

The Senate

Standing Committee on
Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations

Schools Assistance Bill 2008 [Provisions]

Education Legislation Amendment Bill
2008 [Provisions]

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Members of the Committee

Members

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Substituting Senators

Senator Christine Milne	AG, Tasmania (substituting for Senator Siewert)
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Secretariat

Mr John Carter, Secretary
Ms Katie Meyers, Research Officer
Ms Candice Lester, Executive Assistant
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia
Phone: 02 6277 3521
Fax: 02 6277 5706
Email: eewr.sen@aph.gov.au
Internet: www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/eet_ctte/index.htm

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Chapter 1

Government Senators' Majority Report

Schools Assistance Bill 2008

1.1 On 15 October 2008 the Senate referred to this committee the provisions of the Schools Assistance Bill 2008 and the Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 for report by 27 November 2008.

Conduct of the inquiry and submissions

1.2 The committee advertised the inquiry on its website and in *The Australian* on 22 October 2008, calling for submissions by 31 October 2008. The committee also directly contacted a number of relevant organisations and individuals to notify them of the inquiry and to invite submissions and appearances before the committee. Fifty submissions were received as listed in Appendix 1. These appear on the committee's website.

1.3 A public hearing was held in Canberra on 19 November 2008. The witnesses are listed at Appendix 2.

Acknowledgement

1.4 The committee thanks all those who contributed to its inquiry by preparing written submissions and giving evidence at the hearing.

Background

1.5 The *Schools Assistance Bill 2008* (the bill) represents a change in the way Commonwealth funding is delivered to schools. The bill follows on, in part, the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together– Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004* which provided funding for both government and non-government schools for the period 2004–2008. This bill covers funding arrangements for non-government schools only. Future funding for government schools will be provided through the National Education Agreement, which is currently being negotiated with the states and territories through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The bill will align the non-government school sector with the reporting requirements for government schools to be set out in the National Education Agreement.¹

1.6 The bill provides an estimated \$28 billion of funding for non-government schools for the period 2009–2012. It will apply transparency and accountability

1 Marilyn Harrington, 'Schools Assistance Bill 2008', *Bills Digest*, no. 37, p. 2.

requirements to the non-government sector that are the same as government schools. This means, for the first time, the performance of non-government schools will be scrutinised in the same manner as government schools, with both sectors providing information on performance, finances and programs. The introduction of these measures gives effect to the Government's election commitment to improve transparency in all schools.²

1.7 The bill also provides funding for Indigenous students attending non-government schools. Previously, this funding was appropriated under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000*. The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 will amend this Act for this purpose. The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 is discussed in Chapter 2.

1.8 The bill represents the government's commitment to provide scrutiny of Commonwealth funding for non-government schools for the next quadrennium. The government has set the goal of making Australia 'one of the most highly educated and skilled nations on earth'³, and of improving school standards. Part of this improvement is ensuring that all schools are bound by the same reporting and transparency requirements. Another key element is the proposed implementation of a national curriculum to make educational standards consistent across the country. Ultimately, the government is hoping this bill will reduce the gap in the perception of quality between government and non-government schools and focus attention on the real needs of schools, rather on divisive issues which have affected school policy in the past. This was explained by the Hon. Julia Gillard MP in her speech to Independent Schools Council of Australia Parliamentary Forum:

For too long the debate about schools was diverted into unproductive avenues. Public schools were pitted against private, traditional curriculum was pitted against new, and academic ends were pitted against technical. That era is now over. The true target of our efforts must be individual students no matter which type of school they attend. The Commonwealth has embarked on a new direction.⁴

1.9 Submissions received by the committee supported the bill being passed expeditiously to ensure funding for non-government schools is provided in time for the new quadrennium, commencing early in 2009. However, this support was conditional on certain issues being addressed, namely the implementation of a national curriculum and the proposed transparency and reporting requirements within the provisions of the bill. As was revealed at the public hearing, however, representatives of non-government school organisations understood that these concerns would be

2 Explanatory Memorandum, *Schools Assistance Bill 2008*, pp 1–4.

3 Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Speech to the ISCA Parliamentary Forum*, media release, 1 September 2008, p. 2.
<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p?query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2FFEFR6%22> accessed 20 November 2008

4 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

addressed in discussions with the government after the bills were passed, and that they were in no position to influence the government's immediate legislative intentions.

Provisions of the bill

1.10 The purpose of the bill is to provide funding to non-government schools in a manner that ensures transparency and accountability of the sector is consistent with public schools. As part of the government's commitment to improving educational standards across the country, new reporting requirements will be placed on the non-government school sector. For this to occur, the bill introduces six performance and transparency requirements which are set out in clauses 17 to 22. Subparagraph 19(2)(b)(ii) allows the Minister to report publicly on non-government schools' performance and financial arrangements. Clause 22 provides for the compulsory implementation of a national curriculum as a condition of funding.

1.11 Clause 24 provides that a funding agreement must require reports of financial information to the Minister. Reports relating to the following are required:

- (a) programs of financial assistance provided under this Act, so far as they relate to the relevant authority;
- (b) the financial operations (including the financial viability and funding sources) of:
 - (i) in any case – the school or other body; and
 - (ii) in the case of an approved school system – the schools (including each particular school) in the system.

1.12 The Government's commitment to retain the current system of general recurrent funding for non-government schools is reflected in clauses 38 to 56 of the bill. Non-government schools will continue to be funded through the Socioeconomic Status (SES) funding model introduced in 2001. This model allows for the allocation of funding to be based on the socioeconomic profile of the school community, whereby the higher a school's SES score the lower the per student funding rate. Routine revision of SES scores will occur over the next four years, but provisions of the bill ensure that no school will receive less funding due to the re-assessment of its SES score.⁵

1.13 The bill allows for the funding of current targeted programs under clauses 86 to 99. These programs include short term emergency assistance; education in country areas; teaching English to new arrivals; and literacy, numeracy and special learning needs.⁶

5 Explanatory Memorandum, *Schools Assistance Bill 2008*

6 Marilyn Harrington, 'Schools Assistance Bill 2008', *Bills Digest*, no. 37, p. 11.

Issues

1.14 The committee notes a number of concerns with the bill raised in both submissions and in evidence taken at the committee's public hearing. Although the majority of submissions supported the passage of the bill, most were apprehensive about a number of the provisions that were conditional to funding.

