

Media Statement

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Independent Schools
Council of Australia

ALL Education Should be Considered a Public Good

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) rejects the inaccurate figures and divisive line taken towards Australian schooling by a new research paper asserting that public education is the only type of education that can be viewed as a public good.

The paper, *Building Our Nation through Public Education* by Professor Alan Reid, and released by the Australian Government Primary Principals Association (AGPPA), states that private schools “cannot, and can never be, public goods.”

The Independent school sector supports adequate funding for ALL Australian school students, across ALL school sectors. It supports the belief that education of an individual not only benefits that individual but benefits communities and society as a whole. These benefits are recognised and reinforced through government policies relating to compulsory school attendance and funding support for all not-for-profit schools.

The AGPPA paper uses highly questionable figures from previously published studies that use Commonwealth funding for schools to paint a distorted picture of non-government schools receiving a disproportionately larger share of funding than government schools, not taking into account that the states and territories are the majority funder of government schools while the Commonwealth is the majority funder of Independent and Catholic schools.

The research paper’s future projections also use outdated funding models, ignoring 2015-16 Commonwealth budget figures that show a per student funding increase to government schools of 9.55% and a per student funding increase to non-government schools of 5.6%.

In addition, the paper focuses on the government school sector providing for the majority of Australia’s disadvantaged students (particularly Indigenous students and students with disability) without acknowledging that enrolments of disadvantaged students in the Independent sector are growing at three times the rate of overall enrolments. Indeed, there are many places in Australia where Independent schools are disadvantaged students’ only available choice.

Independent schools reflect Australia’s social and ethnic diversity, offering choice for young Australians to be educated in schools with different cultural, religious and educational philosophies. The funding of Independent schools is a partnership between governments and parents, with fees paid by parents often necessitating considerable sacrifice. This in turn

saves governments money: the average government funding to non-government schools is \$8,812 per student, while the average per public school student is \$15,703.

ISCA believes it is counterproductive for Australian education to see sector pitted against sector for funding dollars at a time when all Australian schools should be working together to improve the quality of outcomes for all Australian students.

###ENDS###

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