



Response

The Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) represents the interests of 98 South Australian Independent schools with an enrolment in excess of 47,200. SES scores in the South Australia Independent school sector range from 81 to 116 with almost 60% of schools having an SES score of 100 or less. The sector also includes one MATSIS school, two special schools and one Special Assistance School. The AISSA supports the submission provided by its national office the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) but would like to make the following key points based on feedback from the SA Independent school sector.

The current SES methodology is widely viewed within the South Australian Independent school sector as a credible and appropriate measurement of the capacity of families to contribute to their children's education. The AISSA considers that in general the SES scores provide an appropriate distinction in terms of the socio-economic background of school communities between schools within the sector.

The key benefits of the current methodology for calculating the capacity to contribute are seen to be the:

- use of independently collected and collated data, derived from the ABS Census of Population and Housing (the Census), which minimises the potential for data misuse and manipulation and is a significant improvement over the previous ERI model;
- transition from the use of Census Collection District (CCD) to Statistical Area 1 (SA1) for the purposes of the SES methodology which means that the SES is now based on smaller groupings of households and therefore has increased statistical accuracy;
- updating of the data on a cyclical basis which provides an appropriate balance between the currency of data and stability in funding;
- The SES methodology does not discourage the contribution by parents of private income.

By its very nature any methodology to determine the capacity of families to contribute to their children's education is indicative and it is therefore always possible that anomalies will be seen. However, it should be noted that in cases where non-government schools do not consider that the SES score provides an accurate reflection of the actual SES of their school community they have access to an appeal mechanism.

The AISSA would not support any changes to the current methodology without a significant modelling and validation exercise being undertaken. The AISSA would strongly oppose the use of direct data, for example parent background data collected as part of the NAPLAN testing program, being incorporated in the methodology due to the lack of quality and transparency of the data and the potential for the data to be manipulated and misused.

Summary

The AISSA response makes the following key points:

- The current SES methodology is widely viewed within the South Australian Independent school sector as a credible and appropriate measurement of the capacity of families to contribute to their children's education.
- In general, the SES scores are considered to provide an appropriate distinction between schools in terms of the socio-economic background of school communities within the SA Independent school sector.
- The use of independent ABS Census of Population and Housing significantly negates the potential for data misuse and manipulation.
- Any methodology to determine the capacity of families to contribute to their children's education will be indicative and it is therefore always possible that anomalies will occur.
- The current appeal process provides an appropriate mechanism whereby non-government schools which do not consider that their SES score provides an accurate reflection of the actual SES of their school community can have their scores recalculated based on actual school data.
- The SES methodology does not discourage parents in making a financial contribution to their children's education.
- No changes should be made to the current methodology without a significant modelling and validation exercise being undertaken.