

Media Release

13 March, 2014



Independent Schools
Council of Australia

One National Model for School Funding Unachievable

The previous Labor Government's idea to design a common national funding model for all schools was a commendable but unachievable vision, according to Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) Executive Director, Mr Bill Daniels. Mr Daniels was giving evidence to the Senate Select Committee on School Funding in Sydney today.

“We have been left with merely the rhetoric of a national funding model, and a reality that we have a more complex and less transparent situation than existed before, and this is most unsatisfactory”, he said.

According to Mr Daniels, the funding arrangements for 2014 were hastily finalised and only represent a small, incremental step towards a model which it is now clear, will never fully come to fruition.

“There are at least 27 different funding models around the country and the 900 non-systemic independent schools are the only schools that the Commonwealth's model actually applies to at the individual school level. Government funding directed to individual independent schools cannot be re-allocated as occurs in both government and non-government systems”, Mr Daniels said.

“On average, the majority of funding for independent schools comes predominantly from parents, however public funding, and in particular Commonwealth Government funding, is of critical importance to the sector. This is particularly the case for the many independent schools serving low socio-economic communities and students with special needs”, he said.

“Any funding model that nominally directs small amounts of additional funding to individual schools does not reflect the reality of what occurs in the vast majority of schools and nor is it the most effective approach to addressing certain types of educational disadvantage such as students with disability. Providing block grants to sectors to allocate to schools according to the needs of these students, is a more flexible and responsive approach”, Mr Daniels said.

“It is essential that future funding arrangements meet the criteria of effective and efficient funding models including: equity, incentive, flexibility, transparency, simplicity, predictability, consistency and be based on reliable, robust data which is fit for purpose. All Australian schools should be funded appropriately to ensure all students have equal access to educational opportunity”, he said.

Mr Daniels urged the Committee to recommend that the Commonwealth Government moves quickly to amend the funding arrangements in a way that meets these effective and efficient public policy criteria.

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