

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding for Schools

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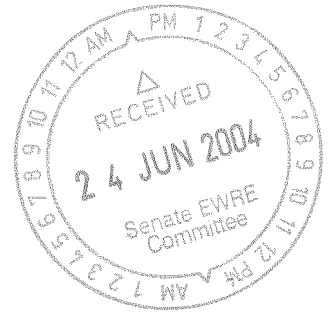
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ANNESLEY COLLEGE
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The Secretary
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education References Committee
Suite SG52
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir

INQUIRY INTO FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS

Annesley College is a day and boarding school of the Uniting Church in Australia for girls from Kindergarten to Year 12. The College was established in 1902 and currently has 450 students. Students in the main come from middle class backgrounds as is reflected in our SES score of 110. This will reduce to 109 in 2005

Our funding profile per student is as follows:

From the Federal Government we receive per capita

- Primary Student \$2254
- Secondary Student \$2824

From the State Government we receive per capita

- Primary Student \$466
- Secondary Student \$648

We receive no capital funding from the government and approximately 78% of the cost of educating a child is raised from private sources.

Below is a list of points that demonstrates why funding levels to the independent sector need to be maintained

- School education is an important public good. Governments, both nationally and at state and territory level, have a responsibility to provide each Australian child – no matter what their family background or what school they attend – with a reasonable level of funding for their schooling. All school students deserve government support for their education irrespective of the school they attend.
- Non-government schools are important providers of education for the children of Australia and should be recognised for their contribution to the economic wellbeing of the nation. Over one million students are currently enrolled in non-government schools. Non-government schools account for one-third of total school enrolments and some 37 per cent of secondary enrolments. In all capital cities other than Darwin, non-government schools educate over 40 per cent of secondary students.
- Governments must recognise that a substantial proportion of Australia's system of school education, like the public systems of health and transport, is delivered by private (not-for-profit) providers. Government schools funding models must recognise the validity of diversity in schooling provision.
- Non-government schools are registered to operate as schooling providers with their state or territory government. The school registration process ensures non-government schools meet the public goals of schooling and community standards. Students attending non-government schools should be eligible for a reasonable basic level of funding by governments in support of their education. In addition, students with special needs who attend non-government schools should be able to access the same needs-based funding and government services available to students attending government-owned schools.
- Parents value diversity in schooling options and the freedom to choose among them in order to best meet the educational needs of their children. Parents who choose to educate their children in non-government schools demonstrate their willingness to play a partnership role with governments in funding the cost of their children's education. They contribute to the cost of their children's education from their after-tax dollars.
- Parents who exercise their freedom of choice in schooling options for their children should not attract financial penalty. Parents should not be penalised for their willingness to spend money on their children's education.
- Parental contribution to the education of their children in non-government schools represents a significant proportion of Australia's expenditure on school education. If the students in non-government schools were educated in government-owned schools, governments would need to find another \$4.2 billion each year in recurrent funding alone to be able to educate all students to the standard currently available in government-owned

schools. In our school, parents are asked to pay around \$6,500 in fees to meet the gap in funding from governments.

- Students in non-government schools are not eligible for the same level of government funding as students attending government-owned schools.
- The current system of allocating general recurrent grants for non-government schools from the Australian Government (the SES model) provides a reasonable measure of the capacity of school communities to contribute to the costs of schooling.
- In contrast, funding for government schools is provided without any assessment of the financial circumstances of their school communities.
- Much of the recent public debate on schools funding has focused on the facilities available to independent schools. Unlike the provision of capital infrastructure in government-owned schools, facilities in independent schools are largely funded through borrowings and the generosity of school communities. It is estimated that, nationally, 86 per cent of funds for capital development in independent schools has been contributed by the school communities. This is another saving to governments.
- Australian government funding should be retained in its current form for the coming quadrennial period (2005 – 2008) to allow our families some certainty to plan for their financial commitments. Stability and certainty in funding is most important for our school's continued viability and ability to sustain quality in educational provision.

In line with the Education Charter of the Uniting Church in relation to access and equity, Annesley College offers a number of scholarships and bursaries to families who would otherwise find it difficult to access education at the school. The inquiry needs to be mindful of the efforts made by all independent and non-government schools to support the aims of the government to ensure that all Australian children achieve a well rounded education and hence is entitled to government support.

Yours faithfully



MARION GAERTNER-JONES
Principal