Media Release

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Federal and State MPs Hear Parents’ Fears about School Funding Review

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All federal and state Members of Parliament in Victoria are being told that parents with children at Independent schools are deeply concerned about the outcomes of the Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling.

It’s important that all MPs understand the ramifications of the Gonski review for parents of the 129,000 children attending some 219 independent schools throughout Victoria. School funding is not just a federal government issue, the state government is part of the funding process and this will continue whatever the outcomes of the review.

We have written to Parliamentarians in state and federal electorates throughout Victoria on behalf of parents who say they “chose an Independent school because we want the best education we can afford, and we want to have a say in how our school is run”.

Parents are not complaining but they do admit that, “it’s not easy to juggle school fees and all our education expenses against the costs of commuting to work and our monthly mortgage”.

Many have had to rely increasingly on a second job.

“From time to time our parents have chipped in with donations from their superannuation because they want the best for their grandchild’s future. Unfortunately, in these uncertain economic times, when interest rates go up so does our mortgage, and when they go down any spare investment income from Nan and Pop disappears.

“But we think our decision has paid off for our child because we know that teachers at our school are working for us, rather than for the state education system.”

The Australian Education Union, Save Our Schools and other opponents of non-government schools have bombarded the media with half-truths and doubtful research about funding, and it has had an effect.

“We are more and more worried when the media reports that our fees may have to increase because the government teachers’ union wants a cut in the limited funding received by students at Independent schools.”
Parents are not only worried but also puzzled because they know that in Victoria total government funding amounts to $6310 per Independent school student compared with $12,382 for a government school student. Parents have to make up the difference and they know what will happen if they cannot continue contributing to close the funding gap.

“It’s pretty obvious to everybody that if state and federal governments cut this small subsidy to Independent schools, some parents will be forced to put their children into government schools.

“We imagine that this is why the government education union is opposing fair funding for Independent schools. But if the union wins, our fees will go up, more kids will go across to government schools and everybody’s taxes will increase because it costs governments twice as much to educate children in the state school system.”

The parents’ plea to Parliamentarians is:

“We don’t have the time to play political games so we’re asking you to take a close look at all the issues involved. We found some very good background material on the Independent Schools Victoria website and we ask you to read it, before you endorse any changes in the way Independent schools are funded.”

Independent Schools Victoria hopes that Victoria’s Members and Senators in the national Parliament, and Council and Assembly Members of the Victorian Parliament provide their constituents with this undertaking, and will also agree that:

- Federal and state governments must invest more in school education.
- Government financial support for education is a basic right for all children, irrespective of their family background or the school they attend.
- Funding should be centred on students, not schools.
- Freezing funding at current levels for individual Independent schools is not acceptable.
- Parental or private contributions towards a child’s education should have no bearing on the level of funding Independent schools receive.
- School funding must be based on reliable data that minimises the possibility of manipulation aimed at unfairly maximising funding outcomes.
- Any new funding model should not discourage parents from investing in the education of their child.