INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SECTOR

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The Independent school sector across Australia plays a vital role in delivering high-quality education services to children and families nationwide. As an essential component of the education landscape, this sector provides diverse schooling options that complement the government and Catholic school systems. This diversity in educational offerings allows families the freedom to choose schools that align not only with academic or extra-curricular goals but also with specific values, religious beliefs, and educational philosophies.

Independent schools, as a result of educating 716,848 students in 2023-24, **delivered $45.69 billion to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and supported 264,360 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs** through direct and flow-on contributions. This accounted for 1.8% of the total industry contribution to GDP in Australia and 2.1% of the total employment.

IN 2023-24 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS:

SUPPORTED
264,360 FTE JOBS

SAVED TAXPAYERS
$12.51 BILLION

$45.69 BILLION IN
GROSS PRODUCT

DELIVERED $1.55 BILLION IN
ADDITIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH

Independent schools **saved taxpayers $12.51 billion** through a combination of savings of $9.91 billion in recurrent education costs and $2.60 billion in capital costs.

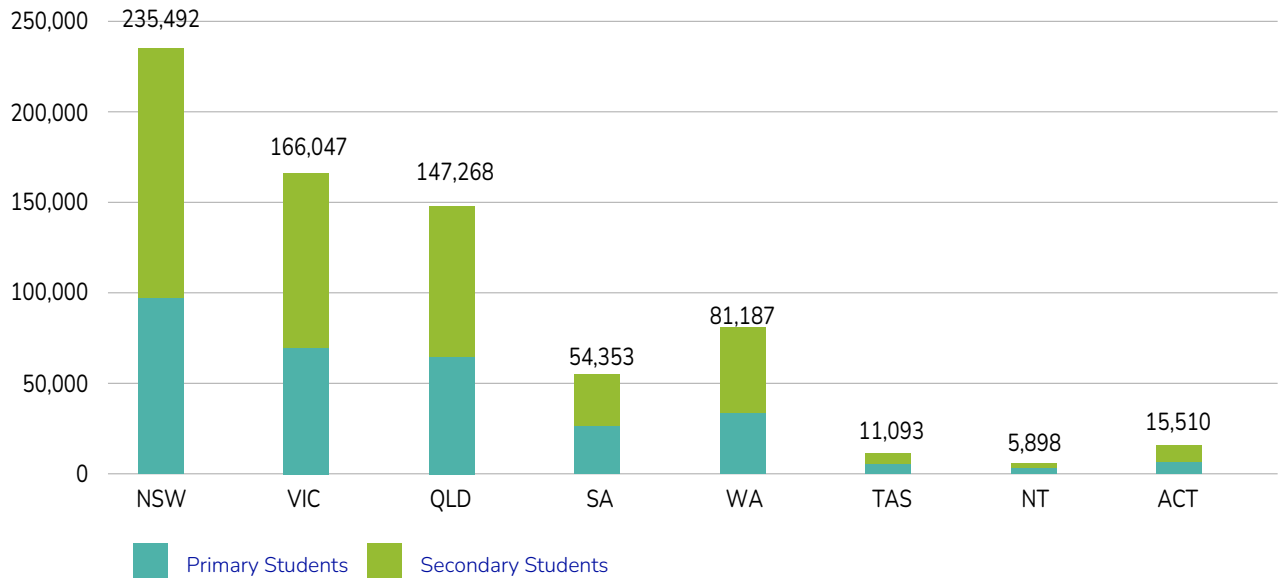
- All students enrolled at Independent schools in Australia are entitled to a place in a government school. It costs federal and state governments approximately $26,600 in recurrent funding to educate a student in a government school, compared to only $13,500 for students in an Independent school, saving taxpayers $13,100 per student.
- The total capital cost saving is estimated to be $2.60 billion in 2023-24. This reflects the potential cost to taxpayers to increase the brick and mortar school facilities which would be required if students at Independent schools were instead educated in the government school system.

