

About Christian Schools Australia

- A national peak group serving the needs of Christian Schools.
- 130 member schools across Australia educating over 45,000 students.
- Geographically, culturally and educationally diverse.
- CSA schools serve mainly lower and mid range socio-economic groups. The average ICSEA of CSA schools nationally is 997, virtually on the definitional mean of 1,000.

About Our Members

Professional and accountable, established and grounded in the Christian faith

- Operating under applicable state and commonwealth statutes;
- teaching state and national curriculum,
- registered and accredited, employing registered teachers,
- reporting directly to parents and through MySchool,
- meeting all requirements for funding.
- Faith principles involved in staff choice and sometimes in enrolment.

Community-based, not for profit, charitable organisations.

- Non-diocesan. Locally governed.
- In partnership with one or more local churches, formally and informally.
- Working closely with other agencies in service locally and internationally.
- Capacity and desire to grow in serving particular groups, e.g. students with disability.

Contributing to social wellbeing locally and internationally

- A strong culture of mission and service.
- Many schools are working to alleviate global poverty through education, health and other mission work.
- They do this directly, and in partnership with others. Student involvement is a key focus.

Affordable and accessible

- Seeking to provide genuine choice for those who want Christian faith-based education.
- Comprehensive (not academically selective).
- Ministry principles in enrolment: students with disability, indigenous students, refugee populations, 'fresh start' enrolments, fee concessions.

A growing movement with future capacity

- A strong record of growth. Enrolment growth in member schools has averaged 9.7% nationally since 2002 (until 2009 – latest available data).
- With appropriate policy support, there is every reasons to believe Christian schools will be a popular, affordable and efficient way of meeting government objectives for excellent schooling in a growing nation.

More detail and election briefings at <http://www.csa.edu.au/>

Funding for students with a disability

The most important and urgent funding need is to end the discriminatory funding which denies students with disabilities real choice, and causes heartache and hardship for their families. (Our policy paper “A Fair Go for Students With A Disability” gives more detail.)

We welcome the “unequivocal support” for the principle of equitable funding given by Shadow Minister Christopher Pyne at our National Policy Forum in May. We look forward to a commitment to implement this principle. We request that the Government does likewise.

Fair and certain funding: the funding review

A major Review of Funding is underway. There is no certainty of funding for any school beyond 2012. We have set out the Principles that should be applied to a fair funding mechanism: (an expanded version is also available)

- o The role of parents as the primary educators must be affirmed and maintained.
- o The historical and continuing role of faith communities in education must be respected and supported.
- o Equity, a fair go, must be at the heart of any allocative mechanism.
- o Schools must be provided with certainty and transparency in any funding model.
- o Accountability must be meaningful and proportionate Capital funding for growth

Christian schools are growing at a much greater rate than other sectors, and there is a demand for new schools in growth areas. We have demonstrated that we can help government to meet its obligations for school choice in growth areas.

We are concerned about what will become of capital funding following the BER programme which, while very welcome and certainly meeting many local needs, by definition doesn't meet the continuing need for growth, and especially for new schools.

We are asking that incentives for investment, such as an interest subsidy scheme or concessional tax arrangements, be considered to encourage investment in community-based non-government schools.

Ensuring freedom of choice and expression

We depend on the rights to freedom of religious expression, and the right of parents to choose an education based, if they desire it, on religious conviction.

In practical terms this means that existing protections under Commonwealth and State laws and regulations need to be retained. This includes in particular:

- o the ability to integrate a world view based on our beliefs and values into curriculum and school practice
- o The ability to choose staff on the basis that they are genuine adherents, in belief and practice, to the Christian faith.

We seek commitments from all parties that they will not jeopardise these freedoms.