INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS SNAPSHOT

2026 EDITION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA

LATEST AVAILABLE FACTS AND FIGURES

The Independent school sector is a diverse and growing group of non-government schools. This snapshot provides an overview of the key characteristics of Independent schools, the students, the teaching and non-teaching staff, and how these schools are funded.

The Independent school figures in this snapshot include independent Catholic schools, except where otherwise indicated.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

- ✓ Choice for parents
- ✓ Strong community links
- ✓ Diversity of school type, size and focus
- ✓ Autonomous governance arrangements
- ✓ Comprehensive accountability

SCHOOL METRICS

In 2025, there were 1,240 Independent schools, including 145 boarding schools.

1,240
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

767,712
TOTAL STUDENTS

TYPES OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

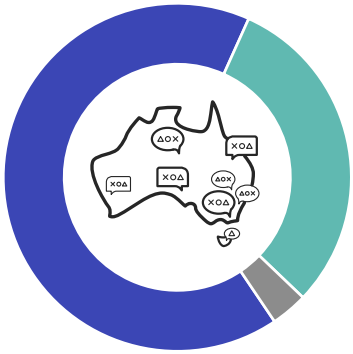
63% (785)
COMBINED

17% (214)
PRIMARY

7% (82)
SECONDARY

13% (159)
SPECIAL/SPECIAL ASSISTANCE SCHOOLS

LOCATION OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



66.2%
MAJOR CITIES

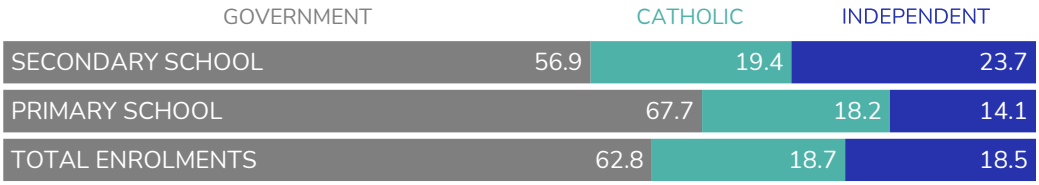
30.2%
REGIONAL

3.6%
REMOTE

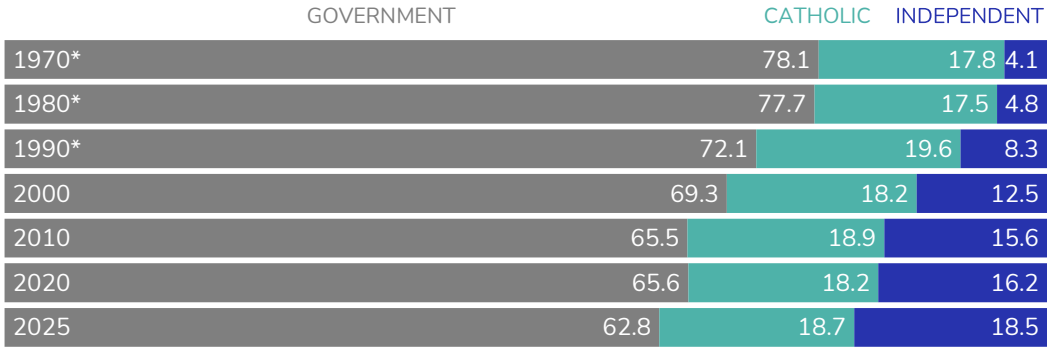
STUDENT ENROLMENTS

The rate of growth in Independent schools has been increasing.
In 2025, enrolments in Independent schools grew at a rate of 3.0%, higher than government (-0.2%) and Catholic (+1.4%) schools.

