



Independent Schools  
Queensland

choice & diversity

# CHOICE AND DIVERSITY IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS





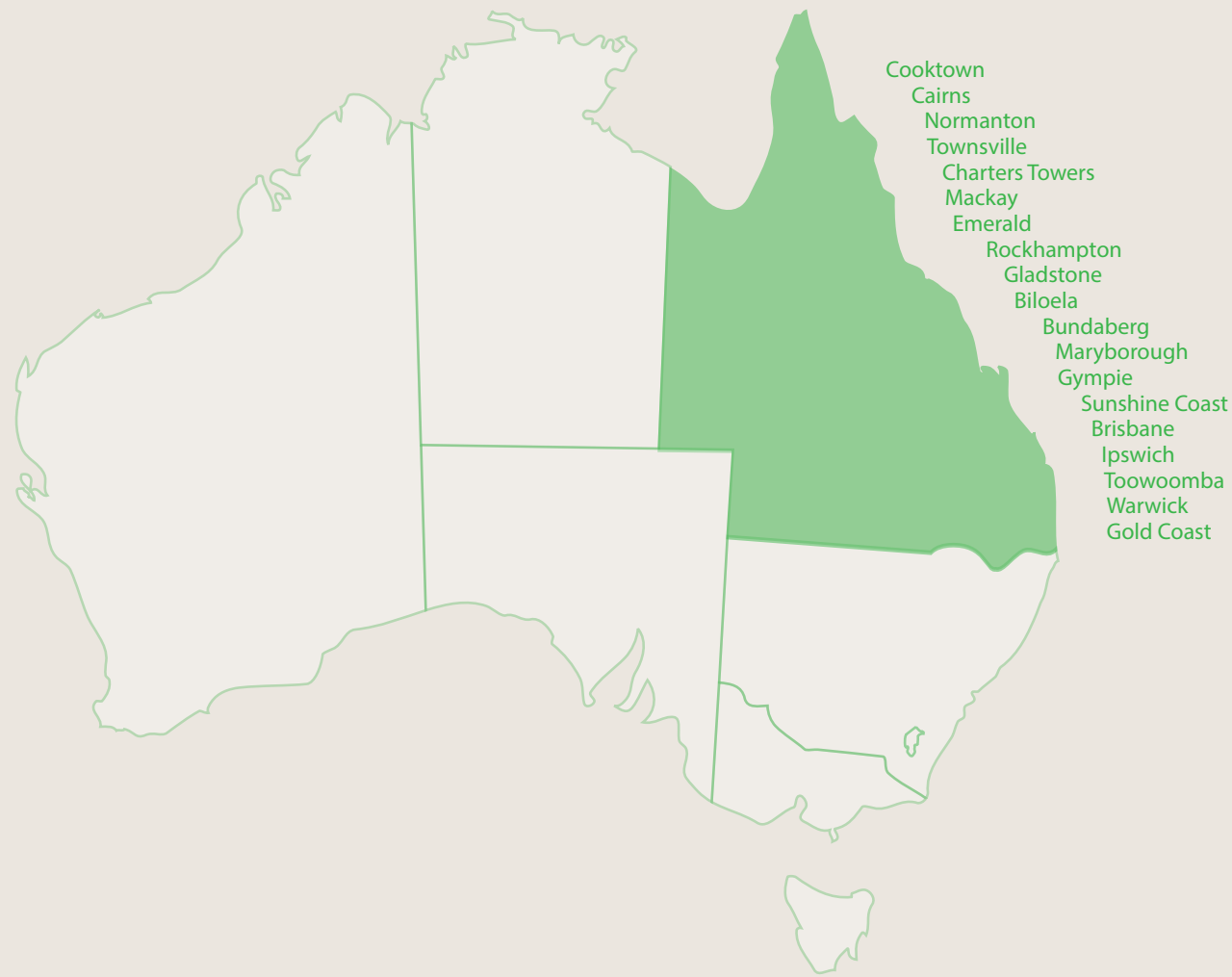
# About the sector

Independent schools form a key part of the education landscape in Australia and sit alongside State and Catholic schools in contributing to Australian society and the safety, learning and wellbeing of Australian children.

Queensland independent schools cater for families from a variety of social and economic backgrounds and income levels, with the majority in the low-to-mid fee range. In fact, in 2021, half of all Australian independent schools charged fees of less than \$5000 per annum.

About 40% of independent schools are located in regional or remote Queensland and educate about 26% of all independent school students. The remaining 74% of students are educated in metropolitan schools, comprising 60% of schools in the sector.

