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Strong and Growing Qld Independent Schooling Sector Important to COVID-19 Recovery

The livelihoods of more than 33,000 Queenslanders and almost \$5 billion worth of economic activity rely on a strong and growing independent schooling sector, according to new modelling released today.

According to the report, *Economic Significance of Independent Schools to the Queensland Economy, 2020 Update*, independent schools contributed \$4.88 billion to Gross State Product (GSP), directly and indirectly through employment, infrastructure investment and international student programs in 2017-18.

This economic contribution represents an average of \$40,300 per Queensland independent school student – an average return of \$3.66 for every \$1 of state and federal government investment.

The independent schooling sector is also a significant employment generator, supporting 33,560 full-time direct and indirect jobs worth \$2.95 billion in wages and salaries - the equivalent of 1 full-time job for every 3.6 independent school students.

The analysis by AEC Group – an independent global consultancy firm specialising in economic modelling – was commissioned by Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ) to update modelling undertaken for the first time in 2016 using 2013-14 data.

The analysis shows Queensland independent schools added an extra \$735 million to GSP (18% increase) and supported 2,702 extra jobs (9% increase) worth an additional \$530 million in wages (22% increase) between 2013-14 and 2017-18.

Over the same four-year period the sector grew by an additional 6,000 enrolments to 121,000 students and 15 schools to 205 schools. At the start of the 2020 school year 218 independent schools enrolled almost 129,000 students.

ISQ Executive Director David Robertson said the report revealed the influence and impact of independent schools – which educated 15% of school-age Queenslanders – extended beyond strong academic and civic outcomes.

“As our state and nation grapple with the economic fall-out of the COVID-19 pandemic, this report reveals the critical role the independent schooling sector must continue to play to

support jobs, build new social infrastructure, welcome fee-paying international students and build human capital,” Mr Robertson said.

“In the current environment every dollar and job generated by independent schools are vital to state and regional economic recovery in the short and long term.”

About 40 percent of independent schools are registered to offer fee-paying international education programs. In 2017-18 these programs generated \$49.7 million in revenue – up 93% from 2013-14. The direct economic impact of the sector’s international students on the Queensland economy was valued at \$28 million in GSP – up from \$14.4 million in 2013-14.

The report reveals, outside Brisbane, the three highest contributing local government areas to GSP and jobs were: the Gold Coast (\$881.8 million GSP; 5,964 jobs); Sunshine Coast/Noosa (\$495.4 million; 3,291 jobs) and Moreton Bay (\$365.6 million GSP; 2,642 jobs).

Mr Robertson said the report also estimated families who chose independent schools for their children instead of a fully-funded place at a state school freed up \$1.02 billion per annum in capital and recurrent government funding for other essential services, or in the current environment, COVID-19 recovery projects.

“In the education sector this combined funding would be equivalent to building five new Prep to Year 12 schools and employing an additional 10,150 beginning teachers,” he said.

Many parents make sacrifices in other areas of their lives to educate their children at independent schools meeting about half the operational costs, on average, with the Australian and Queensland Governments contributing the remainder.

“This report shows that encouraging private investment in education pays enormous dividends. The private-public partnership between tax-paying independent school families and governments is a successful and enduring partnership which must continue with the support of ongoing public investment,” Mr Robertson said.

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