Students at Independent schools achieve excellent education outcomes due to the high-quality teaching provided and the tailored learning environment. Enhanced educational outcomes provided by Independent schools can be linked to an estimated contribution to **growth in GDP of approximately $1.55 billion** in 2023-24, based on the latest PISA test results.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL STUDENT BODY

Independent schools educated 17.6% of the national student body in 2023 with 716,848 students enrolled at over 1,200 Independent schools across Australia. Approximately 36% of Independent schools have less than 200 students enrolled in 2023.

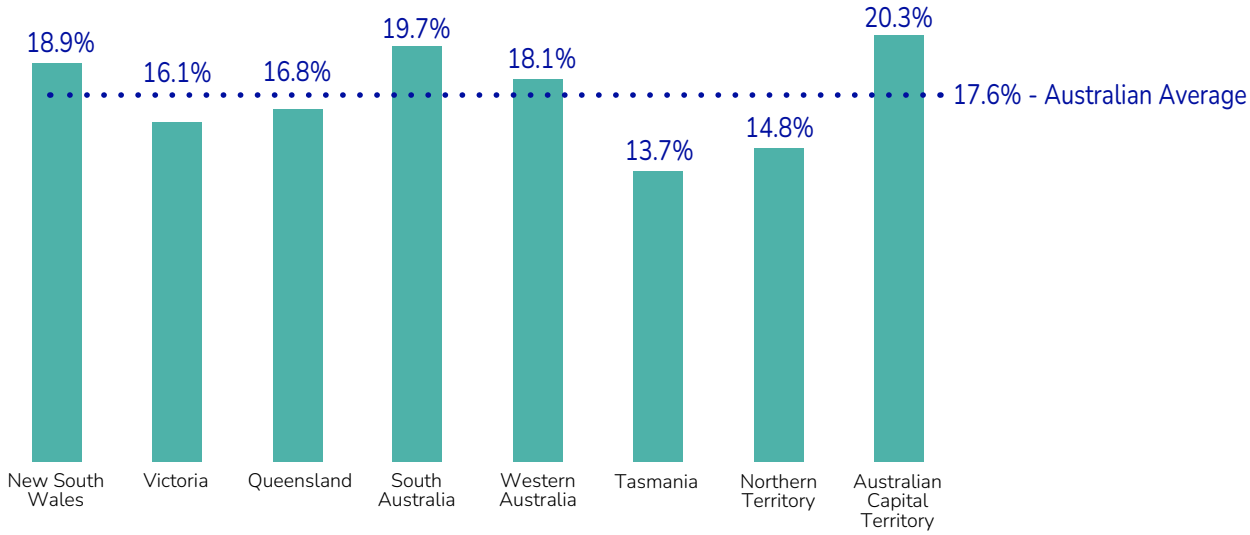
Independent schools offer choice to Australian families with 60% of all students educated at an Independent school coming from a low or middle-income family. Additionally, of the 716,848 students, 157,000 are students with disability and 19,000 are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students.



Over the past decade, this sector has been the fastest-growing within the Australian education system, with substantial enrolment increases across nearly all states and territories. Enrolments at Independent schools have been rapidly growing at an average rate of 3% over the last five years, far beyond average annual growth in all school enrolments of only 1%. This means, over half of all enrolments over the last five years have been at Independent schools.