For more than 50 years Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) has been the voice of the sector and a leading advocate for parental choice in schooling. ISQ is a representative body for independent schools, not a regulator or governing authority.



Cover Image: Freshwater Christian College

ISQ respectfully acknowledges past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traditional owners. ISQ also acknowledges the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians to the education of all children and people in this country that we all live in and share together.

## SECTOR OVERVIEW

**236**

schools across 292 campuses



**145,000+**

students attend independent schools in Queensland

**16.5%**

of all Queensland school students and 1 in 5 of all Queensland secondary students attend independent schools



## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE QUEENSLAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL SECTOR

**>33,500**

full-time jobs supported



**\$1.02bn**

in savings to taxpayers through full fee-paying parents

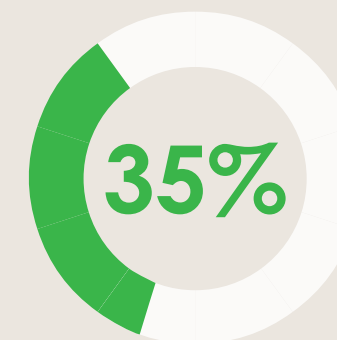
**\$4.88bn**

to the Queensland economy

## FUNDING



of the costs of educating a student at an independent school is met by parents



of the costs of educating a student at an independent school is covered by Federal Government



of the costs of educating a student at an independent school is covered by State Government

Sources: AEC Group, (2020 update), Economic Significance of Independent Schools to the Queensland Economy | 2023 Non-State School Census (State) February Collection.



# Choice in Queensland's independent schools

Queensland parents have been exercising their right to school choice for as long as some of the state's oldest independent schools have been serving their local communities – more than 150 years.

Independent schools are autonomous, not-for-profit institutions run and governed at the local level. There are, however, some independent schools with particular church or ethnic affiliations that, although constituted independently, operate within a mutually supportive school system.

Families of children at independent schools:

- attach a high priority to their children's education
- wish to educate their children at a school of their choice.



## TOP 5 REASONS WHY PARENTS CHOOSE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

1. Preparation for student to fulfil potential in later life
2. School seemed right for child's individual needs
3. The high quality of teachers
4. Encouragement of responsible attitude to work
5. Teaching methods/ philosophy

Source: ISQ. (2021).  
What Parents Want Survey.

### Affiliations of Independent Schools

Anglican	24
Assemblies of God	10
Baptist	8
Brethren	1
Catholic (Other)	1
Christian	39
Inter-denominational	6
Islamic	2
Jewish	1
Lutheran	25
Montessori	4
No Religious Affiliation	8
Non-Denominational	42
Other Religious Affiliation	1
Pentecostal	2
Presbyterian	2
Seventh Day Adventist	10
Steiner	5
Uniting Church	7
Other	30

Image right: Moreton Bay Boys' College



Independent schools make a significant contribution to the growth and development of Queensland's children through the strong support of their communities and the achievement of excellent educational outcomes.





— DIVERSITY

# The diversity of Queensland's independent schools

Independent schools are as diverse as the communities they serve and offer parents a choice in the education of their children. They come in all sizes, from small community schools to large Prep to Year 12 schools and cater for families from a variety of social and economic backgrounds. Independent schools enable families to select a school that best serves their child's needs.

Schools range from those affiliated with a particular faith, such as Christian, Islamic or Jewish faiths, to schools that promote an educational philosophy or serve particular community groups, including schools that have a majority of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and schools that support students with disability and/or learning difficulties.

Many independent schools educate international students or specialise in the education of students with disability. There has been strong growth in the number of Special Assistance Schools for students who have disengaged from mainstream schools, and trade training schools that combine senior year studies with practical vocational education and training.

## Diversity at a glance

	SCHOOLS	STUDENTS
Independent schools Co-ed 202   Girls 11   Boys 9	236	145,466
Sites/campuses	292	
Special Assistance Schools	30	4,942
Sites	53	
Vocational Education and Training	152	
School-based Apprenticeships/Traineeships		1,051
Registered Training Organisations	43	
Students with Disability	194	
Special Schools	4	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education		6,192
Distance Education	14	3,658
Boarding	31	3,516
English as an Additional Language/Dialect	107	5,122
International	73	1,035

## DIVERSITY IN MANY QUEENSLAND INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS



- re-engage young at risk Queenslanders in education
- give students a head-start in their career
- support students with disability
- support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- welcome overseas students to study
- support students with English as an additional language or dialect
- deliver education at home, or at a home away from home.

