



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## SCHOOL CHOICE COUNTS - INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA LAUNCHES MAJOR ELECTION PUSH

Independent Schools Australia (ISA) has launched *School Choice Counts* – a significant national election campaign that will see a campaign toolkit being distributed to over 1,216 schools and advertising starting today.

Representing over 716,000 students nationally and a family, teacher and supporter community of 2.5 million voters, ISA is drawing a line in the sand and calling on the next Federal Government commit to critical policy measures.

At today's launch at Parliament House, Canberra ISA CEO Graham Catt said the campaign came from feedback from educators and families around the country.

"They are saying enough is enough, that families who choose Independent schools deserve fairness," Mr Catt said.

"Children are not political footballs. Families make sacrifices every day to give their children the best start in life. They should not be publicly vilified or penalised for choosing an Independent school.

"This election, we are standing up for the students, parents, and communities who are being targeted by misleading rhetoric and threats of policy changes that could drive up school fees and limit school choice.

"Our policy priorities are designed to give families peace of mind that they won't be forced to pay more for their child's education in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis."

### ***School Choice Counts* - Our Five Key Policy Priorities:**

#### **1. Protecting Family Choice**

Independent schools empower families to choose an education that aligns with their values, beliefs and child's needs. Many families make significant sacrifices to make this choice – particularly as cost-of-living pressures grow.

To keep this choice accessible:

- We call for stable, predictable federal funding that keeps school fees affordable.
- We urge all parties to rule out funding cuts that could limit family choice.

#### **2. Ending the Blame Game**

We believe every Australian child deserves access to a high-quality education that meets their unique needs and supports their future success – regardless of the school they choose or the sector it's in.

We should be united in this goal, but too often politics pits school sectors against each other.

To help focus on students and families and end division we need:

- A commitment to cross-sector collaboration to address shared challenges.
- A national campaign to promote understanding of how Australia's education system works and the critical role of all school sectors.

### **3. Supporting Vulnerable Students**

Independent schools educate over 157,000 students with disability, 19,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and thousands of disadvantaged young Australians.

To ensure these students thrive:

- We advocate for fair and adequate funding for schools serving vulnerable communities.
- We need to ensure there's a 'safety net' to guarantee our most disadvantaged students, and the schools that support them, receive the resources they need.

### **4. Investing in Cross-Sector Innovation**

Innovation in education benefits every student. To encourage sharing of new approaches that can deliver great student outcomes, support well-being and address our teacher workforce challenges we propose:

- A \$50 million cross-sectoral innovation fund to share and scale solutions to our current and future challenges.
- Support for collaboration between Independent, government, and Catholic schools.

### **5. Building Choice into the Future**

Demand for Independent schools is growing, with enrolments projected to rise by over 120,000 students in the next decade. Currently families and school communities contribute 90% of all capital funding. Government funding for the entire non-government sector is less than \$250 million annually compared to \$1.5 billion for government schools in NSW alone.

To help meet this future demand we need:

- Increased funding for the Capital Grants Program to help schools expand their capacity.
- Adjusted regional loadings that will support schools in rural and remote areas.

### **The Greens Are on Notice**

Mr Catt said ISA is putting the Australian Greens on notice in response to their divisive class-war rhetoric, which unfairly misrepresents Independent school families.

“There isn’t an Independent school parent, teacher, or principal who doesn’t support full funding for public schools. But this isn’t a competition. Students in our government schools should be fully funded, and so should those in Independent schools. Promoting the idea that funding public schools fairly means stripping funding from Independent school students is just wrong,” he said.

“The Greens attack hardworking families with misleading and inflammatory rhetoric. It needs to stop now. This election, we will make sure every Independent school parent knows who supports them—and who is wants to make their child’s education more expensive.

“We will be sending a loud and clear message with a targeted advertising campaign beginning today in 17 key seats—including those where Independent school families make up a significant portion of the electorate.

“This is not just a political debate—it is about hundreds of thousands of families across Australia who are being unfairly targeted. Parents will remember which representatives stood up for them—and who wanted to make their lives harder.”

Mr Catt said the campaign will also aim to expose the myths around how Independent Schools are portrayed.

“The attacks on Independent schools are ideological, not factual,” Mr Catt said.

“Most Independent school families are everyday Australians. More than 60% come from low- and middle-income backgrounds, and the median Independent school fee is just \$5,537 per year—not the misleading figures pushed by critics.

“Hundreds of thousands of working Australian families are being unfairly targeted in a political blame game.”

### **Independent Schools Play a Vital Role in Australia’s Education System**

Independent schools educate:

- ✓ 19,000+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- ✓ 157,000 students with disability
- ✓ 140,000+ students in regional and remote areas
- ✓ 15,500+ students in Special Assistance Schools who have faced significant life challenges
- ✓ The largest number of boarding students in Australia

“Politicians who threaten funding cuts are not just targeting schools—they are targeting vulnerable students who rely on the support Independent schools provide,” Mr Catt said.

“We want every child—whether in a public, Catholic, or Independent school—to have access to a great education. What we won’t stand for is politicians trying to punish tax-paying families for making the choice that’s best for their child.

“This election, politicians will have to decide whether they stand with families or against them. Our message is clear: We will fight for school choice. And we won’t let Independent school families be ignored.

“Our parents are watching.”

Visit – <https://schoolchoicecounts.isa.edu.au/> to see the full suite of policies and learn more.

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## About Independent Schools Australia

Independent Schools Australia (ISA) represents the national interests of the Independent school sector. ISA works closely with member associations to advocate for choice, diversity, and fair funding—ensuring that all Australian families have access to high-quality education that meets their children’s needs.

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