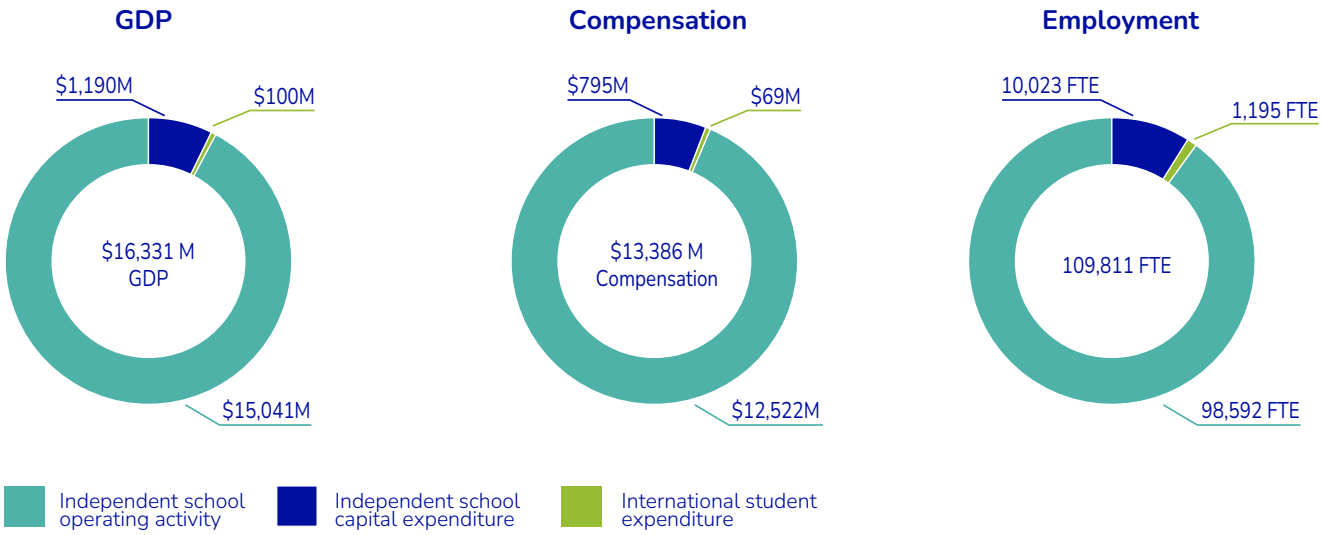
Much of this growth is being driven by low-fee Independent schools, with the strongest increases seen in schools charging under $7,500 annually. This growth is driven by increasing parental demand for school choice and highlights a clear shift in educational preferences with Independent schools becoming an increasingly prominent choice for Australian families.

Around the country, growth has been especially strong in New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, which collectively account for over 75% of total Independent school enrolments. The Australian Capital Territory has the highest proportion of Independent school enrolments (on a state/ territory basis) with Independent schools educating over one-fifth of all students in the ACT.



INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DIRECT CONTRIBUTION

The direct activity of Independent schools is measured across the operating activity of the schools, the capital investments made by the schools, and the induced spend in the Australian economy by international students who choose to be educated in Australia.



In 2023-24, Independent schools directly employed nearly 98,600 FTE staff who were paid $12.52 billion in wages. In addition to Independent school staff, there were over 11,250 FTE jobs directly supported by Independent school capital expenditure and Independent schools international student expenditure.

Total Independent school turnover was $19.82 billion in 2023-24 and Independent schools spent a further $3.64 billion on capital expenditure. This supported $15.04 billion and $1.19 billion in Gross Product, respectively. Additionally, international students at Independent schools directly contributed $195.5 million to local businesses, which created $100.4 million in Gross Product.

