

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

This submission is presented on behalf of 86 independent member schools in South Australia.

The ISB is affiliated with the National Council of Independent Schools' Associations (NCISA) and has endorsed the submission presented by NCISA to the Senate Committee.

New Recurrent Funding Arrangements

The States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Bill, 2000 contains a very significant reform of the recurrent funding arrangements for independent system and non-system schools. The introduction of the Socio-Economic Status scheme is supported by a significant majority of independent schools in South Australia.

The ISB urges the Senate Committee to support the new recurrent funding arrangements for non-government schools and to facilitate the passage of the legislation through the Parliament so that schools across Australia (government and non-government) can undertake budget planning for 2001.

Characteristics of the Independent Sector

The ISB urges the Committee to recognise:

- the changing socio-economic profile within the independent sector
- the variations in the contribution of parents, State and Federal governments in funding government and non-government schools
- the significant role of the Commonwealth in providing public funds for recurrent capital and Targeted program funds to government schools
- the entitlement of non-government school students to support services provided by governments
- that non-government schools save both levels of government about 2.5 billion per annum of public funds

The determination of funding to non-government schools is based on a % of the average cost of educating a child in a government school (AGSRC). The ISB requests that the Senate Committee endorse the development of a more

adequate AGSRC as the basis for providing a more equitable allocation of public funds to students to non-government schools.

Funding Maintenance

The ISB supports **funding maintenance** for those independent schools that could suffer a reduction in their recurrent funding through implementation of the SES and calls for a longer-term maintenance policy to be determined for these schools.

Accountability

The ISB acknowledges the need for financial and educational accountability for the use of public funds; however it does not support excessive accountability that may inhibit innovation or diversity within the independent sector.

Changes to Targeted Programs

The ISB requests that the Senate Committee recognise the significant role of the Commonwealth in the provision of public funds to non-government schools for students with special learning needs.

The ISB considers that in the interest of efficiency and effectiveness there should be one school authority within each school sector that should administer Targeted Programs. In South Australia, that would be the South Australian Independent Schools Targeted Programs Authority inc. The Commonwealth government should continue to recognise that Authority for the purpose of establishing agreements with the sector and for consultation purposes.

The ISB welcomes the potential flexibility that may arise from the restructuring of the Targeted Programs.

The ISB is disappointed in the level of support provided by both Commonwealth and State governments for students with disabilities and considers this is a major policy issue that requires further negotiation with school authorities beyond the passage of the States Grants Bill through the Commonwealth Parliament.