

**NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues
 Inquiry into childhood overweight and obesity**

3.00pm, Monday, 12th September 2016

AISNSW Opening Statement

Document tendered by <i>Mr Malcolm Hunt</i> Received by <i>Jodi Rahme</i> Date: <i>12/9/16</i> Resolved to publish <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes / <input type="radio"/> No

Chairman and Honourable members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today. I am representing our Chief Executive, Dr Geoff Newcombe, who offers his apologies. My colleagues are Jo McLean, Senior Assistant Division Head of Professional Learning, and Nicky Sloss, Education Consultant for Student Wellbeing, both of whom have extensive experience working with schools in the area of PDHPE curriculum, including student wellbeing matters.

The Association represents more than 460 independent schools enrolling over 190,000 students. We are a member association, not a school authority, and the independent schools sector does not operate as a system. These are important distinctions as the sector and our role as the peak body differ to those of the larger government and Catholic school systems.

We work closely with the Department of Education, the Catholic Education Commission, NSW Health and other government and non-government agencies on a range of issues, and participate on many committees to represent the needs of independent schools. We provide a perspective that helps ensure that independent schools can play their part in addressing student health and wellbeing issues, including nutrition and physical activity. This is work that is largely unfunded.

I will make a couple of brief points. While schools are obvious places for efforts to be directed to address social issues, all schools struggle with an overcrowded curriculum and expectations that they be the main agents of change or the delivery arm for almost any initiative involving children. Schools already access and implement on a daily basis initiatives that promote healthy eating, good nutrition and physical activity.

There are many initiatives aimed at improving the eating and exercising habits of children which involve, variously, schools, parents, community organisations, food manufacturers and suppliers, media, health providers and government and non-government agencies. While many have similar goals to improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children and the wider community, too much occurs in isolation. Greater coordination is needed so they complement each other and work towards common or agreed goals. Improved coordination will increase their individual and collective effectiveness and may relieve some of the burden on schools.

Secondly, any potential solutions involving schools must be flexible in their implementation and allow for individual school and community contexts to be considered. Mandating specific solutions or approaches to address complex social issues is not effective. Schools are already swamped by compliance requirements so an approach that is more carrot than stick is preferred.

Lastly, adaptable resources for schools are critical and need to be accompanied by adequate and ongoing funding, particularly for professional learning, practical support and resources. We will be happy to elaborate on a model that has worked well for NSW schools for many years in another context and which we think would be worthy of consideration by the Committee should it be considering recommendations along those lines.



The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales Limited

Level 12, 99 York Street, Sydney NSW 2000
Phone (02) 9299 2845 Fax (02) 9290 2274
Web aisnsw.edu.au Email ais@aisnsw.edu.au
ABN 96 003 509 073

**NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues
- Inquiry into childhood overweight and obesity**

**Additional comments from the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW)
3.00pm, Monday, 12th September 2016**

AISNSW representatives:

Malcolm Hunt, Manager: Public Affairs

Jo McLean, Senior Assistant Division Head: Professional Learning

Nicky Sloss, Education Consultant: Student Wellbeing

Background to AISNSW and the Independent schools sector

AISNSW is the peak body representing more than 460 Independent schools across NSW which enrol over 190,000 students. The Association's main purpose is the provision of services and support to its member schools and to advocate for Independent schooling. Although recognised as the sector peak body, AISNSW is not a school authority and Independent schools operate autonomously, not as a system of schools. These are important distinctions as the sector and our role as the peak body differ to those of the government and Catholic school systems.

Independent schools are registered by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES), follow the NSW BOSTES-approved curriculum, and are educationally and financially accountable to their boards and to the Australian and NSW Governments. Most Independent schools are also required to report to other statutory authorities such as ASIC and the ACNC.

The sector is extremely diverse: a majority (around 75%) are faith-based; almost 50% enrol fewer than 200 students; and two-thirds have a socio-economic status (SES) score in the lower half of the scale, indicating they serve low socio-economic communities. There are 28 special schools for students with disability/special learning needs, and 23 special assistance schools for students at risk for whom mainstream schooling is not a suitable option.

AISNSW has a long history of cross-sectoral involvement, representation and collaboration with the Department of Education, Catholic Education Commission, NSW Health and other government and non-government agencies. This representation allows AISNSW to ensure strategies and resources are relevant and appropriate for use in Independent schools, such as through the use of inclusive language. In addition, the AIS has worked with area health services (LHDs) in relation to health promotion, including in the areas of nutrition and physical activity.