1,260 FTE
PRINCIPALS

6,690 FTE
SPECIALIST SUPPORT STAFF

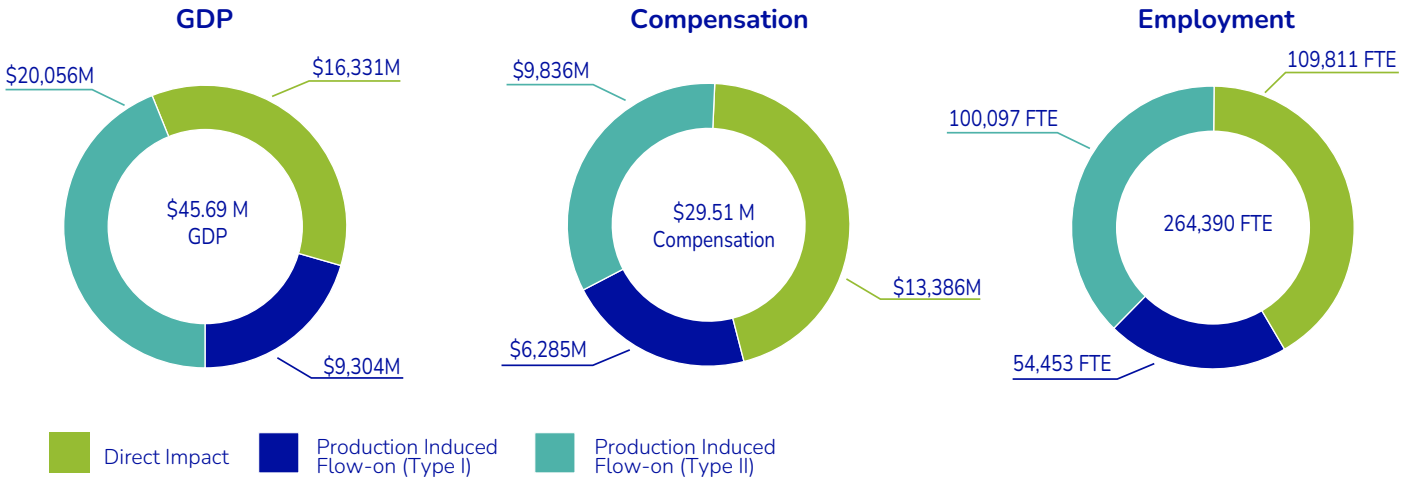
59,540 FTE
GENERAL TEACHING STAFF

249 FTE
SENIOR EXECUTIVE STAFF

23,385 FTE
ADMINISTRATIVE/ CLERICAL SERVICES STAFF

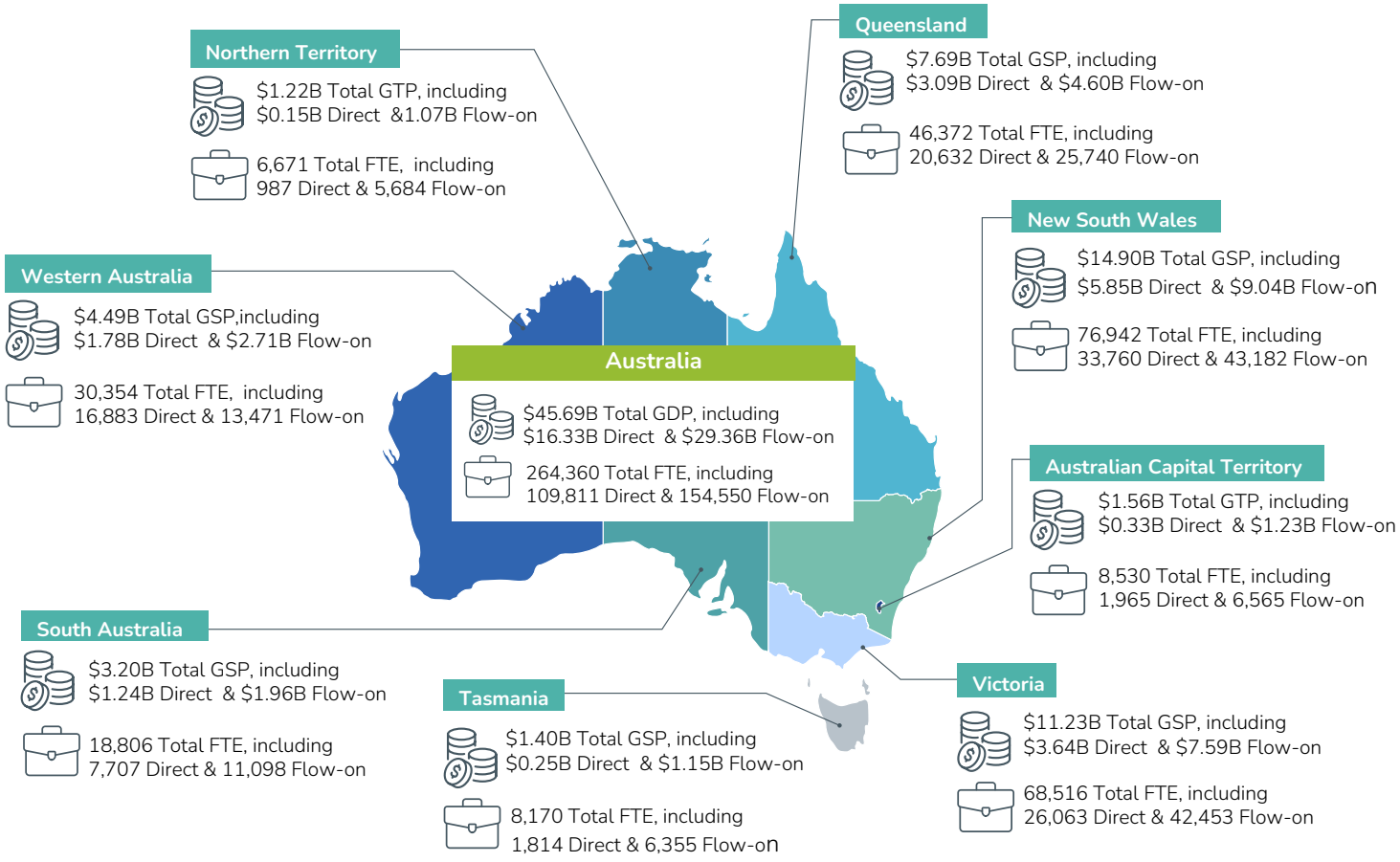
7,199 FTE
BUILDING OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE STAFF

