

Embargoed for publication until 4 August 2020

## Could COVID-19 be the Catalyst to Transform Schooling? New ISQ Issues Paper

The emergency transformation of schooling during the pandemic could be the catalyst for real reform that addresses some of the thorniest challenges facing education, according to a provocative issues paper released by Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ).

The paper proposes a rethink of six key areas of education, including the purpose of schooling, the structure of the Australian Curriculum, student assessment, digital literacy and the traditional roles of teachers and students.

ISQ commissioned respected University of Melbourne academics Professor Jim Watterston – former Director-General of the Queensland Department of Education – and Professor Yong Zhao to consider the future of schooling and the opportunities for change as a result of the pandemic.

According to Professors Watterston and Zhao: “The one incredible educational revelation that has been observed during this challenging time has been that when all staff are engaged and there is a compelling reason, we can collectively change the traditional schooling experience, for better or worse, virtually overnight.”

“We need to use the new-found COVID-19 inspired capacity of the profession to take ownership and implement the reforms that were required long before we had to adapt our thinking to the challenges of a pandemic,” they wrote.

Professors Waterston and Zhao said they believed the “independent school sector, free of the systemic constraints in other sectors, is well placed to lead the nation in this quest”.

This week more than 20 Queensland independent schools will showcase how they are already disrupting and reimagining education at ISQ’s annual Big Ideas Summit in Brisbane and a regional showcase in Townsville.

School presentations will include the incorporation of enterprise education, design thinking, mixed/virtual reality and educational technology into the curriculum, the creation of 21st century learner profiles and the rapid adoption of online learning and communication platforms during the pandemic.

ISQ Executive Director David Robertson said *A Catalyst for Change* was the latest issues paper in ISQ’s Our Schools - Our Future policy reform series.

Mr Robertson said the last comprehensive State Government-led reform of school education in Queensland was undertaken in 2002 which resulted in the introduction of the full-time Prep Year and laws that required students to be “learning or earning” until they were 17.

“In the intervening 18 years since the Education and Training Reforms for the Future White Paper, we have seen the introduction of Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), the iPhone (2007), iPad (2010), artificial intelligence and improved internet speeds,” Mr Robertson said.

“How students learn, access information and socialise have changed significantly. The rapid move to home learning during the pandemic has also raised questions about where and how learning happens which is just as much a question for legislators as it is for educators,” he said.

“Many independent schools have affirmed their intentions to take the momentum, goodwill and great ideas that emerged out of the home learning period and build on them to improve teaching and learning for their students.”

ISQ recently brought together a small group of independent school senior leaders to discuss blended models of face-to-face and online learning at Saint Stephen’s College on the Gold Coast.

**MEDIA CONTACT | Justine Nolan | 0428 612 315 | [jnolan@isq.qld.edu.au](mailto:jnolan@isq.qld.edu.au)**