One of the key strengths of Queensland independent schools is the diverse range of schools and the diversity of the students they educate.

Image left: John Paul College

# Special Assistance Schools

Student enrolments in independent Special Assistance Schools have increased by more than 26% in the past year.

The number of Special Assistance School sites and students has more than doubled in the past five years.

4,942 students attended one of 30 independent Special Assistance Schools in Queensland.

Source: 2023 Non-Government Schools Census (Commonwealth) February Collection

**Students who have disengaged from mainstream schooling are returning to learning with the support of a growing network of specialist schools dedicated to helping young Queenslanders turn their lives around.**

Students learn best when they feel safe, when they feel a sense of belonging, and when they are not in a state of physical or emotional distress. That is why student wellbeing is at the heart of the approach adopted by independent Special Assistance Schools to encourage students back into learning. The return of disengaged youth to education is often a challenging journey due to very complex and traumatic experiences that have shaped students' attitudes and impacted on their progress.

Students at independent Special Assistance Schools generally receive one-on-one support or are taught in small group settings in less formal environments that are staffed by teachers and specialist staff, such as youth and welfare workers. Special Assistance Schools rely principally on government funding, as they do not charge tuition fees.

### Re-engaging young Queenslanders

Independent Special Assistance Schools are the fastest growing school type in the independent sector. The number of students enrolled in independent Special Assistance Schools has risen to 4,942 students in 2023.

These schools largely cater for secondary school students, however recently the sector has diversified to include boarding, single gender and primary school services.

Students are generally referred to Special Assistance Schools by mainstream schools, government or welfare agencies, as well as parents or students themselves.

Special Assistance Schools offer a wide range of education programs under the Australian Curriculum, however there are some underlying common elements in their approaches, including:

- a strong focus on strengthening student literacy and numeracy skills
- building student confidence and resilience
- offering practical learning opportunities including VET.

### SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) provides targeted support, with Federal Government funding assistance, to independent Special Assistance Schools in a range of priority areas including: Australian Curriculum; school improvement; leadership; and teacher performance and development. ISQ also administers the Queensland Government Youth Support Initiative.

ISQ's Outcomes Framework – developed to help schools monitor and evaluate their work with young people – comprises a range of common elements: wellbeing; literacy and numeracy; student health; participation and engagement; ICT; employability; and community.

# Students with Disability

194 independent schools receive funding to support students with disability.

Over the last decade, students with disability enrolments have almost tripled

Students with disability represent 2.1% of all students attending an independent school.

Source: 2023 Non-Government Schools Census (Commonwealth) February Collection

**Queensland independent schools cater for a diverse range of students, including those with disability. Independent schools implement programs and strategies to enable all students to participate in school activities, access the curriculum and achieve learning outcomes.**

Independent schools are varied in how they cater to students with disability. There are schools that deliver multi-disciplinary programs through a combination of teaching and therapy, while others provide learning enrichment programs designed to cater to each student's requirements. Some independent schools have specialised staff in addition to teachers, such as speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, music therapists and psychologists.

Students with disability require significant education adjustments related to the specific impairment areas of:

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Hearing Impairment
- Intellectual Disability
- Physical Impairment
- Social Emotional Disorder
- Speech-Language Impairment
- Vision Impairment.

The number of independent school students with disability verified under the Education Adjustment Program continues to increase. So too does the number of schools that cater for these students.

The number of Queensland independent schools receiving funding to support students with disability stands at 194 representing almost 82% of all independent schools in the state.

More than 300 students attend four independent Special education schools.

Students with disability are verified under an Education Adjustment Program and are eligible for government funding and assistance.

### SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) regularly compiles and shares Focus Area Updates which detail relevant research, funding advice, and effective practice to support the education of students with disability.

Tailored education support covers: Education Adjustment Program, inclusive classroom practices, differentiation in the classroom, learning disabilities, and teacher aide development.

Support is delivered both face-to-face and online.



# Vocational Education and Training

152 independent schools offer Vocational Education and Training.

43 independent schools are QCAA-registered school Registered Training Organisations.

1,051 students from independent schools commence a school-based apprenticeship or traineeship last year.

**Queensland's independent schools are giving students a head start in their career through Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses which can help pave the way for their future careers.**

An increasing number of schools are engaging students in vocational learning. Young people are able to develop the knowledge and skills essential for employment outcomes, particularly in skill-shortage areas.

## School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships

School-based apprenticeships and traineeships combine school with paid employment and off-the-job training, allowing students to work towards a nationally accredited qualification and transition to employment after Year 12.