Implementation of a national curriculum

1.15 In December 2007, all governments agreed through COAG to develop and apply a national curriculum. Successive governments have been interested in pursuing this goal, and renewed enthusiasm for the idea straddled the change of government in November 2007. The national curriculum has bipartisan support. The implementation of a national curriculum by 31 January 2012 as a condition of funding is provided for in Clause 22 of the bill. In developing a single curriculum from kindergarten to Year 12, the government aims to create uniform achievement standards and broadly common curriculum content across the entire school sector.⁷

1.16 The committee notes concerns regarding the proposed national curriculum in submissions made to the inquiry. The most prevalent concern expressed in submissions is the perceived lack of flexibility in the delivery of learning. The Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS) argued that it is the very nature of the non-government school curricula that sets it apart from public schools:

There are numerous philosophical, theological and pragmatic implications attached to curricula and AACS would be most concerned if anything flowing from the National Curricula were to compromise its schools' capacity to maintain their distinctive approaches, content, interpretation and pedagogies.⁸

1.17 At the hearing it became apparent that some members of the AACS are concerned lest they be barred under curriculum guidelines from teaching the doctrine of 'creationism'. They took away with them the committee's view that it was highly unlikely there would be any presumption of what should not be taught. The Minister's assurances in this regard were made known at the hearing by officers from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

1.18 Concerns were also raised about the future of alternative curricula programs such as the International Baccalaureate in the proposed national curriculum. The Independent Schools Council of Australia also argued the importance of non-government schools retaining flexibility in their curriculum. In their submission, the Council expresses concern over the future of these alternative programs:

7 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 25*, p. 6.

8 Australian Association of Christian Schools, *Submission 2*, p. 3.

The capacity to delivery the curriculum according to a school's philosophy and pedagogical approach is essential for the continued operation of these schools. It is not clear that this will be possible under this legislation.⁹

1.19 A number of submissions expressed hesitation over the acceptance of a curriculum that is yet to be written, but the committee believes such concerns are unfounded. The national curriculum proposes uniform standards for each of the key learning areas– English, mathematics, the sciences and history. However, outside these core requirements, there will be flexibility allowing schools to implement curriculum content at school level. It is inconceivable that there will be no provisions for discretion and choice in subject content. Rather than restrict school curriculum, the government sees the proposed curriculum as setting key educational standards for all schools, and addressing concerns that have arisen in many quarters about standards and about pedagogy which is most effective in raising standards, particularly in regard to literacy and numeracy.

1.20 In their submission, the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations argued that the introduction of a national curriculum will ensure all students have access to the essentials of learning regardless of school they attend.¹⁰ In response to claims of inflexibility, Minister Gillard explained:

The national curriculum will not be a straightjacket for schools. It will provide for flexibility and scope to allow schools and teachers to implement its content and achievement standards in appropriate ways at the local and school level. It should not interfere with the ability if independent schools to continue to offer local curriculum arrangements within the requirements of the curriculum essentials of the national curriculum.¹¹

1.21 The committee expects the government will take into consideration these concerns over curriculum flexibility when finalising the implementation of the national curriculum. Furthermore, the committee notes that representatives of non-government schools will participate in curriculum writing and consultative bodies established to advise on national curriculum matters.

Funding transparency and audit reports

1.22 In bridging the gap between public and non-government schools, the government has promised to apply the same financial transparency requirements across the education sector. In doing so, the government hopes to gain a better understanding of the financial requirements of schools, and the current state of the education system. However, the issue of funding transparency of non-government

9 Independent Schools Council of Australia, *Submission 31*, p. 13.

10 DEEWR, *Submission 25*, p. 6.

11 Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 21 October 2008, p. 48.

schools has proved to be contentious, with a large number of submissions focussing on this issue.

1.23 Some submissions are opposed to Section 15(c) of the bill which allows the Minister to refuse or delay payment to a non-government school if a qualified audit is conducted. Concern with audit process derive from the possibility that the audit may be qualified for reasons other than financial viability, such as a difference in accounting standards as argued by the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AISV) in evidence given to the committee.¹² Likewise, in their submission The Geelong College argued:

A qualified audit opinion may be given in an annual audit of a school where the auditor disagrees with the treatment or disclosure of information in the financial statements...A qualified audit may therefore arise from an issue completely removed from the school's ability to viably operate. It may even arise for non-financial reasons.¹³

1.24 The committee believes that fears about qualified audit reports are without foundation. As explained by the Minister, an auditor may express concern regarding a school's finances or viability without qualifying their opinion. This section of the bill is described as a 'probity provision' and relates purely to the 'appropriate and proper use of government funds'.¹⁴ The committee is confident that the audit process will not be used in a way which harms non-government schools which are in all respects compliant with the law.

1.25 A number of submissions suggested that the more stringent financial reporting requirements are unnecessary. They argue that non-government schools are already subject to Commonwealth accountability mechanisms such as the financial questionnaire. In their submission to the inquiry, the AISV also questioned the need for government to obtain this information:

Investment in education by parents and the community from private after-tax income is not a matter for government. Big brother supervision of parental decision on investing personal resources in their children's education is extreme micromanagement. The requirements on schools to report to parents and disclose their financial activities are more than sufficient for parents to determine the value of schooling.¹⁵

1.26 Similarly, they felt that the current reporting requirements were sufficient:

It is AHISA's view that current reporting arrangements for independent schools' financial data more than adequately meet public accountability and

12 Ms Michelle Green, Chief Executive, AISV, *Committee Hansard*, 19 November 2008, p. 37.

13 The Geelong College, *Submission 16*, p. 2.

14 Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 21 October 2008, p. 9760.

