



MEDIA RELEASE

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CALL FOR CANDIDATES TO SUPPORT CHOICE IN EDUCATION

Independent schools call on election candidates to support families' choice in education.

Independent Schools Australia (ISA), the peak body representing 1,190 schools and 667,259 students, today released their Federal Election Statement. The statement outlines five key priority areas for an incoming Australian Government.

"Independent schools are a key part of the education landscape in Australia making a major contribution to the learning and wellbeing of children, said ISA's CEO Ms Margery Evans.

"The Australian Government needs to make greater investment in Independent schools to ensure families have choices for their children's education," Ms Evans said.

The rapidly increasing number of student enrolments in Independent schools show the value parents place on an Independent education.

"Across Australia, one in every six school students attend an independent school, with enrolments in the sector growing by more than 20 per cent in the past decade," Ms Evans said.

"Investing in Independent schools makes good economic sense," said Ms Evans. "Supporting students in Independent schools saves taxpayer funds.

Average government recurrent funding per independent school student (\$11,620) is significantly less than public (\$20,810) and Catholic (\$13,100) per student funding, realising an estimated \$5.5 billion in recurrent savings to governments.

Independent schools are looking for assurances in five key areas:

1. Wellbeing and mental health support

Independent schools urgently require funding at the school level to address the acute mental health needs of students and support protection and prevention programs. The wellbeing and mental health needs of students have substantially increased in number, complexity and severity. Funding is needed for;

- training staff
- in-school wellbeing programs
- engagement of experts
- the effective selection and application of the mental health resources available through third parties.

2. Resources to implement national reform priorities

It is critical to resource the implementation of government education reforms and issues of national significance in Independent schools beyond 2023. However, the Non-Government Reform Support Fund is due to cease at the end of 2023 with schools still needing to implement not just current, but emerging priorities including disability, financial management and school improvement.

3. Addressing the consequences of funding reform

Schools hard hit by the Government's new funding methodology require support to manage their transition to new funding levels while containing fees to remain accessible to families. Addressing the elements of the new funding model that have resulted in significant funding shortfalls, including refining the loadings for disadvantage, is also necessary to ensure sustainability.

4. Invest in regional boarding schools

For many families, regional and remote boarding (predominantly in the Independent sector) provides the only practical educational option, yet multiple reports have shown regional boarding schools are chronically underfunded.

The degree to which Independent schools can continue providing high-quality boarding options in regional and remote locations depends on:

- additional resourcing to cover costs of goods, transport, technology and connections to family and culture
- incentives to attract and retain a quality workforce
- capital funding to improve the living and learning environment.

5. Capital funding

An improved allocation and more flexible use of the Australian Government Capital Grants Program is required to help fund infrastructure and support the substantial enrolment increase in low-fee Independent schools.

ISA full Election Statement can be viewed at:

<https://isa.edu.au/media-events/federal-election-2022/>

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