Students enjoy contextualised learning across a broad range of growth industries including construction, advanced manufacturing, health, community services, hospitality, agriculture and conservation.

Independent schools have developed strong and sustainable industry partnerships to ensure students are engaged in qualifications that meet local and regional employment demands.

## VET Certificates

VET qualifications remain a popular choice for young people in independent schools.

Forty-three independent school Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) deliver VET qualifications in a broad range of areas including: Creative Industries; Business; Kitchen Operations; Boating; Visual Arts; and Sport and Recreation. Other independent schools partner with TAFE or private RTOs to increase VET offerings to their students. Training and assessment may be delivered by qualified school staff or external trainers.

### SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) administers funding from the Australian Government and provides a range of support activities to schools including: career development; school RTO professional learning; VET and career coordinator workshops; VET support staff training; training and assessment credentials; and an online VET Resource Library.



To learn more, visit [www.isq.qld.edu.au](http://www.isq.qld.edu.au) and search: VET Case Studies; and VET Pathways.

Sources: Queensland Department of Employment, Small Business and Training, 2021, [www.detconnect.qld.gov.au](http://www.detconnect.qld.gov.au)  
Australian Government, 2021, [training.gov.au/Home/Tga](http://training.gov.au/Home/Tga)



Image: Australian Industry Trade College



# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education

Queensland's independent schools are implementing a range of strategies to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to foster greater understanding and respect for Indigenous peoples and cultures.

Enrolments of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are increasing each year. Since 2013, Indigenous enrolments in Queensland's independent schools have increased to more than 6,192 students in 221 schools; twelve of these are majority Indigenous schools (50–100% Indigenous students enrolled).

Independent schools in Queensland enrol many Indigenous boarding students, many of whom come from remote communities. Independent boarding schools are often the only education option for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from remote areas.

Staff at these boarding schools support Indigenous students to make the transition from remote communities to new educational environments. Schools establish strong links with families, assist with transport, and provide students with advice on matters such as clothing and health concerns.

Many independent schools offer bursaries/scholarships for Indigenous students. Various organisations also provide financial assistance to students including the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, Yalari, and the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation.

## SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) works closely with independent schools to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student outcomes.

Our support to member schools is three-fold:

- ensuring Indigenous students achieve the best possible educational outcomes
- providing development opportunities to Indigenous staff
- supporting all schools to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives into the curriculum.

Targeted education support and activities focus on: Indigenous EAL/D and bandscales; curriculum planning and cultural awareness; literacy and numeracy planning; community partnerships; middle leaders; and development for Indigenous teachers, support staff and emerging leaders.

Support is delivered both face-to-face and online.

93.6% of Queensland independent schools cater for Indigenous students.

Over the last decade, Indigenous student enrolments have increased at an average annual rate of 6.5%.

6,192 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attend 221 independent schools in Queensland.

Source: 2023 Non-Government Schools Census (Commonwealth) February Collection

# Distance Education and Boarding Schools

A select number of Queensland independent schools deliver distance education schooling and/or boarding facilities offering a choice in schooling options to students from geographically isolated or regional areas.

## Distance education

Fourteen Queensland Independent schools provide distance education, catering for 3,658 home-based learners (2.5% of all independent school students).

Online distance education suits a wide variety of learners. Students are challenged to develop their academic abilities with the support of qualified teachers and the use of technology. They collaborate online with their peers who are throughout Queensland, and complete assessment tasks appropriate to the subjects, including exams, essays and multimedia projects.

## Boarding

Independent schools continue to be the main provider of boarding for rural, remote and international families, supported by exceptional care and first class facilities.

Nearly two-thirds (63.4%) of boarding students attending schools in Queensland attend independent schools.

Thirty-one independent boarding schools cater to more than 3,516 enrolled students, representing around 2.5% of all Queensland independent school enrolments.

Of these 31 schools catering for boarding students, three schools catered for more than 250 boarding students and a further four schools catered for more than 150–250 boarding students.

Most boarding students attend schools offering co-educational schooling. Eighteen boarding schools are co-educational, six schools cater for only male boarders, and eight schools cater for only female boarding.

31 independent schools in Queensland cater for boarding students, with 99% of boarding students enrolled in secondary years.

Independent boarding schools cater for nearly two-thirds of all boarding students at non-state schools in Queensland.

Independent schools cater for 3,658 students via distance education.

Source: 2023 Non-Government Schools Census (Commonwealth) February Collection

## SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) advocated for and secured funding from the Australian Government for the families of many boarding students affected by drought and the North Queensland floods.