15 Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, *Submission 35*, p. 2.

transparency requirements and AHISA recommends this be taken into account in the framing of the regulations pertaining to the legislation.¹⁶

1.27 In evidence given to the committee during the public hearing, it was claimed that publishing the source of funding of schools may discourage private donations. The appropriateness of public reporting was also questioned on the grounds that for some independent schools Commonwealth funding constituted only a small proportion of income. The Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV) told the committee:

In a local community people will give to a school, but they will not give to every school and they may well be concerned that, if they provide money to one school and that is publicly disclosed, they will then be under attack from other schools, including government schools. We believe that will have a direct impact on people's willingness to give in a corporate sense. There are other more specific examples that others might want to address.¹⁷

1.28 Furthermore, the AISV also voiced their concern regarding the possible misuse of school financial data by the media. Dr Heather Schnagl, Vice-Chairman of the organisation claimed:

We are concerned about the potential, in publishing all sources of moneys, for it to be distorted in the public press. I can just see the headlines on the front page of the media if they are published out there: 'So-and-so school has this amount of money to spend on each individual student.'¹⁸

1.29 Conversely, some submissions supported the stringent financial scrutiny of non-government schools. In their submission, the New South Wales Teachers Federation pointed to the transparency of the government school sector, and argued that non-government schools need to become just as transparent:

The public education system is subject to the most intense scrutiny, through reports to Parliament and other bodies, to parents and through the media. In NSW they are obliged to report publicly on their financial affairs. Public schools have found themselves in the position of having their bank balances published in the tabloid press, the information provided to them by official channels. No such scrutiny is applied to private schools which act with the benefit of 'commercial-in-confidence' clauses. There can only ever be a perception of any semblance of "fairness" in funding when there is full knowledge of the circumstances of the private schools sector...¹⁹

1.30 The committee considers that the grounds for opposition to increased financial transparency of non-government schools are insubstantial. Increased transparency of

16 Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, *Submission 24*, p. 4.

17 Ms Michelle Green, Chief Executive, AISV, *Committee Hansard*, 19 November 2008, pp 34–35.

18 Dr Heather Schnagl, Vice-Chairman, AISV, *Committee Hansard*, 19 November 2008, p. 33.

19 New South Wales Teachers Federation, *Submission 15*, p. 2.

the financial resources of non-government schools is essential to gaining a better understanding of the current state of the country's education system. The funding transparency provisions in the bill will allow the government to target financial assistance effectively and will make financial reporting requirements consistent across both government and non-government schools. It will make possible more accurate indications of cost-benefit trends. The fear that private donors will be discouraged out of fear of identification is without grounds. DEEWR officials advised the committee that:

It does identify it in an aggregated level [the sources of income]. But in terms of what would be reported publicly, that is still to be developed in consultation with the non-government sector and also through the expert working group...But it is not the intention to go to that level of disaggregation. Private donors would not be revealed in that sort of way. It would be aggregated up.²⁰

National Education Agreement and performance reporting

1.31 In *Federal Labor's Commitment to Lift School Standards*, the government made an election commitment to improve transparency in schools through the introduction of national testing and public reporting on performance of schools. This commitment has materialised as a central element of the schools assistance bill. The National Education Agreement currently being finalised through COAG provides for performance and accountability requirements to be applied to government schools. The Schools Assistance Bill aims to make requirements on non-government schools consistent with this agreement. The National Education Agreement plays a central role in the government's education reform agenda. Aligning requirements of non-government schools with those of government schools will ensure consistency and transparency in performance reporting across all schools.

1.32 A number of submissions made to the inquiry expressed apprehension at the proposed publication of school performance reports. While recognising the collection of this data may assist the government in targeting needs-based funding, concern has arisen regarding the potential misuse of such data. In their submission, the Australian Association of Christian Schools explained:

...we have significant concerns about the potential uses and abuses of this data once it is in the public arena. Of particular concern are the schools that are most exposed to social dysfunction and socio economic disadvantage...AACS believes that this data, once collected, should be scaffolded with carefully designed confidentiality protocols that protect schools from a predatory media.²¹

20 Ms Deb Rollings, Branch Manager Schools Policy, Grants and Reporting Branch, DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, 19 November 2008, p. 60.

21 Australian Association of Christian Schools, *Submission 2*, p. 3.

1.33 Raising the issue of the possible misuses of school data, Hillcrest Christian College asked:

Furthermore, how will this information be used? Too frequently we see information gathered by the Government end up in the media only to be distorted and misrepresented. How will the rights of our community be respected and protected in such an information gathering exercise?²²

1.34 There are fears that the release of such information will unfairly rank non-government schools. The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) argues in their submission that data collected may be used to 'denigrate certain schools or teaching programs'.²³ Moreover, such reporting requirements are expected by some to 'add to the already significant regulatory burden'²⁴ faced by schools.

1.35 In response to concerns raised over the publication of school performance reports, the Minister rebutted claims that the release of such data would create disadvantage amongst schools. Instead, she explained the use of such reports would enable the government to allocate resources more fairly and effectively and provide parents with more information about schooling options for their children.²⁵ Furthermore, the Minister explained that schools would be compared with other like schools so as to avoid unfair comparisons.²⁶ The Minister also responded to suggestions that simplistic league tables would be created and stated:

I want to emphasize that these will not lead to the creation of dumb league tables that tell us little but to smart reports that show us how well each school is meeting agreed standards compared to schools with similar enrolments and challenges.²⁷

1.36 The committee recognises that performance reporting needs to be consistent for all schools for the government to achieve its education improvement goals. The committee has some regard for the arguments that 'league tables' can give a misleading impression of overall school performance. They may inflate the reputations of some schools and underrate the effectiveness of others. On the other hand, the arguments of independent schools are inconsistent with the otherwise competitive tendencies of schools in asserting their commitment to excellence. Competition is one of the main rationales for the continuing existence of independent

22 Hillcrest Christian College, *Submission 29*, p. 2.

23 National Catholic Education Commission, *Submission 28*, p. 2.

24 AISV, *Submission 35*, p. 10.

25 Josh Gordon, 'Gillard dismisses school league table anger', *The Age*, 17 August 2008, p. 12.

26 Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 21 October 2008, p. 9759.

27 Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Speech to the ISCA Parliamentary Forum*, media release, 1 September 2008, p. 5.
<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22media%2Fpressrel%2FFEFR6%22> accessed 20 November 2008

schools and for the support they receive from the Commonwealth. If parents send their children to independent schools in the expectations of higher achievement than they would receive elsewhere, this should be tested. In practice, published performance on school data is highly unlikely to result in a rush of students from one school and into another on the basis of this performance. Enrolment stability is unlikely to be effected by this measure.

The SES model

1.37 The government will continue the SES funding arrangements for non-government schools under the provisions of the bill. Introduced in 2001, the SES funding model links the residential addresses of students enrolled at the school to Census data to produce a socioeconomic profile of the school community and its ability to support the school. Under the SES model, funding is allocated according to the socioeconomic status of the community the school is located in. Schools which draw students from largely high SES areas receive lower levels of funding than schools which draw from areas of average or low SES.²⁸ SES scores will be reviewed over the next four years.

