



Dr Geoff Newcombe

Executive Director
gnewcombe@aisnsw.edu.au

Michael Carr

Deputy Executive Director
Director: Employment Relations
mcarr@aisnsw.edu.au

Frank Brooks

Director: ICT
fbrooks@aisnsw.edu.au

David Buley

Director: Finance & Administration
dbuley@aisnsw.edu.au

Estelle Lewis

Director: Teacher Accreditation
elewis@aisnsw.edu.au

Julie Thompson

Director: Professional Development
jthompson@aisnsw.edu.au

Grahame Wilson

Director: Compliance
gwilson@aisnsw.edu.au

Robyn Yates

Director: Professional Services
ryates@aisnsw.edu.au

The AIS leadership team invites you to contact them on (02) 9299 2845 or via email to discuss any of the issues raised in this newsletter or other schooling matters.

ISTAA: changes in 2009

Experienced Teacher

To assist teachers to show that they have met the standards for Experienced Teacher, evidence guides are being prepared which will be made available to teachers applying in 2009. The guides provide indicators of actions that teachers can use to show that they meet the standards as well as types of evidence that can be submitted to demonstrate each standard. To streamline the accreditation process for teachers, the ISTAA Council has decided that only one piece of evidence for each standard will be required to demonstrate achievement of that standard.

In response to requests, ISTAA will also be conducting a one day course in March for supervisors of teachers applying for accreditation. Details can be found on the Teacher Accreditation page of the AIS PD website.

Classroom/Professional Excellence

From 2009 NSW teachers will apply to complete accreditation for Professional Accomplishment through the Institute of Teachers. The AIS is currently awaiting confirmation from the Minister for Education of its status as the Teacher Accreditation Authority for the higher levels of accreditation for member schools. In other changes, ISTAA panels will review applicants' evidence prior to it being submitted to the Institute for consideration by the Moderating and Consistency Committee. The additional component that assesses values and ethos will be assessed by ISTAA. A new information brochure for CPE is being prepared by ISTAA and will be available early in Term 1.

For teachers in the ACT, the process remains unchanged.

NSW Institute of Teachers

A recommendation has been made to the Minister to include preschool teachers as teachers under the Institute of Teachers Act. If this is adopted, new preschool teachers will have to register with the Institute of Teachers and complete accreditation at Professional Competence level. Information will be made available to schools by the Institute of Teachers once this recommendation has been endorsed.

Teachers can apply online through the Institute's website to commence accreditation at Professional Accomplishment and Professional Leadership.

Accreditation courses

The Institute of Teachers does not provide direct support to teachers seeking accreditation at any of the key stages. Courses supporting teachers applying for all levels of accreditation and for school leaders managing the processes of accreditation will be provided in 2009 by ISTAA.

For details see the AIS Course Calendar or the PD courses on the AIS website.

The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales Limited

Level 12, 99 York Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Phone (02) 9299 2845
Fax (02) 9290 2274
Web www.aisnsw.edu.au
Email ais@aisnsw.edu.au
ABN 96 003 509 073

Dear Colleague,

On behalf of the AIS Board and staff may I wish all schools a successful 2009. The year will be very challenging for our sector with much of the focus on financial sustainability, National Partnerships and the ongoing development of a national curriculum.

The end of 2008 saw the Rudd Government's *Schools Assistance Bill* passed by Federal Parliament after considerable political gamesmanship between the Government and the Opposition in relation to several aspects of the Bill. As well as guaranteeing the existing funding arrangements for non-government schools from 2009-2012, the Bill contained clauses relating to the implementation of the national curriculum and the requirement for schools to disclose their sources of funding.

I would like to thank independent schools and other groups in the sector for their support during this very public debate. With your assistance we were able to represent the views of the sector to the Deputy Prime Minister's office and seek clarity around some aspects of the Bill. As a result we were able to support the Government's legislation with confidence and it is important that you are aware of the nature of the assurances given to us.

In relation to the need for schools to implement the national curriculum, the Deputy Prime Minister has confirmed that "... *beyond the core requirements of the national curriculum, there will continue to be flexibility for innovation and creativity for the development and delivery of curriculum at the local level in schools. The national curriculum will not mandate the pedagogical practices that schools or teachers use to deliver the content and achievement standards.*"

This ensures that schools following alternative educational philosophies or those that educate students from a faith perspective can continue their existing educational approaches within the framework currently provided by the NSW Board of Studies.

On the critical issue of the reporting of income sources, the existing Financial Questionnaire will remain the primary method through which this information will be collected from schools. There were concerns raised during the debate that individual school donor details may be publicly reported. The Deputy Prime Minister's office has advised us that "... *the Schools Assistance Act now makes it explicit that any information that would identify individual donors will not be collected. It was never the Government's intention that reports would collect this level of detail.*"

In addition, while there may be some revisions to the Financial Questionnaire this will only take place after consultation with peak bodies, and "... *the information reported may be disaggregated by broad categories, such as fees and levies, scholarships and grants. These requirements will be the same as those required of state government schools under the National Education Agreement.*"

National Goals for Schooling

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* was launched on 5th December during the Australian Education Ministers' 1st Biennial Forum: Sharing innovation and excellence in school education.

The *Melbourne Declaration* acknowledged some significant changes in the world including globalisation and technological change, increased engagement with Asia, complex environmental, social and economic pressures, and the rapid advances in ICT which have occurred since the 1999 Adelaide Declaration.

Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians was contextualised through two overarching goals:

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

Goal 2: All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

The supporting descriptors for each goal were very general, in most cases being motherhood statements which received unanimous support. For example, Goal 1 requires schools to ensure that *"... the learning outcomes of indigenous students improve to match those of other students; ensure that socioeconomic disadvantage ceases to be a significant determinant of educational outcomes; and ensure that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity."*

Similarly, Goal 2 stated that *"confident and creative individuals have the knowledge skills, understandings and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives. In addition, confident and creative individuals have a sense of self-worth, self awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage*

their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing. Active and informed citizens act with moral and ethical integrity."

Within the supporting text, some goal descriptors could potentially be interpreted in a way which may be of concern for some independent schools.

Goal 1 requires all school sectors to provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location. The intent of this statement needs to be considered in tandem with the initial statement referring to schooling contributing to a socially cohesive society. The AIS will work with government sector colleagues to assist them to understand the nuances embedded in the text and to interpret the wording to encompass the diversity of views within the independent sector.

All Australian governments have committed to working with all school sectors and the broader community to achieve the goals. To this end, eight inter-related areas have been identified for future action. These are:

- developing stronger partnerships
- supporting quality teaching and school leadership
- strengthening early childhood education
- enhancing middle years development
- supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions
- promoting world-class curriculum and assessment
- improving educational outcomes for indigenous youth and disadvantaged

young Australians especially those from low socio economic backgrounds, and

- strengthening accountability and transparency.

These areas formed the basis of the MCEETYA Action Plan which was released for consultation at the Education Ministers' 1st Biennial Forum and is available on the MCEETYA website. Key stakeholders have been invited to provide a response by early March.

In providing feedback, the AIS will be cognisant of the inter-relationship of the many facets of the Rudd Government's education revolution. The areas for action arising from the new National Goals and draft Action Plan are consistent with the focus points being addressed through the National Partnerships, National Education Agreements and the Schools Assistance Act 2008. Australian Government funding is forging the acceptance and delivery of the education revolution.

The AIS will work with the NSW Government, the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) and the Australian Government to maximise the opportunities for participation by independent schools. A significant ongoing challenge will be to balance the access and participation of independent schools in funded activities without compromising the representation of the views from the diverse range of schools within the sector.

Inquiry into Child Protection Services

In 2008 a Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW was held. Its task was to examine changes to the child protection system to cope with future levels of demand.

The AIS participated on the panel at the forum on mandatory reporting. At this forum we raised some of the key issues for schools, including the difficulty in interpreting the definition of 'risk of harm'; the small number of reports leading to action by DoCS; the lack of feedback to mandatory reporters; and the negative impact of penalties for non-reporting.

Some interesting points that came to light through the Inquiry include:

- DoCS' annual budget in 2007/08 exceeded \$1.2 billion
- Approximately 20% of the most frequently reported children & young people accounted for more than half the total reports to DoCS
- Most reports concern domestic violence, psychological abuse, neglect, carer substance abuse, carer mental health and/or sexual abuse
- Only 13% of reports resulted in a home visit from DoCS
- Too many reports are made which do not warrant the exercise of DoCS' considerable statutory powers
- Too much effort and cost is expended in managing reports, rather than assisting children
- Mandatory reporters receive insufficient information from DoCS about its response to their efforts.

The Inquiry made 111 recommendations and proposed a number of key reforms, some of which will have an impact on independent schools. The most significant of these are described below.

Proposed key reforms

- Amending the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* so that only children and young people who are suspected to be at risk of significant harm are reported to DoCS
- Addressing the needs of children, who do not reach the significant harm threshold, through organisations other than DoCS
- Developing a common assessment framework to identify and respond to the needs of children
- Amending privacy legislation to allow appropriate exchange of information for the safety, welfare and well-being of a child or young person
- Encouraging more and better feedback to mandatory reporters.

Key recommendations

- The amendments to the definition of risk of harm include the insertion of 'significant' and a new criteria, 'the child or young person habitually does not attend school'
- Penalty provisions relating to mandatory reporters are to be removed
- Newly created Regional Intake and Referral Services, located within a non-government organisation, will receive information regarding the needs of children where the risk of harm does not meet the threshold of 'significant'
- DoCS will remain in its current structure with considerable inputs to training, assessment and prioritising children's needs, decision-making and responses.

Late in 2008, the NSW government indicated that it would accept the recommendations of the Special Commission. We understand that the planning for the implementation of reforms has now commenced. As soon as any further information comes to hand schools will be informed but until there is any change in legislation, it should be noted that the current legislation and procedures remain in force.

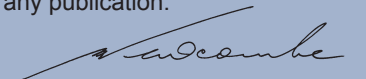
The commission's full report is available at www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpsinquiry

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These comments are reassuring and articulate what we understood to be the Government's position all along. We will be working with the Government over the coming months on the detail of the financial reporting requirements and ensure that the needs and concerns of independent schools are given appropriate consideration.

The Deputy Prime Minister has made it clear that her intention is to treat all school sectors equally. This includes the collection of information, financial and educational, from all schools that allows for valid measurement and comparisons of school performance to be made.

The AIS position has been made clear to the Government - while we don't oppose transparency, any financial data collected from independent, government and Catholic schools that is put into the public domain must be accurate and comparable. The task of comparing individual school data with that from large systems will be extremely difficult and must be thoroughly investigated prior to any publication.



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