



# IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR ALL: LEADING REFORM THROUGH INNOVATION

ROUNDTABLE WITH MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, THE HON JASON CLARE MP

KEY FINDINGS | 21 MARCH 2024

# THEME & PURPOSE

Australian Governments are currently developing the next **National School Reform Agreement**, commencing in 2025. The identified priority areas are **equity, wellbeing** and **workforce**.

Independent Schools Australia (ISA) supports a national policy agenda aimed at enhancing outcomes for all students and advocates for reforms that leverage the unique strengths and innovations of the Independent sector.

The diverse and autonomous nature of Independent schools encourages innovation, responsiveness to local needs, local level cross-sector collaboration and community engagement. This highlights an opportunity for Independent schools to share their practices within the education sector so all children can receive the best outcome.

ISA hosted a roundtable event with the Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP to showcase the reform initiatives in the Independent sector. This conversation offered a platform for selected Independent schools to share their innovative practices and contributions to the priority reform areas.

*"Today's innovation is tomorrow's evidence.  
We need to keep experimenting with the  
ability to innovate."*



# PARTICIPANTS

The roundtable meeting was attended by a broad spectrum of roles within the education sector, including policy directors, educational researchers, and on-the-ground educators. Representation from various regions across Australia ensured the discussion benefitted from a wide array of experience and perspectives. This fostered a holistic approach to the discussion on innovation and national school reform. The goal was to create a comprehensive dialogue informed by the varied landscapes of the Australian Independent school sector.

- **The Hon Jason Clare MP;** Minister for Education

## INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- **Stuart Harris;** Principal, Treetops Montessori School, WA
- **Sharon Crossman;** Head of Primary, Treetops Montessori School, WA
- **Wendy Matear;** Principal, Bethany Christian School, SA
- **Nathan Grierson;** Teacher, Bethany Christian School, SA
- **Karla Brady;** GEO, Hymba Yumba School, QLD
- **Jessica Endean;** Head of the Primary School, Hymba Yumba School, QLD

## INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA AND STATE AND TERRITORY ASSOCIATIONS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- **Graham Gatt;** Chief Executive Officer, Independent Schools Australia
- **Tracey Taylor;** Director Education Policy, Independent Schools Australia
- **Caroline Miller;** Director Policy and Research, Independent Schools Australia
- **Gemma Daley;** Director, Public Affairs and Communications, Independent Schools Australia
- **Tony Crehan;** Executive Director, Independent Schools TAS
- **Anne Dunstan;** Chief Executive, Association of Independent Schools SA
- **Meg Hansen;** Acting Chief Executive, Independent Schools VIC
- **Chris Massey;** Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools WA
- **Sarah Egan;** Associate Chief Executive: Policy, Association of Independent Schools NSW
- **Cheryl Salter;** Executive Director, Association of Independent Schools NT
- **Joanne Garrisson;** Senior Manager, Strategic Programs, Association of Independent Schools ACT
- **Chris Mountford;** Executive Director, Independent Schools Queensland



# KEY TAKEAWAY POINTS

Participants had the opportunity to share insights and innovations from the Independent school sector. These insights highlighted how their autonomy and pioneering practices contribute to addressing the core areas of equity, wellbeing and workforce. The discussion underscored the vital role of collaborative engagement and the sharing of evidence-informed strategies across the sector to drive meaningful reform.

## UNIFIED VISION

Addressing issues of equity, wellbeing and workforce are essential to the advancement of the educational landscape in Australia.

Participants were unified in this shared commitment to fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and effective schooling environment for all students.

## DRIVEN BY INNOVATION

Autonomy has facilitated an environment where innovative education practices and technologies can thrive.

These advancements enhance student outcomes within Independent schools while driving broader educational reforms when adopted across the sector.

## COLLABORATION

This roundtable discussion highlighted a significant opportunity for cross-sectoral collaboration, with Independent schools ready to share their innovative approaches and successes.

This collaboration will extend the benefits of innovation and best practices to students and educators across Australian schools, fostering effective educational reform to improve outcomes for all.

## RESPONSIVE ADAPTATION

Independent schools demonstrate agility in adapting to evolving educational needs and challenges. They can rapidly implement change and evaluate the impact on student outcomes.

Participants showcased the dynamic capability of Independent schools to innovate, adapt and refine their practices to improve outcomes, offering effective and sustainable contributions to education reform.

# MINISTER'S KEY POINTS

## COMMITTED TO ENGAGING WITH ALL SCHOOLS

The Government is committed to engaging with all schools, including Independent schools, to inform the National School Reform Agreement. This engagement is facilitated through the Department of Education.

## 10-YEAR AGREEMENT

The Government is working towards a 10-year agreement with a 5-year review period.

