



“Public Funding of Australian Schools: The Facts”

A Research Paper commissioned by AISV

Launched by the Hon Julie Bishop MP., Minister for Education, Science and Training
Monday 20 August, 2007 at Bialik College, Hawthorn East

Simon McKeon, Chairman, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria (AISV):

Thank you Alan for hosting this event at Bialik and of course thank you to Bialik's Principal, Genia Janover, who can't be with us today, and also her staff members who have provided such great help.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome and thank the Hon Julie Bishop MP., Minister for Education, Science and Training, for making time to join us today.

I would also like to welcome:

- The Premier's policy advisor Ms Brigit Monagle and Michael Kane, Executive Director, Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Members of the AISV Board and the Council of Bialik College

Minister, ladies and gentlemen and students

It's often said that modern Australia is a knowledge-based society. This implies that we make good decisions about work, home life, politics and leisure because we have all the information that we need – and more.

There is a huge amount of information available to us. Once, our direct sources of information were quite limited.

We read newspapers, magazines and books and listened to the radio or watched television to find out what had happened that day.

Today we are bombarded with information – through a growing mass of media; new technology bringing us the internet, ipods, cable TV, electronic billboards, giant screens in public places and small screens in planes and in our cars.

But the information that we receive today is also highly processed. Now, even before we are fully aware of a news event, it is being interpreted by experts who are telling us what it means.

In today's jargon, spin-doctors are massaging the message to suit particular needs. Yes, there's plenty of information around but often not much by way of facts.

And it can be difficult to sort through opinions, ideas and views when trying to make decisions about important issues – everything from climate change to politics, from investing your savings, to knowing what's the best buy.

We know that the issue of school funding is complex. Many people have different and legitimate views on how the tax dollar should be spent and they work hard to ensure that their opinions are heard.

But some muddy the waters, or as our Chief Executive Michelle Green says:

“Ignorance, misunderstanding and wilful distortion of the facts cloud the important debate about the complex question of funding schooling in Australia.”

That's why AISV commissioned Matthew Ryan, an independent Canberra economist to dig into all of the publicly available information about education funding.

Matthew's conclusions have now been published in *“Public Funding of Australian Schools: The Facts”*.

We have extracted some of the findings and published them in fact sheets.

We have provided a four page summary and produced a wallet card so that parents and any others interested in a balanced discussion can have the facts at their finger tips. We believe it has been a very valuable exercise.

Ladies and gentlemen, the independent sector provides choice for Australian parents and saves the State and Federal governments billions of education dollars every year, which can be spent elsewhere in education.

The independent sector is rich in its diversity – representing a range of faith traditions, co-educational and single gender offerings and a broad spectrum from low fee to higher fee schools.

And typically the principals and their staff are dedicated educationalists, not only wanting a fair go for the independent sector but a fair go for education itself – which is that broad institution whereby one generation passes the baton to the next.

Minister, I hope that you and your colleagues will agree that we have made a useful contribution to the discussion about funding education in Australia. Useful, because it is based on facts. We are in no way concerned or embarrassed about an informed debate on the funding of education – indeed we welcome it

I would like to present you with a copy of *“Public Funding of Australian Schools: The Facts”* and invite you to say a few words.