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## Qld Independent Schools Must Come Out the Other Side of this Pandemic

Queensland independent schools are supporting families experiencing financial hardship while also making tough decisions to ensure they remain viable and able to continue educating students.

Independent Schools Queensland Executive Director David Robertson said independent schools like many employers impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic were having to re-assess their operations and budgets.

“The pandemic is having a significant effect on independent schools because parents, on average, provide 43% of school recurrent income with 57% coming from governments,” Mr Robertson said.

“When you have independent schools taking in less income, because some families have lost employment, while also having aspects of their operations, such as boarding, international education, or co-curricular activities cut back, very difficult decisions have to be made,” he said.

“Staffing costs (70-75%) make up the largest expense for all independent schools. While schools will exhaust all measures to keep their staff, in some cases this may just not be possible.

“Any notion that the government funding received by independent schools covers staffing costs is not correct. It may be the case for some independent schools, but it is not the case for the vast majority.

“On the latest available financial data (2018 calendar year), Queensland independent schools received a total of \$1.2 billion in Commonwealth and State Government recurrent funding. The salary and on-costs for staffing in the same year was \$1.5 billion.”

Mr Robertson said at an individual school level the wage cost difference not covered by government funding could run into the millions of dollars for some schools.

“Boarding schools are in a difficult situation whereby total staffing costs of \$46.5 million far outweigh Government funding for boarding of \$4.3 million. There are 31 independent boarding schools in Queensland catering for nearly 4,000 boarders,” he said.

“It's in the best interests of our state, governments and families that independent schools also come out the other side of this pandemic to continue to sustain vital jobs and educate the 1 in 7 Queensland children whose parents choose independent schools .”

Mr Robertson hit back at claims by the Independent Education Union of Queensland that independent schools were benefiting from State and Federal Government COVID-19 funding rescue packages.

“Independent schools have not received any significant additional special funding from governments and it is unclear whether independent schools will qualify for the JobKeeper package. In addition, the child care assistance announced has resulted in significant income losses for many early childhood centres operated by many independent schools as they cannot charge fees.

“Independent schools, their boards, principals and staff have conducted themselves with professionalism and compassion during this period while balancing the needs of their many stakeholders. They deserve to be commended for continuing their commitment to high-quality learning opportunities for their students and keeping their communities connected.”

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