

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WHAT THE FEDERAL BUDGET MEANS FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Australia (ISA) welcomes the Australian Government's Budget last night, which affirmed election commitments of continued support for the wellbeing of students, to take steps towards addressing the shortage of teachers and early childhood educators, and to broaden access to childcare subsidies.

ISA Chief Executive, Ms Margery Evans said, "The measures in the Budget for the wellbeing of students and increasing the educator workforce for schools and early childhood services show that the Government understands the importance of these issues."

Wellbeing

ISA welcomes the renewed commitment to funding for student wellbeing that will assist schools in providing additional mental health and wellbeing support for students

"Looking after wellbeing of students has never been more important and our understanding of students' needs is increasing.

"ISA commissioned research that shows students are experiencing poor mental health more often and at an earlier age.

"The research also identified the kinds of wellbeing programs that are effective in school environments.

"We know what works in schools and we are pleased the Government recognises the important role schools play in protecting student wellbeing.

"ISA will be looking at the details for the flexibility that would allow schools to determine the most effective programs for their communities' needs," Ms Evans said.

ISA also welcomes the funding (\$10.8 million) to develop a free voluntary mental health check tool to assist teachers and schools to identify students with, or at risk of, declining mental health. The tool is to be developed in consultation with stakeholders.

Funding Respectful Relationship Education (\$77 million) also confirms an election promise.

Teacher and early childhood educator workforce

"It is important to address the critical shortage of teachers and early childhood educators and we are pleased to see that the Budget will go some way to addressing these," Ms Evans said.

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The Budget provides for more university places for teachers and early childhood educators. The 4,036 places in education (of which 1,469 are for early-education teachers) is good news for school leavers from disadvantaged backgrounds and locations outside metropolitan area who may not otherwise have access to teacher training.

The Budget also provides for attracting and retaining high-quality teachers and improving student outcomes. (\$310.4 million over 9 years from 2022–23, and \$7.9 million per year ongoing.)

Other measures in the Budget for addressing educator workforce include;

- Bursaries for undergraduate and postgraduate students (\$160.1 million over 8 years from 2023–24 for up to 5,000 bursaries of \$10,000 per year to students, with an ATAR of 80 or above, who undertake a teaching degree, with an additional \$2,000 for students who complete their final year placement in a regional area.)
- Expanding the High Achieving Teachers program to support an additional 1,500 high-achieving professionals to transition into teaching through employment-based pathways. (\$78.8 million over 5 years from 2022–23.)
- Implementing the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review’s recommendations, including the expansion and development of new micro-credentials courses in classroom management and phonics. (\$60.6 million over 9 years from 2022–23, and \$7.1 million per year ongoing.)

Childcare subsidies

ISA also supports the increased eligibility for the childcare subsidy. Many Independent schools provide early childhood services on site.

Ms Evans said, “Broadening the number of families eligible for childcare subsidies shows the Government understands the universal value of early childhood services.”

ISA is the peak body representing 1,187 Independent schools with 667,259 enrolled students.

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More information:

Student and Staff Wellbeing report: <https://isa.edu.au/documents/report-wellbeing-of-students-and-staff>

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