



29 July 2024

Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,

**Inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Sponsorship and Nomination Processes) Bill 2024 [Provisions]**

Independent Schools Australia (ISA) welcomes this opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee's Inquiry into the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Sponsorship and Nomination Processes) Bill 2024 [Provisions].

ISA is the national peak body for Independent schooling in Australia. ISA represents the sector on national issues and engages with the Australian Government, national agencies, media, key stakeholders, and the wider Australian community.

Working with the eight state and territory Associations of Independent Schools (AISs), ISA represents 716,800 students, over 1,215 schools and a workforce of 122,000 people.

The Independent sector encompasses considerable diversity in size and location of schools, and the types of students enrolled. The latest available data shows that more than one in six Australian school students attends an Independent school. For secondary students, it is over one in five. Students at Independent schools reflect the full diversity of Australian society – including those who experience one or multiple forms of disadvantage.

Most families with children enrolled in non-government schools are middle-to-low-income earners, increasingly from culturally diverse backgrounds, and residing in outer-suburban and inner-suburban communities. Many of these families are currently facing economic stress and are making substantial sacrifices for their children's education.

Many Independent schools provide a religious or values-based education. Others promote a specific educational philosophy or interpretation of mainstream education. Some have been established by community groups seeking to meet particular needs or to reflect the religious values of a community. Independent Catholic schools are a significant part of the sector, accounting for eight per cent of the Independent sector's enrolments.

Most Independent schools are set up and governed independently on an individual school basis. However, some schools with common aims and educational philosophies are governed and administered as systems, for example, Lutheran schools. Systemic schools account for 20 per cent of schools in the sector.

With the current national teacher shortage impacting Australian schools, many schools are looking overseas to fill gaps in school staffing including specialist teachers at all levels of school education. Some schools are also seeking a range of other staff to fill areas of need such as in regional and remote schools and in boarding schools in the Independent sector.

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Many Australian schools, including Independent schools, are seeking to fill these vacancies through offshore recruitment.

*Publication of the list of employer sponsors.*

While ISA supports the principles behind the proposed development of a public register of approved sponsors as outlined in the Explanatory Memorandum, ISA is concerned that such a list could expose schools wanting to sponsor only one or two employees in very specialist areas to a large number of unsolicited enquiries.

While the EM states that “this will help temporary skilled migrant workers find a new sponsor and provide a resource to check that a sponsoring employer is legitimate”, this is generally contrary to how schools recruit employees. Further, there are many small schools that would not be able to manage a large number of inquiries from prospective employees.

ISA requests that the Committee consider the inclusion of a threshold number of employment opportunities available, which would be taken into account when deciding whether employee details can be published on a public register.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

Graham Catt  
Chief Executive Officer