



# MEDIA RELEASE

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28 FEBRUARY 2025

## NATIONAL EDUCATION FORUM TO TACKLE THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIA

The future of Australian education takes centre stage today as Independent Schools Australia (ISA) and the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) host the National Education Forum in Canberra.

The event, following the national launch of ISA's *School Choice Counts* campaign, will bring together school leaders, policy experts, and politicians to discuss the key challenges and opportunities facing education.

ISA CEO Graham Catt and AHISA CEO Dr Chris Duncan will address attendees, alongside a lineup of leading voices in education and policy.

The event, hosted by ABC presenter Lisa Millar, features contributions from Senator Deborah O'Neill (representing Education Minister Jason Clare), Shadow Minister for Education Senator Sarah Henderson, one of Australia's leading behavioural scientists Dr Juliette Tobias-Webb, Education Demographer and former Senator John Black and The Australian's National Editor Dennis Shanahan.

ISA CEO Graham Catt said the forum provides a vital platform for discussing fairness in school policy, particularly in the lead-up to the Federal Election.

"The timing of this forum could not be more critical. Families are facing real cost-of-living pressures, and yet some political parties are threatening policies that could make school choice more expensive or out of reach," Mr Catt said.

"Yesterday, we launched School Choice Counts, a campaign to stand up for families who make sacrifices to give their children the best education."

"The reality is that families who choose Independent schools are everyday Australians, not an elite few. More than 60% come from low- and middle-income backgrounds, and over 140,000 students in regional and remote areas rely on these schools."

Mr Catt said that "attendees are looking forward to hearing Government Representative Senator Deborah O'Neill and Shadow Minister for Education Senator Sarah Henderson respond to the policy priorities that underpin the School Choice Counts campaign. "

"We also extended an invitation to the Australian Greens to address the forum and explain their policies to the school communities they consistently attack, unfortunately they couldn't come."



Dr Chris Duncan, AHISA CEO, highlighted the forum's role in exploring the broader challenges and opportunities in education.

"This year's theme, The Changing Landscape, is about understanding how schools, governments, and communities can work together to ensure the best outcomes for students," Dr Duncan said.

"The forum will focus on the Australian Government's Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, as well as future reforms that impact all school sectors. It's about engaging with policy and practice in a way that supports choice, innovation, and high-quality education for every student, no matter their background."

"The forum's panel session will explore the critical role that education plays in addressing the goals set by the National Agreement on 'Closing the Gap' by bringing together school and community leaders and an Australian Indigenous Education Foundation graduate to discuss the transformative power of education in overcoming the disparities faced by First Nations peoples in Australia, discussing challenges, what works and what doesn't work."

The National Education Forum brings together chairs and members of Independent school boards, principals, and education leaders to engage with key policymakers and analysts on the future of schooling.

### Event Details

**When:** Friday, 28 February 2025 | 8:30 AM – 4:00 PM

**Where:** Hotel Realm, Canberra

*Media Note – Media are to call or text Shaun Rigby on 0438021936 on arrival so he can give you a media pass. There is also a riser for televisions crews.*

### About Independent Schools Australia

Independent Schools Australia (ISA) represents the national interests of the Independent school sector, advocating for fair funding, school choice, and quality education for all students. ISA works closely with member associations to promote diversity, choice, and sustainable education policy.

### About the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

AHISA is the peak body for principals of Independent schools across Australia, supporting leadership excellence and fostering high-quality education through research, policy engagement, and professional development.

### Media Contacts:

Shaun Rigby – 0438 021 936 – [shaun.rigby@isa.edu.au](mailto:shaun.rigby@isa.edu.au)

Brendan Walsh – 0411 850 515 – [brendan.walsh@isa.edu.au](mailto:brendan.walsh@isa.edu.au)

Tanya Cunningham (AHISA) - 0433 314 598 - [Tanya.Cunningham@ahisa.edu.au](mailto:Tanya.Cunningham@ahisa.edu.au)

For more information – [www.isa.edu.au](http://www.isa.edu.au) and [www.ahisa.edu.au](http://www.ahisa.edu.au)

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