ENROLMENTS BY SCHOOL SECTOR AND LEVEL (%) 2025

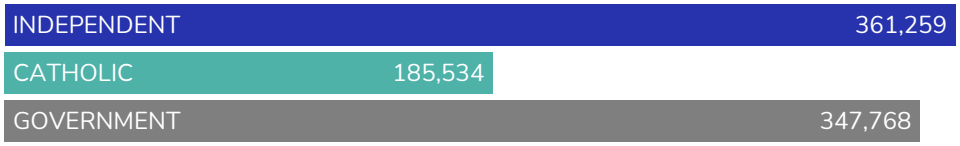


ENROLMENT CHANGE OVER TIME BY SCHOOL SECTOR (%)



Shown as percentage of total enrolments.
* Enrolment change figures in 1970, 1980 and 1990 are sourced from Australian Bureau of Statistics where independent Catholic schools are included in the Catholic school category.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL ENROLMENTS BY SCHOOL SECTOR 2000-2025



ENROLMENTS BY GENDER AND LEVEL 2025 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
PRIMARY	158,819	161,040	319,859
SECONDARY	221.081	226,772	447,853
TOTAL	**379,900**	**387,812**	**767,712**

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITY (EST.) 2025 INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS*

SUPPORT PROVIDED WITHIN A QUALITY DIFFERENTIATED TEACHING PRACTICE	62,500
SUPPLEMENTARY	84,300
SUBSTANTIAL	30,100
EXTENSIVE	10,400

* More information on the levels of adjustment for students with disability is available at www.nccd.edu.au

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN 2025:

22,538
ABORIGINAL and TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS

5,321
OVERSEAS STUDENTS

15,600
BOARDING STUDENTS

187,300
STUDENTS WITH **DISABILITY** (ESTIMATED)

SCHOOL FUNDING

Parents and communities contributed over half (51.8%) of all Independent school funding (recurrent and capital combined).

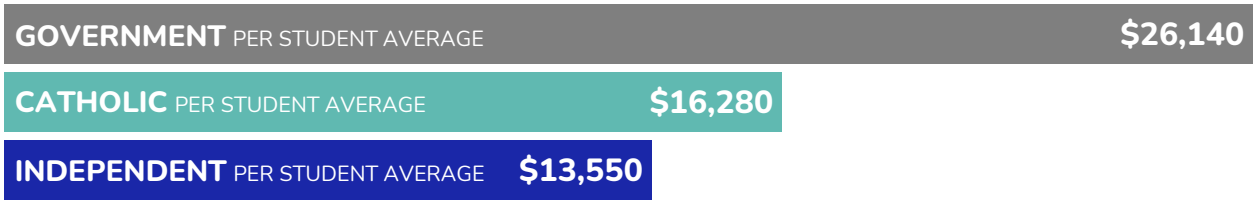
FAMILIES CONTRIBUTED
$11.2 BILLION
(RECURRENT AND CAPITAL)
TO INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN 2024

AN ESTIMATED SAVING OF
$9.3 BILLION
TO GOVERNMENTS

MEDIAN ANNUAL FEE
FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS IN 2024
$6,060

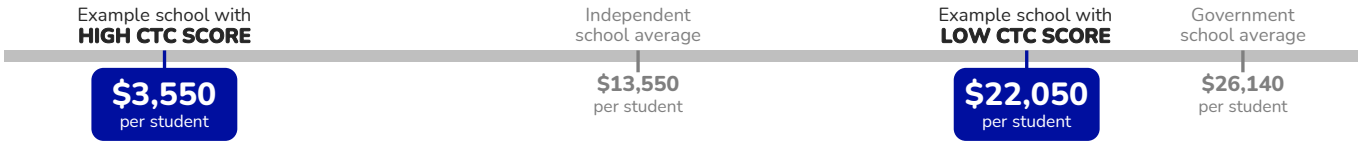
Each Independent school student received **$12,590 less government funding** (on average) compared to students in government schools.

