



NATIONAL INDEPENDENT SPECIAL SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION

LEVEL 12, 99 YORK STREET, SYDNEY 2000

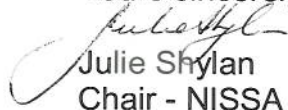
5 November 2008

Dear Sir / Madam *Mr. Coote*

The National Independent Special Schools Association (NISSA) commends the Australian Government's commitment to non-government schools, particularly in relation to maintaining the existing funding arrangements. However, we do have some concerns regarding the passage of the Schools Assistance Bill 2008 through Parliament.

- There are some provisions in the current Bill that hold some concerns for NISSA member schools, specifically relating to the national curriculum and the requirement to identify all sources of school income. However:
 - our schools support the principle of a national curriculum as long as it retains sufficient flexibility for schools to adopt differing educational philosophies and approaches that are currently widely accepted. In particular, there is a need to be able to modify the curriculum so that it fits within the framework of Individual Education Planning for students with disabilities. The proposed National Curriculum needs to be inclusive all learners including students with disabilities. At present, there is little detail about how a national curriculum would cater for this.
 - Our schools support accountability and transparency in relation to educational and financial operations. Our main concerns with the Bill relate to the lack of detail around the identification of all income sources for schools and the comparability of data between schools and school sectors.
- We understand that the details we are seeking about these matters will be contained in the Regulations and that there will be opportunities for consultation and negotiation on these.
- We support the passage of the Schools Assistance Bill 2008 without delay to ensure that critical funding for our schools is provided in a timely manner.
- We are continuing to work with the state Associations of Independent Schools and the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) on these issues and are confident that this will lead to the negotiation of acceptable Regulations for independent special schools.

Yours sincerely


Julie Shylan
Chair - NISSA