1.38 The use of the SES funding model, as well as the transparency and reporting requirements outlined in the provisions of the bill, has generated concern regarding its use in the future. The additional reporting requirements placed on schools are seen by some as signalling the abolition of the SES model. Ms Joy Shepherd, Principal of St Hilda's Anglican School in Perth explained:

I think the additional reporting requirements for programs and financial operations suggest there's a move away from the commitment to the current SES as a basis of grants for non-government schools.²⁹

1.39 The belief that the new reporting requirements may undermine the continued use of the SES model was evident in a number of submissions. Geelong College questioned the introduction of these new requirements, fearing they could form an alternative funding system which would replace the SES model of funding.³⁰ The College showed support for the SES funding arrangements in their submission:

The Geelong college has in the past stated its strong support for the SES model of funding...the SES model eliminated many inequities and went further towards producing a 'level playing field' than its predecessor...³¹

1.40 Christian Schools Australia argue the benefits of the SES model, citing its transparency and independence from both schools and government as key reasons for

28 DEEWR, *Submission 25*, p. 12.

29 Bethany Hiatt, '*Grant agenda worries schools*', *West Australian*, 29 October 2008, p. 7.

30 Geelong College, *Submission 16*, p. 3.

31 *Ibid.*,

their support.³² The NCEC argued the use of the SES methodology 'has provided a degree of funding stability for Catholic schools'.³³

1.41 The Lutheran Education Australia submission acknowledged there are issues that need to be addressed with respect to the SES model. However, they are 'confident that the announced funding review for 2010 will allow these issues to be identified and addressed'.³⁴

1.42 The Australian Education Union has consistently opposed the SES model, which it sees as a device of funding for resource rich schools at the expense of those less endowed. Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, President of the Australian Education Union told the committee:

In approaching this inquiry, we want to again restate what is in our submission—namely, our critique of the architecture of the funding arrangements which regrettably the Rudd government has embraced in their entirety and put forward again for another four years. It is regrettable because the architecture of the funding system is flawed and known to be flawed, and it is not only our own critique that shows that.³⁵

1.43 The committee notes that research conducted by the Department has indicated problems with this model, and that it will be further evaluated during the forthcoming quadrennium. In response to opposition of the model, the government has maintained that it will review the SES funding program over the next four years.

Abolition of establishment grants

1.44 Introduced in 2001, establishment grants were introduced to assist newly commencing independent schools. The grants were implemented to allow these new schools to be competitive with existing schools, particularly newly established Catholic systemic schools. At the time, Catholic schools were funded outside the SES model without regard to the socioeconomic status of their school community. As Catholic systemic schools became fully integrated into the SES system of funding and therefore have had their funding determined on the same basis as new independent schools, the government decided establishment grant assistance is no longer needed.³⁶

1.45 The committee notes that while the establishment grants are welcome, new schools are not totally dependent on this assistance. Representing the Independent Schools Council of Australia, Mr Bill Daniels told the committee:

32 Christian Schools Australia, *Submission 36*, p. 4.

33 National Catholic Education Commission, *Submission 28*, p. 2.

34 Lutheran Education Australia, *Submission 39*, p. 2.

35 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, President, Australian Education Union, *Committee Hansard*, 19 November 2008, p. 17.

36 DEEWR, *Submission 25*, p. 14.

From an ISCA perspective, we do not consider that to be a major issue. It was certainly a useful contribution for new schools that were being established to help them get over the hurdles of the first couple of years, the additional start-up costs of the school...It was certainly a valuable contribution, but I do not think it will prevent the opening of schools that are determined to open.³⁷

1.46 Similarly, Mrs Therese Temby of the NCEC informed the committee at the public hearing:

...most schools when they open have very few enrolments so in fact the establishment grant, because it was per capita based, was quite small. So, therefore, I do not believe it will be a disincentive to the establishment of new Catholic schools.³⁸

1.47 The committee believes that the abolition of the establishment grants will not pose a hurdle to the formation of new non-government schools.

37 Mr Bill Daniels, Executive Director, Independent Schools Council of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, p. 7.

38 Mrs Therese Temby, Chair, National Catholic Education Commission, *Committee Hansard*, p. 14.

Chapter 2

Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008

Background

2.1 Since the Aboriginal Education (Supplementary Assistance) Amendment Bill was passed in 1989, Commonwealth funding for Indigenous education has contained two main elements: assistance to individual students and direct funding to institutions providing courses and training. Although emphasis has shifted toward funding of targeted initiatives through education providers rather than through support to individuals, the provision of Commonwealth funding has continued under the structure of a specific Act. Currently, this Act is the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* (the ITEA Act).¹

2.2 The Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008 provides for funding for a range of targeted programs and projects to support improvements in Indigenous education outcomes. In doing so, the bill amends the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000* in order to:

- Appropriate funding for 2009–13 for non ABSTUDY targeted programs, mostly in the non school sector, and projects aimed at improving Indigenous education outcomes
- Provide for the continuation of payments for 2009–13 to education providers for the mixed-mode 'Away from Base' element of ABSTUDY
- Appropriate funding for new Indigenous early childhood measures until new arrangements are introduced in 2009
- Cease appropriations from 2009 for six Indigenous education school programs

2.3 Funding for the above Indigenous education school programs will now transferred to the proposed State Finances Act for government schools and to the proposed Schools Assistance Act for non-government schools.² The non-government components of these programs contained in the ITEA Act are being streamlined into the one per capita payment– Indigenous Supplementary Assistance (ISA), as part of the Schools Assistance Bill 2008.³

2.4 The government is retaining the ITEA Act through amendments contained in the Education Legislation Amendment Bill. Funding will continue under the ITEA

1 Bills Digest, *Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008*, 13 October 2008, p. 3.

2 Explanatory Memorandum, p. 1.

3 Bills Digest, *Schools Assistance Bill 2008*, 10 October 2008, p. 4

Act until 2013 for Indigenous-specific programs which are not funded under the Schools Assistance Bill 2008 or other legislation.⁴ In allocating appropriations for another four years under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000*, the government hopes to implement and develop measures to 'close the gap' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. The ITEA Act maintains commitments to initiatives introduced under the previous government, as well as supporting the expansion of intensive literacy and numeracy programs for Indigenous students.

