Media Release

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School funding research – not uninformed rhetoric

Michelle Green, Chief Executive, Independent Schools Victoria

The four independent research reports released today make a valuable contribution to the debate on school funding. They are a step above the uninformed rhetoric used by some to promote the out-dated politics of class envy related to education.

We are analysing each of the four reports but we can see that some of the conclusions reflect the views of Independent Schools Victoria and others in the non-government education sector.

The Deloitte Access Economics Report discusses optimal funding models that include:

- identification of public policy objectives of school funding
- evidence-based cost analysis
- preference for local student-centred information over broad proxy measures of need
- transparent funding
- indexation of funding to growth in enrolments and costs
- greater incentives for private contributions.

These features are consistent with the Independent Schools Victoria submission to the Gonski Review. The report does not identify any current Australian school funding model that meets these standards.

The Allen Consulting Group assessed the feasibility of adopting a National Schooling Recurrent Resourcing Standard (NSRSS), topped up with per capita loadings for specific needs such as Indigenous education.

The NSRSS is defined as ‘the level of resourcing per student from all sources that efficiently and effectively applied over time, would enable students attending schools serving communities with minimal levels of educational disadvantage the opportunity to meet agreed national educational agreed outcomes’.

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Allens believes that an NRSS with loadings for specific education needs could be applied to both non-government and government schools providing opportunities for governments to seek out the best value schooling outcomes for taxpayers’ dollar. This model is similar to the Portable Funding Allowance proposed by Independent Schools Victoria.

We endorse Allen’s view that the roles of government as a purchaser of schooling services and as a provider of schooling services needs to be separated because a conflict of interest arises when the two roles are combined. Governments should be a funder of all students, not just a provider of government schooling.

We need to further analyse Allen’s recommendation to assess student resources on the basis of My School financial data about which we have doubts. The recommendation could remove the incentive for private contribution to education and it reflects an earlier discredited funding model.

We are also unsure about the suggestion that an ‘NSRRS should be built from the individual student level, but applied at the school level’. We support identification at the student level, and have concerns about averaging at the school level. We believe that the suggestion that the NSRRS should focus on student and school characteristics rather than community or system background is very positive.

We will be encouraging our 219 Member Schools representing nearly 129,000 students to submit their views on the research papers to the Review of School Funding.