

## AUTONOMY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AUGUST 2022

Independent schools have the autonomy to tailor educational experiences to their community and students, yet they are just as accountable – if not more so – than government schools.

### KEY POINTS

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#### **Autonomy enables tailored and innovative education**

Independent schools offer a diverse range of educational experiences based on religious values, learning philosophies, special needs or with particular facilities such as boarding.

Independent schools enjoy the autonomy to respond promptly, flexibly and innovatively, tailoring their approach to meet the needs and expectations of the students they serve and the communities in which they operate.

#### **Independent schools are accountable – not only to authorities but also their community**

Autonomy does not make Independent schools less accountable. They must still implement the Australian curriculum, participate in national testing, maintain their registration with the relevant authorities, comply with government policy and all relevant legislation and regulation for charities or corporate entities, and report financial and student data to government.

Additionally, Independent schools must consistently strive to meet high expectations of parents. Independent schools are set up and governed on an individual school basis, connected directly to their community and answerable to their own governing board or management committee. In this way, Independent schools are subject to a greater level of educational and financial accountability than government schools.

The freedom of students and their families to exercise choice in schooling is one of the most demanding forms of accountability for Independent schools.

### THE FACTS

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- The Independent school sector is almost entirely comprised of not-for-profit entities and as such do not make 'profits' or pay dividends to shareholders. Any surplus must be reinvested in the school.
- Each Independent school is responsible for its own educational programs, financial decisions, staffing, co-curricular content and ongoing development, and is accountable to its governing body, within the bounds of legislation and government policy.
- As well as complying with the legislative, regulatory and reporting requirements that apply to all schools, Independent schools have additional compliance requirements as corporate entities or charities.

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- To receive Australian Government funding, Independent schools must be not-for-profit institutions and be accountable to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, the Australian Taxation Office and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.
- Independent schools must demonstrate that the funds they receive from government are expended appropriately and they must provide relevant financial data to the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
- All Independent schools (regardless of teaching philosophy, faith affiliation, location or the socio-economic status of their students) must be registered by state and territory authorities to operate. Without registration, schools are not eligible for any government funding. An Independent school's registration is reviewed regularly and must be kept up-to-date.
- All Independent schools must comply with Australian Government and state or territory governments' educational and financial accountability requirements. These requirements include participation in national testing; implementation of the national curriculum; the provision of data on schools, staff and students for national reporting; and completion of an annual financial questionnaire, financial viability assessment and reporting against government grants.
- Independent schools must comply with a range of other requirements and regulations covering occupational health and safety, privacy and child protection, human rights and equal opportunity, local government planning, industrial awards, work health and safety laws and building and fire codes.

## RELATED INFORMATION

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- ISA website: [Diversity and Choice](#)
- Website: [My School](#) - Annual Report on Schooling
- Website: [Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission](#)
- Website: [Annual Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) reporting

**ISA IS THE PEAK BODY REPRESENTING 1,187 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS WITH 667,259 ENROLLED STUDENTS.**

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