2.5 The bill also provides for the continuation of the 'Away from Base' component of ABSTUDY for 2009–2013, which was transferred under the ITEA Act in 1999. Transitional arrangements are introduced in the Bill, awaiting the implementation of reforms to intergovernmental financial arrangements in the Early Childhood Development and Vocational Education and Training Sectors.⁵

2.6 The committee believes that incorporating the supplementary Indigenous education funding into the Schools Assistance Bill 2008 can only be advantageous for Indigenous students. In doing so, the administrative arrangements that support this funding will also become more efficient, allowing more time to be spent on the task at hand—reducing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. As explained by Minister Gillard, the aim of streamlining Indigenous education assistance is to reduce 'red tape' for schools, to allow them to focus on the achievements of their students. The committee has identified this has a matter of concern to schools in its previous reports on Indigenous student funding. For the first time, the ISA will be indexed at the same rate as other general recurrent funding, which is estimated to provide an additional \$24.5 million.⁶

2.7 One particular concern with the new Indigenous funding arrangements was highlighted by the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) in their submission and in evidence taken by the committee at the public hearing. Under the new funding system an increased level of recurrent Indigenous student funding will be applied to remote and very remote non-government schools, as set out in Clauses 64–69 of the Schools Assistance Bill 2008. The QCEC state that the boarding schools they administer educate many Indigenous students from remote and very remote communities. As these boarding schools are located either in Brisbane or provincial centres in the north, they are not entitled to such levels of Indigenous funding, despite the remote locations their students originate from.⁷ At the committee's hearing, Mr Victor Lorenz from the QCEC told the committee:

The commission believes that Catholic schools in Queensland, particularly the boarding schools, are contributing to closing the gap. The commission

4 DEEWR, *Submission 25*, p. 19.

5 Explanatory Memorandum, p. 1.

6 Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *House of Representatives Hansard*, 24 September 2008, p. 8360.

7 Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission 1*, p. 2.

strongly believes that there is a compelling case for funding Indigenous boarding students from remote areas at the remote rate. The commission acknowledges that this is an issue for all boarding schools in Australia that are endeavouring to close the gap.⁸

2.8 This issue was taken up by the committee, who later pressed the Department on this matter. The Department explained to the committee that the ISA is intended as supplementary assistance, in the sense that schools in Indigenous communities have additional requirements that need to be financed. By this logic, schools located in remote and very remote communities would require even further financial assistance. Ms Loire Hunter explained to the committee:

The Indigenous supplementary assistance will provide education systems and schools with an opportunity to flexibly address those needs as they see is reasonable, depending on either the individual circumstance or the circumstance of a group of individuals in a particular location. In addition, we provide waiting for service delivery provided in remote and very remote areas to acknowledge that in those areas there are more significant issues around that actual service delivery. It goes to the attraction and retention of teachers, it goes to the support of services in that location. It is not to say that we are at all suggesting that Indigenous students from remote areas coming in to metropolitan or provincial areas do not have additional needs. On a per capita basis we provide additional supplementary assistance to all Indigenous students, and in addition we weight those services being provided in remote areas to Indigenous students at a higher rate.⁹

2.9 Despite the concerns of the QCEC, the Indigenous Funding Guarantee in Clause 71(b) of the Schools Assistance Bill 2008 will ensure non-government schools do not receive less funding than what was allocated to them in 2008. Funding of \$18.1 million over the next four years has been provided for this guarantee.¹⁰ The Department gave evidence to reassure the committee of this fact when Ms Susan Smith stated:

Our assessment is that there are very few cases where this funding guarantee would be needed and it is our initial assessment that the Queensland Catholic Education Commission would not be a loser under the new arrangements.¹¹

8 Mr Victor Lorenz, Assistant Director, Finance and Resourcing, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Committee Hansard*, 19 November, p. 42.

9 Ms Loire Hunter, Branch Manager, Indigenous Education Program Taskforce, DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, 19 November 2008, p.

10 Marilyn Harrington, 'Schools Assistance Bill 2008', *Bills Digest*, no. 37, p. 2.

11 Ms Susan Smith, Acting Group Manager, National Initiatives Group, DEEWR, *Committee Hansard*, 19 November 2008, p. 63.

2.10 While the committee appreciates the concerns raised by the QCEC, it is confident that the boarding schools managed by the Commission would not be disadvantaged by the new funding arrangements.

Conclusion

2.11 The majority of submissions received by the committee supported the passing of the Schools Assistance Bill 2008 and the Education Legislation Bill 2008. Representatives of some non-government school organisations submitted that the regulations of the bills should be made publicly available before the legislation is passed. However, as was made clear at the committee's public hearing, providing the regulations after the bill has passed does not deviate from previous practice when dealing with education legislation. The committee is confident that the government will take into consideration the concerns raised by interested parties when developing the regulatory detail of the bill, and that consultations on the implementation of this policy will allay concerns.

Recommendation

The committee recommends that the bill be passed.

Senator Gavin Marshall

Chair

Coalition Senators' Report

The necessity to have the *Schools Assistance Bill 2008* and the *Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008* passed before the Parliament rises in December limits the opportunity to examine these important policy developments in the time available. It is of limited comfort to Coalition senators that the committee may be able to monitor this legislation in operation over the next two years.

During this inquiry non-government schools' representatives expressed concern that government funding for the 2009 school year is being linked to the passage of these bills, with the detail of many of the policies they will usher in unexplained to the sector at this stage. The Chief Executive of the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria made this analogy:

I had a principal from a school phone me the other day and say, 'We tell our students not to sign up to mobile phone plans unless they absolutely know what they are signing up to, and here we are with something that is far more important to us and we're expected just to sign without knowing.' I think that people are extremely concerned about signing to deliver something when they do not know what it is.¹

Schools Assistance Bill 2008

Coalition senators have a number of concerns about issues foreshadowed in the *Schools Assistance Bill 2008* (the bill).

There are four main areas of concern which interested parties to the legislation raised with the committee, and which are referred to in report. They are:

- Changes to the grounds upon which the Minister can elect to refuse or delay payment, which makes it easier for the Minister to do so (section 15);
- The new requirement in school funding agreements to comply with the National Curriculum by 2012, as specified in regulations (section 22);
- Alterations to the reporting requirements for schools, particularly new requirements relating to information about financial viability and funding sources (section 24); and
- Removal of the previous Government's new non-government schools establishment grants (section 100).

