



# MEDIA RELEASE

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

---

DATE: 5 MAR 2025

---

## A REAL NATIONAL CONVERSATION ON EQUITY IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS IS OVERDUE

---

Independent Schools Australia (ISA) CEO Graham Catt has welcomed comments from former Secretary of the Federal Department of Education, Dr. Michele Bruniges, emphasising the need for a considered national debate on equity and disadvantage in Australian schooling.

"The study undertaken by Dr. Bruniges and the Paul Ramsay Foundation into concentrations of disadvantage is invaluable and will provide policymakers with crucial insights," said Mr. Catt.

"For too long, interest groups have framed the issue as a public vs. private debate, when in reality, a broader and more nuanced discussion is needed, one that recognises the vital role all school sectors play in supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable students across Australia."

Mr Catt said Independent schools are diverse institutions, serving students from all walks of life. More than 157,000 students with disability, 19,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from refugee backgrounds, and 140,000 students in regional and remote areas are enrolled in Independent schools across the country.

"These schools are certainly doing their share in addressing disadvantage," said Mr. Catt.

"Many Independent schools provide targeted fee assistance and tailored programs for students facing disadvantage. Special Assistance Schools, for example, support over 15,500 students who have disengaged from mainstream education, offering intensive support to help them back on track. Community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools, which are part of the Independent sector, also work to provide opportunities and innovative approaches to education."

Mr. Catt noted that access to a quality education should not depend on a postcode lottery, where families feel pressured to spend millions of dollars to buy into the catchment zones of well-resourced public schools.

"We must acknowledge that fairness in education goes beyond funding debates and includes ensuring all families have genuine choices about where they send their children to school," he said.

“It is disappointing to see some, including the Australian Greens, seek to position this important work as an attack on non-government schools. Instead of using divisive rhetoric, we need collaboration across all sectors and governments to address the systemic challenges that this report will identify.”

ISA is the national peak body representing 1,216 Independent schools with close to 720,000 enrolled students, accounting for approximately 17 per cent of Australian school enrolments and a workforce of 122,000 people. Independent schools are diverse, serving a range of different communities across Australia.

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

ENDS

---

Media Contacts: Shaun Rigby	0438 021 936	shaun.rigby@isa.edu.au
Brendan Walsh	0411 850 515	brendan.walsh@isa.edu.au