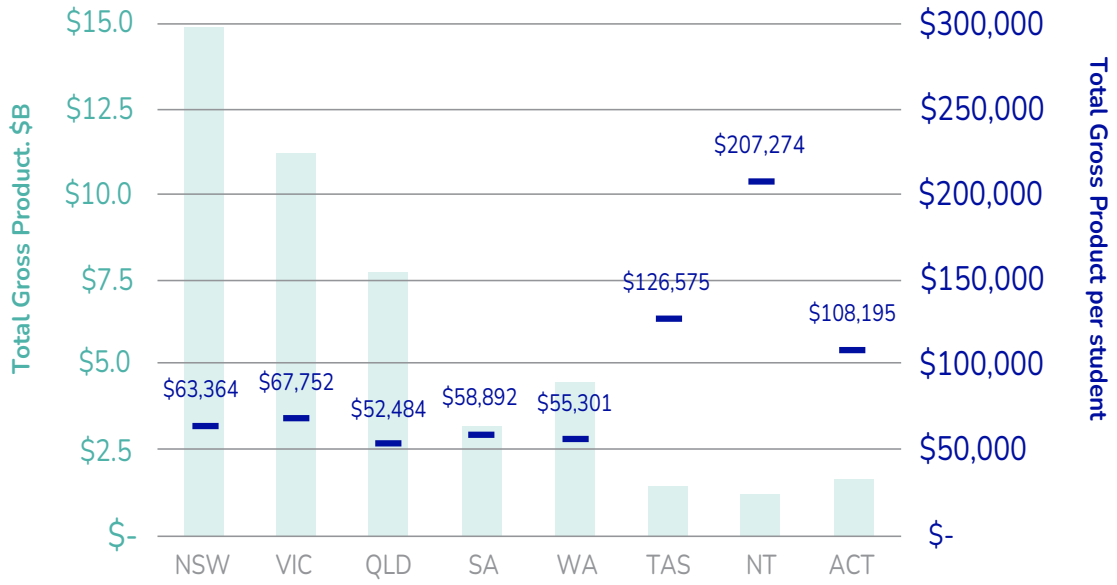
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TOTAL CONTRIBUTION



ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION BY STATE AND TERRITORY

New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland collectively educate 77% of the total Australian Independent school sector enrolments and generate 74% of the national Independent school sector economic contribution (in terms of Gross Product). The economic contribution of Independent schools across the country largely follows the distribution of students enrolled at Independent schools. However, Victoria and the Northern Territory have a greater share of economic contribution than their share of total students, by a factor of 2%.



Nearly a third of the national Gross Product supported by the Independent school sector is due to activity within New South Wales ($14.90 billion in Gross Product). This is equivalent to $63,970 in Gross Product per student enrolled in NSW Independent schools.

Comparatively, the Northern Territory accounts for about 3% of the national Gross Product supported by Independent schools ($1.22 billion), and with enrolments of less than 6,000 students, is equivalent to $207,274 in Gross Product per student enrolled in NT Independent schools.