¹ Ms Green, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 19 November 2008, p. EEWR 39.

Ministerial discretion with regard to payments

Coalition senators have concerns with section 15 of the Bill.

Section 15 specifies grounds upon which the Minister may refuse to authorise or delay a payment to a non-government school. These grounds include if the school is being wound up (s15(a)) or is unable to pay its debts (s15(b)).

Section 15(c) of the Bill provides for new reasons for such refusal or delay in the case that:

c) if a law of the Commonwealth or a State requires the body or authority to be audited – the relevant audit:

(i) is expressed to be qualified; or

(ii) expresses concern about the financial viability of the body or authority.

Coalition senators are concerned that this clause goes beyond ensuring payments are made only to financially-viable schools.

The clause refers to situations where the relevant audit "is expressed to be qualified". The inquiry heard that there may be circumstances, other than those which go to the financial viability of a school, which lead to an audit being qualified. One example is a hesitation about a school model, whether a financial hesitation or otherwise.

A qualified audit does not necessarily signal that a school's financial situation is precarious enough to warrant the Minister refusing or delaying payment.

Geelong College was concerned at the broad power conferred on the minister by this section:

While section 15 of the Bill directly refers to financial viability, part (i) is wide enough to allow the Minister to interfere with payments to a school for **any** issue giving rise to audit qualification.

The Geelong College believes that to thus empower a Minister when an audit qualification arises from non-viability factors is unreasonable and inappropriate.²

Coalition senators believe that a "qualified audit report" covers too broad a range of circumstances to be a useful criterion for refusing to make payments to a school. The proposed clause would allow the Minister to delay or refuse funding even though a school is in fact financially viable.

² Geelong College, *Submission 16*, p. 2.

The Association of Independent Schools (Victoria) gave convincing testimony at the public hearings illustrating how schools might be inappropriately captured by this clause.

Recommendation 1

Recommend that paragraph 15(c)(i) be removed from the bill.

Compliance with the National Curriculum

Coalition senators have concerns with section 22 of the Bill.

Section 22 sets out the new requirement in school funding agreements to require the relevant authority for the school or system to ensure that the school, or each school in the system, implement the National Curriculum by 2012, as specified in regulations.

Section 22 reads as follows:

S.22 – Funding agreements – national curriculum

- (1) A funding agreement for a non-systemic school, or an approved school system, must require the relevant authority for the school or system to ensure that the school, or each school in the system, implements the national curriculum prescribed by the regulations for primary education or secondary education (or both, as applicable).*
- (2) The requirement mentioned in subsection (1) must be satisfied on or before 31 January 2012.*

Testimony was received by the Committee both in writing and at the public hearing regarding concerns by schools with this section, concerns exacerbated in particular by the lack of guidance to date (so far, only the framing documents in each subject area have been released for consultation) as to what the National Curriculum will look like.

This leaves a major conceptual gap in this legislation. Coalition senators are concerned that the Bill seeks to tie school funding to acceptance of a National Curriculum that is not yet drafted. Even if there were no controversy about the apparent ideological bias of some of the framers of the National Curriculum, this clause would still elicit concern.

Section 31 of the previous legislation required schools to commit to curriculum-related activities, such as Statements of Learning in five areas (English, mathematics, science, civics and citizenship education, and information and communications technology), but not to specific curriculum.

Initially, the National Curriculum will cover only four discipline areas being those of Maths, Science, History and English. One of the issues that arise is how prescriptive the curriculum content in these discipline areas will be. Will it be prescriptive in

terms of content and materials, or alternatively, will it be a framework within which schools can determine content? This question is yet to be answered.

This raises obvious issues for schools offering alternative curricula such as the International Baccalaureate or the University of Cambridge International Examinations. These schools will have to comply with the national curriculum in the four stated subject areas whilst teaching their own curriculum in other subject areas. Students cannot however qualify for an International Baccalaureate Diploma, for example, without completing all components of the Diploma including International Baccalaureate specified curriculum in the 4 disciplines covered by the National Curriculum.

Schools offering alternative educational philosophies, such as Steiner or Montessori schools, will similarly face difficulties in meeting the requirements of this section.

Coalition senators believe that diversity in curriculum, teaching philosophies and course offerings is a profound strength of the Australian education system. These reforms seem to depart from that rich historical development. As John Marsden, the principal of Candlebark School in Victoria, put it:

As an author who - and I'm afraid this is going to sound pompous - has always promoted the interests of young people, and more importantly, as a teacher and school principal, I'm a bit stunned to think that the federal parliament might contemplate passing a Bill which could deprive schools of the right to develop their own curricula, and to innovate and develop special, school specific learning programs. Good grief! Schools should be massively encouraged in the development of new curricula and innovative programs. Anything else will lead to a moribund system, and will threaten progress in this most important area of our society.

The dead hand of bureaucracy already rests heavily upon Australian schools. The Parliament should be working to lift it, not to add to its weight.³

Deputy Prime Minister Gillard has refused either in Parliament or in the public arena to confirm that alternative educational philosophies and approaches will continue to be acceptable under the new arrangements, despite many opportunities to do so. When given the opportunity to clarify this matter, she has repeatedly sidestepped the question, instead asserting that application of the curriculum would be mandatory and advising that she would seek the advice of the new Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) – a body yet to be formally established and whose membership will be overwhelmingly appointed by state and territory Labor ministers.

In the same speech in which Minister Gillard said that she would seek ACARA's advice, she went on to say: 'What is not open for negotiation is the idea that a world-

³ John Marsden, *Submission 38*, p. 1.

class curriculum will be an optional extra for schools that are receiving significant public funds.'

The ambiguity in the Government's position presents a major threat to certainty and autonomy in the non-government school sector.

Again, the urgency of this change has not been explained. There is no reason that legislation dealing with a National Curriculum couldn't be separated from this Bill, and introduced in its own bill next year, allowing for appropriate debate to take place once we see the shape of the new curriculum. To pass this section intact now gives a blank cheque to the framers of the curriculum.

Recommendation 2

That section 22 be removed from the Bill. Alternatively section 22 be amended to allow for approved alternative curricula to be offered in schools, such as the IB, University of Cambridge International Examinations, Steiner and Montessori programs.

