

Media Release

5 December 2014

Remembering 2014 and Looking to 2015

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Michelle Green, Chief Executive, Independent Schools Victoria, responds to a request from *Australian Teacher Magazine* to contribute to its 2014 Education Report Card.

2014 will be remembered for the 8.7 million children missing-out on education because of humanitarian crises – Ebola in West Africa, conflict and emergencies in the Middle East, South Sudan and the Philippines. Save the Children says this loss could be felt for years to come and have devastating consequences for children's development.

Throughout 2014 funding uncertainty has affected government, Independent and Catholic schools. This year will be marked by all schools across the country, and their governments, systems and organisations, as the year of 'Gonski funding consequences'.

This is because the new funding model is based on evidence that is not robust and was not thought through. It's not sustainable and will cause public policy problems within the next five years for governments and for schools – government and non-government. Parents do not understand what is being delivered compared with their schools' funding. Most thought that the issue was resolved, but we know there is likely to be continuing instability, questions and argument.

We welcome the increased focus in 2014 on the importance of teacher education that we have focused on for many years. We have continued to develop professional learning programs for school leaders, teachers and staff based on our expertise and knowledge, and best practice from overseas, which will continue to benefit education in Australia. The teacher education discussion has delivered good suggestions. Recognition of the need to improve teacher quality appears to be by-partisan and we ask for constructive debate on how it can be achieved.

In 2015 we trust that state and federal governments will work cooperatively to resolve 'Gonski consequences' and provide fair funding for the best possible education for all students, the long-standing issue of support for students with disabilities and other educational shortcomings.

Another challenge will be Australia's growing population – in Victoria last year the increase was 108,800, with many establishing themselves in Melbourne's new western and northern suburbs. Our schools are helping to meet their needs and we look forward to them being able to extend their work. The number of families facing educational challenges will grow as they seek to settle here. ABS population predictions call for hundreds more schools in the next 15 to 20 years. Governments will need to agree on who is going to fund, design and build schools for 21st century teaching and learning.