## NECESSITY FOR REFORM

There is strong agreement on the necessity for reform, emphasising the crucial focus on achieving optimal outcomes for children.

## INNOVATION

The Independent school system possesses the capacity to innovate for the benefit of all schools and students.



# CASE STUDY 1

## FOSTERING INDEPENDENT THINKING - BETHANY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, PARALOWIE, SA



Presenters: Wendy Matear & Nathan Grierson

Bethany Christian School, positioned in an area with significant socio-economic challenges serve a diverse student body. For over 45% of students English is their second language, and over 33% of students with disability. The school's strategic focus on creative thinking, learning design, and personalised learning underscores its commitment to fostering equity in education.

The school's leadership in developing student agency and purpose, supported by a robust professional learning environment for teachers directly contributes to the discussion on student equity and attracting and retaining teachers.

This approach enhances student learning outcomes while empowering teachers and leaders to innovate and lead in educational reform.



### UNIFIED VISION

Bethany Christian School's commitment to personalised learning aligns with the consensus for equity-focused reform. Their approach demonstrates how targeted strategies can address diverse educational needs.

### DRIVEN BY INNOVATION

The school's leadership in student agency and professional development for teachers demonstrates how innovation, driven by autonomy, leads to significant improvements in teaching and learning practices.

### COLLABORATION

Bethany Christian School's initiatives demonstrate the value of collaboration in enhancing educational outcomes and teacher capacity.

### RESPONSIVE ADAPTATION

The school's adaptive strategies in response to their community's unique needs underscores the importance of flexibility and responsiveness in achieving educational equity.

# CASE STUDY 2

## FEELING VALUED AND SEEN - TREETOPS MONTESSORI SCHOOL, PERTH HILLS, WA



Presenters: Stuart Harris & Sharon Crossman

Treetops Montessori School's blend of Montessori and International Baccalaureate pedagogies exemplifies an innovative approach to wellbeing and education.

With mixed year levels fostering a non-comparative and non-competitive focus, the school tailors learning to each student's individual needs. In doing so, they have created a strong sense of community and student-centred education approach.

The school's flexible and responsive education model prioritises wellbeing and individualised learning.

Their success in creating a nurturing and empowering environment offers valuable insight in scalable practices for student and educator wellbeing.



### UNIFIED VISION

The school's individualised learning and wellbeing focus echos the unified vision for well-rounded educational reform shared by all participants of the roundtable.

### DRIVEN BY INNOVATION

Integrating Montessori and IB pedagogies, tailored to individual student needs, highlights the innovative and student-centred education model of Treetops Montessori. They show how innovative practices can drive positive change in wellbeing and learning outcomes.

### COLLABORATION

Their approach to education and wellbeing illustrates the potential for schools to share and adapt practices that prioritises student wellbeing.

### RESPONSIVE ADAPTATION

The school's flexible educational philosophy demonstrates a powerful model of responsive adaptation with student wellbeing and individual needs guiding teaching practices.

# CASE STUDY 3

## LEARNING THROUGH CULTURE - HYMBA YUMBA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL, SPRINGFIELD QLD



Presenters: Karla Brady & Jess Endean

Hymba Yumba Independent School provides a transformative education for First Nations students, integrating culture and community into all aspects of learning.

Their innovative approach addresses equity by focusing on improving literacy, numeracy and attendance while integrating First Nations culture in all areas of education, including the teaching and use of Indigenous language and Indigenous mindfulness techniques.

The school's partnerships and innovative programs exemplify effective strategies for engaging First Nations students and improving educational outcomes.

Hymba Yumba Independent School contributes to the broader dialogue on equity and wellbeing in education by highlighting the importance of culturally responsive teaching practices and community engagement.



### UNIFIED VISION

Their focus on First Nations education and community integration aligns with the emphasis on equity, showcasing how embracing cultural identity can lead to improved education outcomes.

### DRIVEN BY INNOVATION

The school's culturally enriched curriculum and community service programs represent innovative approaches to integrating First Nations perspectives while enhancing student engagement and achievement.

### COLLABORATION

Through the formation of partnerships and engaging in community-led initiatives, Hymba Yumba Independent School demonstrates how collaborative efforts can address the marginalisation of First Nations students.

### RESPONSIVE ADAPTATION

Their dynamic approach to First Nations education highlights their capacity for responsive adaptation by tailoring learning experiences to meet cultural and educational needs of the students.



# NEXT STEPS

Improving Outcomes for All: Leading Reform Through Innovation report to be released in April 2024.

Continue the dialogue with decision makers about the role of Independent schools in educational reform.

Continue to seek assurance from the Government regarding funding for outcomes outlined in the National School Reform Agreement.