Reporting of funding sources

Section 24 (1) of the bill reads as follows:

S.24 – Funding agreements – reports on programs and financial operations

- (1) *A funding agreement must require the relevant authority for the non-government school, or other non-government body, to ensure that a report (or reports), of a kind (or kinds) required by the Minister, is given to the Minister in relation to each of the following:*
- (a) *Programs of financial assistance provided under this Act, so far as they relate to the relevant authority;*
 - (b) *The financial operations (**including the financial viability and funding sources**) of:*
 - (i) *in any case – the school or other body; and*
 - (ii) *in the case of an approved school system – the schools (including each particular school) in the system.*

What is meant by "funding sources" is unclear on the face of the legislation. The Independent Schools Council was unable to say what this entailed:

What is meant by funding sources is unclear to us. The discussions that we have been involved in with governments to date have a long way to go in

terms of what is the bottom line and what is the level of disaggregation. We simply cannot know.⁴

The Government however has stated that it intends to ensure that all schools, public and non-government, face identical requirements to make known the full financial details of their operations, including all sources of income and expenditure. Such information might specifically include details of scholarship funds, bequests and other sources of funding such as profit-generating activities, or community fundraising undertaken by Parents' and Friends' Associations.

Non-government schools have stated that they consider this demand to be unfair. It goes much further than simply requiring the acquittal of Commonwealth funds, and has the potential to discourage the private donations of endowments and other gifts, especially when these are provided in kind, by way of services.

There was strong testimony delivered to the public hearings of the inquiry, and in written submissions, as to how the publication of this information is superfluous and potentially divisive.

Coalition senators are suspicious of the Government's motives in making this provision in the bill. The Minister has explained, in very vague terms, that this information is necessary for the purposes of overall planning. The Government says that it needs to know the total amount of funds at a school's disposal so as 'to understand the relationship between resourcing and educational outcomes'.⁵ This explains very little.

Coalition senators fear that the Government seeks information about the resourcing of individual schools for the purposes of returning to a funding model which would provide much reduced funding to schools deemed to be asset rich as a result of strong community and family support over many years.

Nor would this policy affect only long-established schools.

The committee received a submission from Fitzroy Community School in Melbourne which sums up the attitude of many non-government schools:

The school funding bill has a new clause that all schools (except state-run schools) shall have to reveal to the government whatever funds they may receive by way of donations or fundraising, and that these figures may be published. It is hard to see what this information could be used for, except to reduce funding to such schools.

This would have bad effects on society. The community would be less willing to support their schools. This would increase the burden on the

⁴ Mr Bill Daniels, Independent Schools Council of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 19 November 2008, p. EEWR 4.

⁵ Hon Julia Gillard MP, *Hansard (Reps)*, 21 October 2008, p. 9758.

taxpayer. And it would suppress the natural inclination of families to be involved with their children's needs.⁶

It is clear to Coalition senators that this concern is linked to the threat to the SES model of funding. A number of witnesses appearing before the committee indicated their apprehension about the possibility that the SES model would cease.

While Coalition senators obviously welcome the retention of the SES funding model in the short term, at least, they are concerned about the longer term policy of the Government. We believe there is a strong chance that the views that Minister Gillard and other members of the Government held when in Opposition will eventually prevail, as traditional Labor interests hostile to non-government education win back policy-making influence.

Recommendation 3

That Section 24(1) (b) of the Bill be amended to exclude a requirement for schools to disclose their sources of funding, other than funding from government instrumentalities.

Removal of the New Non-Government Schools Establishment Grants

Testimony given at the public hearing showed that these grants were very helpful to new schools becoming successful.

The previous Government encouraged the viability of the non-government sector and encouraged new schools where a community demand and private sector interest supported such facilities. This encouragement was provided through the New Non-Government Schools Establishment Grants.

The Australian Association of Christian Schools expressed these concerns:

The unexpected removal of this funding provision from the Act is, to say the least, a disappointment and, in the opinion of AACCS, a serious backwards step.

Already, Non Government schools must carry a much greater burden than Government schools in the establishment of a new facility. Legal, structural, capital and marketing costs are at their peak at such a time and enrolments are often at an awkward stage, thereby creating temporary financial pressures.

The Minister has indicated a strong commitment to "schooling" as an expression of her desire to see the funding of Government and Non Government schools on a more even footing. It is difficult to see how the

⁶ Fitzroy Community School, *Submission 21*, p. 2.

removal of the Establishment Grant contributes to a more even playing field.

AACS would propose that the Government revisit the removal of this Grant and ensure that Non Government schools, who must carry the lion's share of the start-up capital for a new school, are not further disadvantaged in comparison to the establishment of new Government schools.⁷

The legislation allowing for the Minister to make these grants was contained in Section 102 of the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004*. The comparable section (Section 100) in the bill only makes provision for those schools approved in 2008 to receive grants in 2009.

In phasing out these grants (immediately) the Government is making it increasingly difficult to set up new non-government schools. It is hard to understand why newly developing communities and suburbs should not have the same access to government support in establishing new schools that schools in older areas have already enjoyed.

Recommendation 4

That the Government restore grants programmes for new non-government schools of the kind provided for in Section 102 of the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004*.

Education Legislation Amendment Bill 2008

Coalition senators have no comment to make in relation to this bill, which they note brings much-needed simplification of funding arrangements for Indigenous education. Coalition members of this committee have been active in encouraging this trend during previous inquiries.

Senator Gary Humphries
Deputy Chair

Senator Michaelia Cash

Senator Mary Jo Fisher

⁷ Australian Association of Christian Schools, *Submission 2*, p. 5.

Minority Report by the Australian Greens

When in opposition the ALP identified fundamental flaws in the socio-economic status (SES) funding model. The now Education Minister, Julia Gillard, said in 2000:

"There are the following five flaws in the SES model. Firstly, it could be argued that the model is flawed, proceeding as it does on the basis of the average government school costs figure. ... Secondly, this model uses only some aspects of the census data. ... Thirdly, the model may lose veracity the more geographically dispersed the students of a particular school are. ... Fourthly, the model may lose veracity in highly differentiated areas where wealth and poverty live cheek by jowl. The last objection to the SES model is more philosophical, that the model makes no allowance for the amassed resources of any particular school. This is a gaping flaw, one which the government would not allow to emerge in any other benefit distribution system."¹

Nothing has changed in the meantime and it is unacceptable that the Rudd Government is seeking to maintain the SES model with all its flaws for another 4 years.