AVERAGE GOVERNMENT RECURRENT FUNDING PER STUDENT FY 2023-24

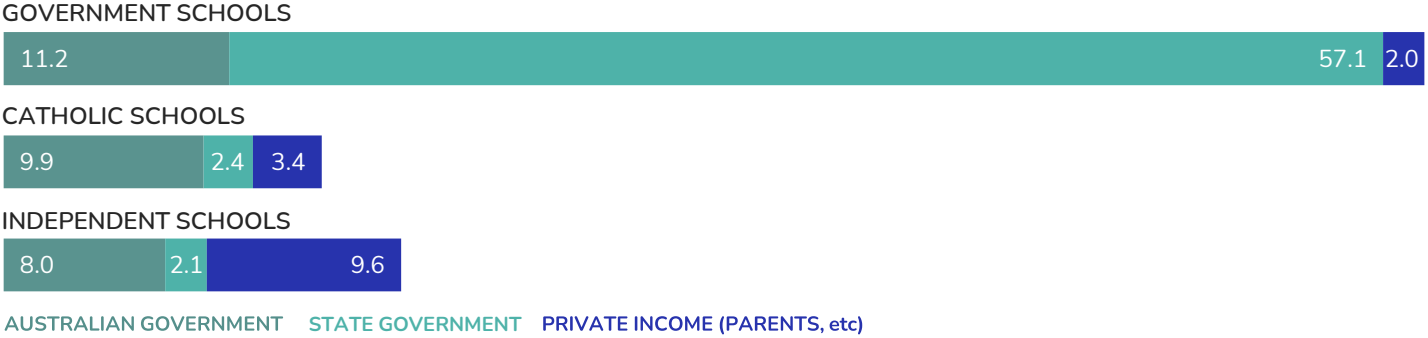


The Australian Government is the primary funding source for non-government schools, with state and territory governments the primary source for government schools. The Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) is a needs-based funding model that includes base funding plus loadings to address educational disadvantage.

Base funding for Independent schools is adjusted according to families' estimated capacity to contribute (CTC), assessed on parental income tax data. Schools with a higher CTC score receive less per student base funding, and schools with a lower CTC receive more.



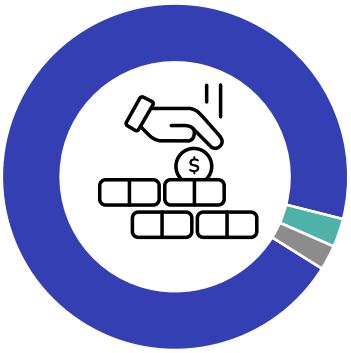
RECURRENT FUNDING FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION $BILLION FY 2023-24



CAPITAL FUNDING

Parents and communities of Independent schools contribute the vast majority of capital investment – through fees, fundraising and voluntary contributions.

SOURCES OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE 2024



PRIVATE SOURCES (parents and donors)

$3.7 BILLION (95%)

Most capital funding is sourced through borrowing, fundraising, levies on parents or school reserves.

STATE and TERRITORY GOVERNMENTS

$103 MILLION (3%)

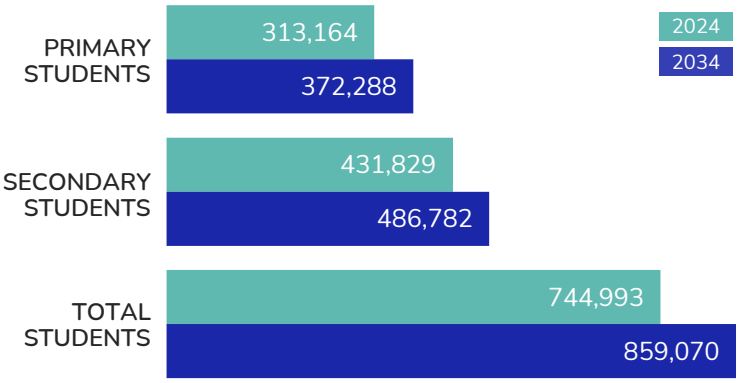
State and territory government assistance for capital funding is limited. Some states and territory governments provide capital grants and several also provide interest subsidy arrangements.

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAM

$89 MILLION (2%)

Australian Government grants are distributed to Independent schools on a needs-basis through Block Grant Authorities, with priority given to disadvantaged school communities with the least capacity to raise funds.

PROJECTED ENROLMENT GROWTH IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS 2024-2034



261 NEW SCHOOLS and CAMPUSES will need to be built by 2034

(Based on average Independent school size)

In 2024, total government capital expenditure per student for government schools was almost **8 times more** than in Independent schools

TOTAL GOVERNMENT CAPITAL EXPENDITURE PER STUDENT COMPARISON 2024

SCHOOL PROFILE

Independent schools have diverse religious or philosophical affiliations.
They represent a range of approaches to teaching and learning.

