Media Release

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Equity Essential for Future Education Funding

Michelle Green, Chief Executive, Independent Schools Victoria, comments on the Australian Government’s Review of Funding for Schooling Discussion Paper

Independent Schools Victoria welcomes the Australian Government’s view that equity should be one of the principles underpinning the future funding of education.

There must be an equitable allocation of resources based on students’ needs so schools can deliver on the promise of the 2008 Declaration on Educational Goals for young Australians – all young Australians.

We also welcome the paper’s introductory message from the Minister that ‘the review is not about taking money away from schools’.

The discussion paper notes that in the non-government sector, parent contributions through fees and charges in 2007 represented an average of 36.3 per cent of total non-government school income, varying nationally from 22.3 per cent for Catholic schools to 51.3 per cent for independent schools.

The paper suggests that the review may consider the ‘place of voluntary and private contributions and fees in school funding arrangements’. In terms of funding, the role of government is to ensure equity of access, not to direct the way that individuals spend their post-tax income.

If we begin talking about a new funding model without reassuring parents that their school’s funding will not be frozen, we will entrench both sides of the debate before we begin. This will inevitably mean that we will continue to disagree to the disadvantage of Australian students into the future.

Penalising a sector, or a school for having existing resources does not assist in delivering education, or making the pool of available funds any larger. It simply demonises some, and detracts from the harder issues of designing a fair, transparent and sustainable, student-centred model of allocating funding. Arguments based on political philosophy, or personal belief systems should not be allowed to cloud the issues.

An allocative model based on students’ educational need and not ideology should be consistent across all sectors, based on measurable indicators, and be transparent, sustainable and robust. An agreement on the basis of allocating student-centred funding would reduce the arguments around reaching a balance between commonwealth, state and non-government contributions.