Current AISNSW involvement in / support for measures to address childhood overweight and obesity through schools

1. The AIS is represented on the following cross-sectoral committees:
 - NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy (HEAL) – (indirectly through the NSW Healthy Children’s Initiative (HCI) incorporating *LLW@S*, *Crunch n Sip* and *Fresh Tastes @ School*)
2. AISNSW has previously been involved in the following initiatives and committees:
 - NSW Active Travel to School (launched October 2014)
 - Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation (2013)
 - NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (SPANS) (2010)
 - Fresh Tastes @ School consultation (2010)
 - *Fresh Tastes @ School* review (2005)
 - NSW Childhood Obesity Summit (2000) and the recommendations that arose as part of the Summit
 - NSW Health Promoting Schools Framework (1999)
 - NSW Healthy Children’s Initiative (HCI) incorporating *Munch n Move* and *Go 4 Fun*
 - NSW Hunter New England Health Region’s *Good for Kids @ School* initiative incorporating *Crunch n Sip* and *Get Skilled, Get Active, Go!*
3. AISNSW regularly distributes relevant research, resources and information related to nutrition and physical activity to Independent schools through the following channels:
 - Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) K-12 email bulletins
 - Student Wellbeing newsletters
 - PDHPE Website page (K-6 and 7-12)
 - Student Wellbeing Website page (K-12)
 - Member monthly Bulletin
 - PDHPE courses, consultancies and conferences
 - Student Wellbeing courses, consultancies and conferences
 - Heads of Sport Conference
 - Internal sharing of relevant information between AIS Divisions and Consultants
4. AISNSW supports the professional learning and capacity building of teachers to develop a supportive school environment and improved student education, which evidence demonstrates are key to behaviour change through addressing knowledge, skills and attitudes via the PDHPE curriculum and Student Wellbeing whole-school approaches.
5. Under BOSTES accreditation requirements, Independent schools need to meet mandatory hours for the inclusion of PDHPE in the K-10 curriculum, into which both the Physical Activity Guidelines and Australian Dietary Guidelines are incorporated. PDHPE provides students with the knowledge and skills to make health-enhancing choices in relation to nutrition and physical activity at school and beyond. In K-6, 40% of time is allocated for other KLAs (aside from English and Mathematics) including PDHPE. In Years 7-10, students are provided with 300 indicative hours for PDHPE.

The PDHPE syllabus acknowledges the link between good nutrition and healthy lifestyle behaviours. Those who are active and eat healthily are more likely to perform better

academically. BOSTES acknowledges that schools play critical roles in educating students, parents and the wider community (through a whole-school approach) about the importance of good nutrition and daily physical activity.

The current K-6 and 7-10 PDHPE Syllabuses are under review by BOSTES. A new K-10 syllabus will be developed over the next eighteen months for implementation in all NSW schools. Syllabus development will incorporate wide consultation with teachers, students, parents and community groups. The new syllabus will again include mandatory content around both nutrition and physical activity based on current research which will address the current NSW Premier's Priority areas.

6. In addition, many Independent schools require students to participate in compulsory extra-curricular sport (intra or inter-school weekly and/or weekend training and competition).
7. In addition to the ongoing relationship with NSW Health, AISNSW also engages successfully with other government agencies in relation to cross-sectoral opportunities as well as teacher and student education. For example, the three education sectors have successfully implemented road safety education to schools in NSW for many years under a funding agreement with Transport for NSW. This agreement provides separate funding to all three school education sectors allowing for the development of contextualised resources, professional learning and additional school project work.

This model recognises that the Independent schools sector is not a system and provides the flexibility required for implementation, allowing individual school context and local needs to be taken into account in the development and delivery of the program.

Possible measures to improve the capacity of schools to address overweight and obesity issues in children

8. The continued development of strong, consistent and sustained cross-sectoral working relationships within the education sector and NSW Health could ensure added success for future consultation and collaboration.
9. An over-arching, appropriately resourced cross-sectoral/industry strategy which coordinates existing initiatives across the education and health sectors and the food processing/manufacturing and related industries may assist to improve the effectiveness of each individual strategy. It may also improve consistency of shared goals to improve nutrition, healthy eating, physical activity and positive lifestyle choices in the community.
10. Enhanced pre-service PDHPE teacher education would significantly enhance the development of learning outcomes for students and schools in a variety of areas, including nutrition and physical activity.
11. Similarly, improved K-6 PDHPE teacher education for practising teachers around health issues would also improve outcomes for students.
12. Ongoing professional learning, support and resources are essential for the success of education efforts in this domain. Ideally, a level of funding would significantly assist schools to dedicate additional time and effort to their work in this area.