ISQ also provides a range of support activities and professional learning experiences to schools whose communities are widely dispersed including: parent engagement; research in schools; and school improvement.

Support is delivered face-to-face, online and via telephone.

# English as an Additional Language/Dialect

Close to 50% of independent schools in Queensland have EAL/D students enrolled.

107 independent schools in Queensland cater for EAL/D students.

More than 5,100 EAL/D students attend independent schools in Queensland.

Source: 2023 Non-Government Schools Census (Commonwealth) February Collection

**Independent schools across Queensland cater for a diverse range of students and for many students English is not their first language.**

Becoming proficient in English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) can present challenges for some students. EAL/D students typically speak another language in the home. They may have been born in Australia or have arrived as migrants or refugees.

They face the challenge of learning the curriculum while simultaneously learning the language and often require additional support.

Independent schools implement programs and strategies, in consultation with parents, to enable all students to participate in school activities, access the curriculum and achieve learning outcomes.

EAL/D learners are typically in mainstream, content-based classrooms. Independent schools classroom teachers adapt their teaching and use of academic language to support EAL/D learners as they develop their proficiency in the English language and achieve success at school.

The independent school sector caters for the learning needs of more than 5,100 EAL/D students. EAL/D students represent a higher proportion of overall student enrolments in the lower primary year levels, with enrolments decreasing as students get older.

Programs focus on differentiating teaching and learning for individual student needs and targeting oral language and literacy development through individual support or in-class support programs to ensure EAL/D students gain increasing English language proficiency.

## SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) uses a variety of mechanisms to support schools and teachers with EAL/D students. ISQ provides advice relating to school funding for students with low English proficiency and shares information with mainstream classroom teachers through online communities.

Education support and activities enable teachers to interact with colleagues from around the state to share best practice teaching and learning models for EAL/D learners during face-to-face events.

Support is also delivered online in the form of videos, online learning modules, interviews and additional reading.

# International

Almost 1,035 overseas students attend 73 independent schools in Queensland.

More than 80% of overseas students were enrolled in Years 7–12.

Independent schools cater for nearly 90% of overseas students enrolled in Queensland non-state schools.

Source: 2023 Non-Government Schools Census (Commonwealth) February Collection

**Studying at a Queensland independent school provides students with a unique opportunity to further their education while learning about Australian life and culture.**

Independent schools engage internationally and integrate global perspectives into curricular and extra-curricular programs and activities in many ways including: overseas student programs; formal and informal exchanges; sister schools; and outbound and online learning experiences.

Queensland independent schools welcome international students to study in a range of individual and group programs. Students can enrol in registered schools for periods of longer than three months on a full-time basis. Many independent schools also offer short-term study programs of less than three months.

There are 73 independent schools registered with the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS), enrolling almost 1,035 full-time equivalent overseas students.

## SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) supports internationalisation of schooling by providing member schools with a range of international education services.

ISQ international education services include:

- advice on developing internationalisation strategies, international activities, and enrolling students on visas
- updates, resources and professional learning opportunities for CRICOS-registered schools
- resources for schools with a focus on global citizenship
- information for international students wishing to enrol in short or long-term programs.

Support is delivered both face-to-face and online.



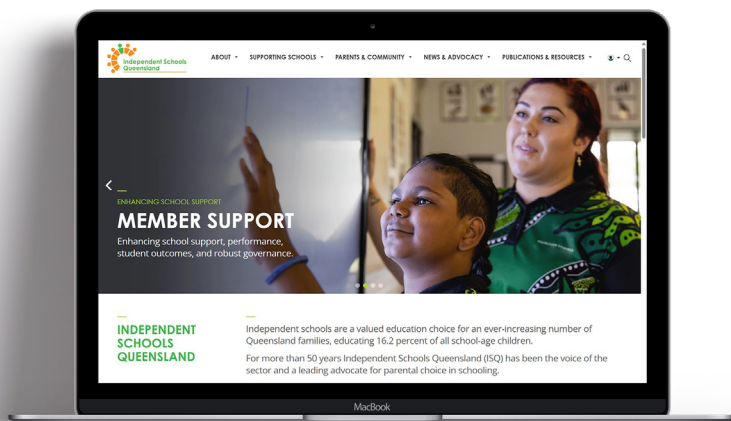
To learn more, visit [www.isq.qld.edu.au](http://www.isq.qld.edu.au) and search: Study in Queensland.



Independent schools give families the ability to select a school that best serves their child's needs and promotes the values they believe are important.



To find out more, visit [www.isq.qld.edu.au](http://www.isq.qld.edu.au)



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