



Election Statement.

A rational, respected voice for independent school parents

Established in 2014, Queensland Independent Schools Parents Network (QIS Parents Network) is the peak body representing parents who choose an independent education for their children.

While independent schools are their own unique community hubs, QIS Parents Network advocates for the sector's families as a whole and supports all independent schools and families with timely information on student learning and wellbeing.

As part of this advocacy, QIS Parents Network enjoys a seat at the table at a range of cross-sectoral education taskforces, committees and reviews.

QIS Parents Network is also one of four members of the Queensland Joint Parent Committee, along with Isolated Children's Parents Association Qld, Catholic School Parents Queensland and P&Cs Qld.

Parents' financial support of independent schools

Parents who choose an independent education for their children share the financial responsibility of that education with government.

Through tuition fees and other contributions, the parent and community contribution to Queensland independent schools' costs via recurrent and capital funding is approximately 43% – or \$1.5 billion.

It is important to remember that many parents make their after-tax financial contributions to their child's education at great sacrifice to household budgets.

And while independent schools are often referred to as "private schools", the reality is the sector is as diverse as the communities they serve.

Independent schools also cater for families from all income levels with the majority of schools in the low-to-mid fee range.

Importantly, data shows parental demand for an independent education that best meets their child's individual needs is only increasing:

- In the most recent ABS reporting period, the Queensland independent sector experienced the largest growth of all three sectors at 4.1%
- Since 2003, enrolments increased by 75% and now represent a total market share of 16.8% of Queensland students.
- It is forecast that in the 20 years from 2021 to 2041, the number of school-aged children in Queensland will increase by a further 117,000 students, meaning parent demand for independent schooling will only continue to build.

QIS Parents Network is seeking election commitments from the major political parties in two key areas:

Commitment 1 – Recurrent funding for our parent engagement work with independent schools and families

Parent engagement is backed by 60 years of research which shows that effectively engaging parents in their child's education can not only enhance students' achievement and wellbeing, it is also a vital ingredient in high performing schools.

Parent "engagement" is much richer and deeper than a parent's "involvement" in school-based activities. Engaged parents value education, have high-but-realistic expectations for their child, and are informed and scaffolded by their child's teacher/s in ways to value add to that learning at home. The hallmark of authentic, effective and sustainable parent engagement is families and schools working together in partnership and respecting each other and their unique roles in a child's educational journey.

QIS Parents Network has been leading the way in parent engagement research and implementation in the independent sector for ten years.

With the financial support of the Queensland government since 2015, we have:

- Financially supported independent schools to implement and evaluate parent engagement initiatives in their school communities.
- Funded a longitudinal research project (2021–2023) into effective parent engagement in Queensland independent schools, resulting in a large number of new findings in the 'how-to' of parent engagement.
- Launched a year-long scaffolded parent engagement program available to all independent schools – 20 schools are taking part in the program in 2024.
- Launched a new series of professional development events for schools focused on topical issues.
- Kept independent schools and families updated with the latest information and resources on student learning and wellbeing through the QIS Parents Network website, monthly e-newsletters and a Facebook page.

Our current one-year \$140,000 Service Agreement with the Queensland government ends on June 30, 2025. Given the current and projected growth in independent enrolments, we require an increased and ongoing funding commitment to sustain our important parent engagement support for schools.

Commitment 2 – Wellbeing support for students and parents

Schools and families shoulder the significant responsibility of supporting children through a myriad of modern issues including school refusal, mental health issues and online safety.

Mental health challenges don't discriminate and government-funded interventions and supports should be equitably distributed to all sectors.

COMMITMENT 1

Queensland independent school parents are seeking a commitment to:

- Recurrent annual funding of \$180,000 with CPI increases annually.*

This certainty of funding will support QIS Parents Network's work to enhance parent engagement in independent school communities through our range of initiatives and programs.

* It is also requested that the funding of non-state school parent bodies reflects each sector's proportion of non-state school student enrolments.

COMMITMENT 2

Queensland independent school parents are seeking a commitment to:

- Extending the state-school-only Student Wellbeing Package (wellbeing workforce increases + GPs in schools) to the non-government school sectors
- The ongoing provision of timely, evidence-based and parent-specific advice on topical wellbeing issues such as School Refusal, online safety for children and supporting children's mental health and wellbeing, to parents in all sectors.