AFFILIATIONS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS 2025

AFFILIATION	NUMBER of SCHOOLS	STUDENTS FTE	STUDENTS %
ANGLICAN	158	183,107	23.9%
NON-DENOMINATIONAL	245	120,263	15.7%
CHRISTIAN	164	98,025	12.8%
ISLAMIC	58	56,196	7.3%
UNITING CHURCH	40	49,607	6.5%
CATHOLIC, ROMAN	55	48,412	6.3%
LUTHERAN	76	46,324	6.0%
BAPTIST	40	27,647	3.6%
INTER-DENOMINATIONAL	24	19,880	2.6%
SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST	45	17,270	2.2%
PRESBYTERIAN	13	12,797	1.7%
PENTECOSTAL	20	10,325	1.3%
STEINER	51	10,081	1.3%
JEWISH	17	8,865	1.2%
ASSEMBLIES OF GOD	11	8,092	1.1%
BRETHREN	20	5,993	0.8%
MONTESSORI SCHOOL	37	4,835	0.6%
ORTHODOX, GREEK	8	4,307	0.6%
CATHOLIC, OTHER	8	3,914	0.5%
ORTHODOX, OTHER	7	2,912	0.4%
OTHER RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION*	11	6,269	0.8%
OTHER**	132	22,591	2.9%

* 'OTHER RELIGIOUS' affiliations include Churches of Christ, Hare Krishna and Society of Friends.

** 'OTHER' includes special schools, international schools, Ananda Marga, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander schools, and community schools.

SIZE OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

<50 STUDENTS
11% (134 schools)

50-199 STUDENTS
25% (315 schools)

200-999 STUDENTS
40% (499 schools)

1,000-1,999 STUDENTS
20% (248 schools)

2,000+ STUDENTS
4% (44 schools)

GOVERNANCE

Independent schools are not-for-profit institutions founded by groups in the community. All Independent schools are registered with the relevant state or territory education authorities.

Independent schools are primarily accountable to their parent and school communities.

About 17% of Independent schools operate within an approved system authority. These include the Anglican, Lutheran or Seventh Day Adventist systems.

All Independent schools comply with relevant state and federal education legislation and regulation.

SCHOOL TEACHERS

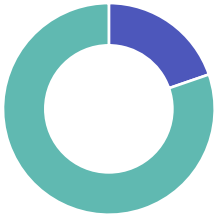
Independent schools employ more than 20.2% of all teachers in Australian schools.
The ratio of student to teacher in Independent schools is the lowest of the school sectors.

65,721
NUMBER OF TEACHERS
FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT
IN 2025

74,722
NUMBER OF TEACHERS
HEADCOUNT IN 2025

134,047
NUMBER OF TEACHING AND NON-TEACHING STAFF
HEADCOUNT IN 2025

TEACHERS IN THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR BY GENDER AND LEVEL 2025



PRIMARY TEACHERS

19.2% (4,456)
MALE

80.8% (18,775)
FEMALE

SECONDARY TEACHERS

40.8% (17,315)
MALE

59.2% (25,174)
FEMALE

STUDENT TO TEACHER RATIOS BY SCHOOL LEVEL 1980-2025

	PRIMARY SCHOOLS			SECONDARY SCHOOLS		
	GOVERNMENT	CATHOLIC*	INDEPENDENT	GOVERNMENT	CATHOLIC*	INDEPENDENT
1980	20.2	23.9	**17.3**	12.2	16.6	**13.3**
2000	17.1	19.1	**15.7**	12.6	13.4	**11.4**
2020	14.8	15.5	**13.9**	12.6	12.2	**10.5**
2025	13.7	14.9	**13.7**	12.0	11.9	**10.5**

STUDENT TO TEACHER RATIOS (AVERAGE) 2025

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
11.7 to 1

GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
13.0 to 1

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS*
13.3 to 1

* Independent Catholic schools are included with Catholic schools.

SOURCES

Figures in this snapshot are derived from data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Government Department of Education, the Productivity Commission and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. Some figures may not add due to rounding. Funding figures in the snapshot use the latest available financial data which is for the financial year 2023–24, or for the calendar year 2024. Due to data availability, capital expenditure by source has been used instead of capital income, as was the case in previous snapshots. Unless otherwise specified, student enrolment figures are full-time equivalent.

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS AUSTRALIA – THE NATIONAL PEAK BODY
FOR AUSTRALIAN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

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SCHOOLS
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