Fundamentally, the problem with the SES model is that the formula to provide the funding has never been applied as intended because of the funding guarantee provisions. These provisions see about half of Australia's non-government schools receive more funding than they would be entitled to if the SES formula was strictly applied. The committee heard evidence that non-government schools would receive around \$2.7 billion in additional funding over the next four years as a result of these overpayments. By guaranteeing this level of overpayment for the next 4 years non-government schools have certainty and additional funding while public schools have no such certainty.

The problem with public education funding in Australia is that it is primarily the responsibility of State governments with top up from the Commonwealth. This funding arrangement has been a disaster for public school funding making it vulnerable to the vagaries of state budgets. Under this dysfunctional education funding model, the gap between funding of private and public education has widened. It is likely that with the current economic downturn, reduced consumer spending and reduced return on resource based company profits that state governments will further cut back on public education spending in the next four years. Therefore, the Australian Greens believe that the review of the SES model should be brought forward and that the Schools Assistance Bill should only provide funding for the next 2 years.

The Australian Greens support the comments of the majority report in respect of the implementation of a national curriculum, funding transparency and audit reports.

¹ The Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Second Reading Speech, States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Bill 2000, *Hansard*, 4 September 2000, p. 20047.

Recommendation 1: The title of the bill be amended to the Non-Government Schools Assistance Bill 2008.

Recommendation 2: The bill provide funding for the next 2 years only.

Recommendation 3: The review of the SES model is brought forward and completed by mid-2010 and the recommendations framed before the next federal election.

Recommendation 4: Public schools receive additional Commonwealth funding over the funding period equivalent to the maintained funding and guaranteed funding provided to non-government schools calculated to be about \$2.7 billion over the next four years.

Senator Christine Milne

Appendix 1

Submissions received

Sub No	Submitter
1	Queensland Catholic Education Commission, QLD
2	Australian Association of Christian Schools, NSW
3	The Hurstbridge Learning Co-Operative, VIC
4	Ms Jo Skuse, VIC
5	Mount Carmel Christian School, VIC
6	Hurstbridge Learning Co-Operative, VIC
7	Mr Malcolm Laurence
8	Dr Michael Furtado
9	North Canberra Christian Education Association Board (incorporating Emmaus Christian School, Dickson)
10	Mr Greg Richards, VIC
11	New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council, NSW
12	Covenant College, VIC
13	Ms Lyndsay Connors, NSW
14	Independent Education Union of Australia, ACT
15	New South Wales Teachers Federation
16	The Geelong College, VIC
17	Australasian Association for Progressive and Alternative Education, ACT
18	Mr Nick Elias, VIC
19	Rudolf Steiner Schools of Australia, NSW
20	Australian Education Union, VIC
21	Fitzroy Community School, VIC

- 22 Ms Miranda Frankel, VIC
- 23 Highview Christian Community College, VIC
- 24 The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, ACT
- 25 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations,
Cwlth
- 26 Balcombe Grammar School, VIC
- 27 Ballarat and Clarendon College, VIC
- 28 National Catholic Education Commission, ACT
- 29 Hillcrest Christian College, VIC
- 30 Casey Grammar School & Balcombe Grammar School, VIC
- 31 Independent Schools Council of Australia, ACT
- 32 Olivet Christian College, ACT
- 33 Fitzroy Community School, VIC
- 34 Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Darwin, NT
- 35 Association of Independent Schools of Victoria Inc, VIC
- 36 Christian Schools Australia
- 37 Australian Christian Lobby
- 38 Mr John Marsden
- 39 Lutheran Education Australia
- 40 Mr Jono Burns
- 41 Australian Parents Council, TAS
- 42 Tintern Schools, VIC
- 43 Mentone Grammar, VIC
- 44 The Uniting Church in Australia, Board of Education, Synod of New
South Wales and the ACT
- 45 National Independent Special Schools Association, NSW
- 46 Mr Cornelius Chidlow

- 47 Forestville Montessori School, NSW
- 48 The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales
- 49 St Paul's Anglican Grammar School, VIC
- 50 Australian Council of Jewish Students, VIC

Appendix 2

Hearings and Witnesses

Parliament House, Canberra, 19 November 2008

Independent Schools Council of Australia

Mr Bill Daniels, *Executive Director of the Independent Schools Council*

Dr Geoff Newcombe, *Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW*

Mr Garry Le Duff, *Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of SA*

National Catholic Education Commission

Ms Therese Temby, *Chair*

Dr Bill Griffiths, *Chief Executive Officer*

Australian Education Union

Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, *Federal President*

Ms Jenni Devereaux, *Federal Research Officer*

Australian Association of Christian Schools Ltd (via teleconference)

Mr Robert Johnston, *Executive Officer*

Association of the Independent Schools of Victoria

Ms Michelle Green, *Chief Executive*

Dr Elizabeth Jedynak, *Chair*

Dr Heather Schnagl, *Deputy Chair*

Mr Ross Fox, *Director of Public Affairs*

Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Mr Victor Lorenz, *Assistant Director, Finance and Resourcing*

Ms Jane Ceolin, *Executive Officer, Indigenous Education*

Mr Ernie Christie, *Deputy Director, Townsville Catholic Education Office*

Independent Education Union of Australia (via teleconference)

Mr Chris Watt, *Federal Secretary*

Ms Lyndsay Connors, *Honorary Adjunct Associate Professor*

Mr Chris Bonnor *Public Education Consultant and advocate*

Ms Jane Caro, *Public school parent and advocate*

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Dr Carol Nicoll, Group Manager, National Education System

Ms Susan Smith, *Acting Group Manager*

Ms Suzanne Northcott, *Branch Manager*

Ms Deb Rollings, *Branch Manager, Schools Policy, Grants and Reporting Branch*

Mr Tony Zanderigo, *Branch Manager, Reporting and Accountability Branch*

Mr Stephen Goodwin, *Branch Manager, Indigenous Policy Branch*

Ms Susan Bennett, *Branch Manager, Early Childhood, Workforce and Indigenous Branch*

Ms Jo Wood, *Branch Manager, Indigenous Education Programs*