,524	854,151	881,970	70.6%	66.0%	61.6%	-4.1%	3.3%
Total	2,207,801	2,221,557	2,248,229	73.6%	70.7%	66.8%	1.8%	1.2%
<b>All Schools</b>								
Primary	1,698,187	1,848,169	1,936,118	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	14.0%	4.8%
Secondary	1,303,202	1,294,846	1,431,918	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	9.9%	10.6%
Total	3,001,389	3,143,015	3,368,036	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	12.2%	7.2%

Source: ABS Schools Australia series

### Number of Schools in Australia 1986-2006 by Sector

Year	Government	Non-Government	
		Catholic	Independent
1986	7,589	1,712	784
1991	7,470	1,705	805
1996	7,088	1,694	848
2001	6,941	1,697	957
2005	6,929	1,698	996
2006	6,902	1,703	1,007

Source: ABS Schools Australia series

### Student-Teacher Ratios in Australia 1986-2006 by Sector

Year	Government		Non-Government			
	Primary	Secondary	Catholic		Independent	
			Primary	Secondary	Primary	Secondary
1986*	18.2	12.3	21.1	14.4	17.2	13.0
1990	17.9	12.0	21.1	14.0	16.9	12.2
1996	17.8	12.7	20.0	13.7	16.1	11.7
2000	17.1	12.4	19.1	13.4	15.6	11.4
2001	16.8	12.4	18.8	13.4	15.4	11.2
2002	16.7	12.6	18.5	13.3	15.3	11.2
2003	16.4	12.5	18.3	13.1	15.1	11.1
2004	16.2	12.4	18.2	13.4	14.9	10.9
2005	16.1	12.4	17.9	13.1	14.6	10.7
2006	15.8	12.4	17.7	12.9	14.4	10.6

**Source: ABS Schools Australia series**

Note: From 2002 the ABS measure is FTE Students to FTE Teaching Staff; previously it was FT students to FTE Teaching Staff

\* Excludes students and teachers at special schools

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