



21 March 2018

The Hon. Bill Shorten MP  
Leader of the Opposition  
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House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

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**Re: Australian Government funding arrangements**

Dear Mr Shorten

Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) and its 217 widely diverse Member Schools have followed with concern recent commentary and media reporting stemming from a campaign related to school funding being waged by a section of the Catholic education system.

Before detailing my concerns, I want to acknowledge your long-standing commitment to education and your undertaking to increase school funding if elected to government.

In particular, I want to commend you for your repeated statements of commitment to the principle that all students in all schools, regardless of sector, deserve a degree of government support. We welcome your acknowledgement of the diversity of Independent schools and the central role they play in the communities they serve. ISV has recognised your commitment in our public statements and in our communications with our Member Schools, which educate some 140,000 young Australians across Victoria.

Like you, we have long argued that it is time to 'draw a line under the "public vs private" debate'.

While that debate still lingers in some quarters, we are now concerned that a new and divisive tone has entered public commentary, in which sections of the Catholic education system have targeted Independent schools, as part of a campaign against aspects of current school funding arrangements.

We note that you also have concerns about those arrangements, which include the current SES methodology. While we recognise that that methodology is not perfect, we believe that any changes should be based on an independent review, such as that currently being undertaken by the National Schools Resourcing Board. As well, we maintain that any changes should not unfairly favour one school sector over another.

We would welcome the opportunity to speak with you, your staff, and the Shadow Education Minister, Ms Tanya Pliibersek, about ISV research, which suggests the changes being advocated by sections of the Catholic school sector could have consequences that are at odds with your party's commitment to ensuring students from low income families are properly funded.

Our modelling has sought to determine the impact on individual schools of replacing the SES methodology with a measure of schools' income.

Far from having the intended outcome of favouring disadvantaged schools, our modelling shows the main impact of such a change would be to transfer money from low-SES schools to high-SES schools, and would unfairly favour Catholic schools in established metropolitan suburbs with high SES scores. The schools that face the greatest losses would be low-SES schools, particularly in regional areas, and Independent schools in Melbourne and Sydney with mid-range SES scores.

As I said, we would welcome an opportunity to brief you on this and other matters, including outlining for you the wide diversity of Independent schools, close to half of which are in the lower SES bands, educating students from low to middle incomes. At the same time such a meeting would allow us to hear in greater detail your plans for school funding and education more broadly.

Thank you again for your close personal interest in and commitment to education.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Green".

Michelle Green  
Chief Executive