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The Hon. Mark Latham MLC
Chair
Portfolio Committee 3 - Education
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

**SUBJECT: Inquiry into measurement and outcome-based funding in New South Wales schools -
post hearing response**

Dear Chair,

I thank you and the Committee for the opportunity to provide evidence at the recent *Inquiry into measurement and outcome-based funding in New South Wales schools* hearing on 10 October 2019. The NSW independent school sector strongly believes that both governments and taxpayers are entitled to transparency and accountability regarding the use of public funds and to have confidence that this funding is delivering the intended educational outcomes.

The Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) responses to the four questions on notice from the hearing are attached. There are no corrections to the transcript.

As I mentioned during the Inquiry hearing, AISNSW is in the third year of the Phase 2 NSW Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan. This initiative seeks to improve the literacy and numeracy performance of students by enhancing the instructional leadership capacity of school leaders. AISNSW, along with the government and Catholic school sectors, has provided targeted schools with evidence-based literacy and numeracy support so that teachers can better address the learning needs of Kindergarten to Year 2 students.

Both AISNSW and participating independent schools recognise the impact of the Phase 2 Action Plan initiative in improving literacy and numeracy outcomes for students. It has been highly successful in enhancing instructional leadership and developing whole school capacity to explicitly teach literacy and numeracy. With only a year of the initiative remaining, additional funding is required to extend this effective model to a wider range of schools.

I wish you and the Committee well in your deliberations. Please let me know if you require any further elaboration on any of the points raised during the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely

Mr Michael Carr

Deputy Chief Executive

Question 1:

The Hon. COURTNEY HOUSSOS: I think the point that Mr Shoebridge was raising was how many of your independent schools are utilising this app. But if you only have a low proportion of primary schools, that would actually be quite a high take-up.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: But more interesting, which you may be able to give us on notice, is the proportion of your primary schools that have got access to it.

Mr CARR: We could do that.

Mr DAVID SHOEBRIDGE: And also what structures you have in place to actually roll it out, because, as I understand it, it is a very loose association; you do not have any compulsion or compliance powers, it is all voluntary take-up.

Mr CARR: That is correct, it is; it is voluntary take-up.

AISNSW Response

The Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) developed the screening tool ESTA-L® to provide teachers with clear information about student achievement in early literacy skills. ESTA-L® has been designed as an accessible and manageable tool to capture the acquisition of foundational literacy skills that are essential for learning to read. The data elicited from ESTA-L® syncs to a portal that can be used to analyse and monitor student progress. This data is then used to plan whole class instruction and differentiated teaching for students according to their identified needs. It also supports teachers to provide parents with clear evidence about their child's progress in learning to read. ESTA-L® is designed for Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 2 students, however, it has proven to be effective for teachers across Years 3-6 in identifying the needs of students who are making low progress in reading.

ESTA-L® launched in 2018 and is being piloted with schools involved in the AISNSW Early Literacy Project. The AISNSW Early Literacy Project is designed to support schools to ensure teachers are equipped to teach essential literacy skills and students have access to a high-quality education where they can reach their full potential. The project includes strengthening leadership capacity, face-to-face and online professional learning, in-class instructional coaching, administration of ESTA-L® and parent workshops.

All 70 independent schools participating in the AISNSW Early Literacy Project have access to ESTA-L®; this is 21% of NSW independent schools with students in Kindergarten to Year 2. Currently 73 schools (15 primary schools and 58 K-12 schools) have access to ESTA-L®, including two Catholic schools from the Diocese of Wilcannia/Forbes and one government school.

Data collected over the duration of the AISNSW Early Literacy Project continues to show a steady increase in student competence in the instructional priorities related to phonemic awareness and phonics. Such improvement in the reading skills of students requires quality professional learning for teachers and access to the appropriate readers for students.

AISNSW continues to refine ESTA-L® through the current piloting phase and is seeking to develop reporting dashboards for schools to enable them to undertake a clearer analysis of trends and monitor progress to better inform teaching and provide additional information to parents. AISNSW intends to make ESTA-L® available to all independent schools following the development of the dashboard component.

Question 2:

The Hon. SCOTT FARLOW: Interesting point. Just to pick up on a couple of other things. I will give you this one for notice: If we can get a breakdown in terms of your enrolments because you talk about the sector-wide enrolments but on a secondary basis, a primary basis and you also mentioned a preschool basis. We have had some commentary this week and I would be interested in your perspective because I imagine some of your schools would handle this differently than the structures that are in place for the Catholic and government schools.

AISNSW Response

Enrolment breakdown of independent schools in NSW		
School type	Number of schools	Number of students
Combined primary and secondary schools	253 (63%)	169,231 (83% of all students)
<i>Primary enrolments</i>	—	74,140 (88% of all primary students)
<i>Secondary enrolments</i>	—	95,091 (79% of all secondary students)
Primary only schools	81 (20%)	9,703 (12% of all primary students)
Secondary only schools	66 (17%)	25,030 (21% of all secondary students)
Total	400	203,964

Source: Australian Government Department of Education; Australian Bureau of Statistics

Notes:

¹ 2018 enrolment data

² Independent schools include independent Catholic schools

The Association of Independent School (AISNSW) does not have preschool enrolment data.

Question 3:

The Hon. MATTHEW MASON-COX: I wanted to ask you about your relationship with the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. Are you familiar with what is referred to as CESE?

Mr CARR: I am familiar, but it is not an area in which I work directly. Anything on this I would have to take on notice.

The CHAIR: They do not do much for you—is that what you are saying? Do you read their case studies but they are not in direct contact with you?

Mr CARR: As I said, it is not in my particular line of work. I would have to confer with my colleagues.

The CHAIR: You can take it on notice. That is available to you.

Mr CARR: Yes, I will take it on notice.

The CHAIR: We are interested in their role and how useful they are to schools outside the government sector—if you follow their case studies, if they have direct contact with you, if they help you or serve as consultants in any shape or form.

Mr CARR: My understanding is that we have one or two staff who attend meetings but I do not believe that we have much beyond that.

AISNSW Response

The Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AISNSW) has a positive working relationship with CESE on a range of activities. AISNSW collaborates with CESE on educational evaluations when schools from all three schooling sectors are involved. Where research reports are a product of the cross-sector evaluations, AISNSW receives copies of these reports.

In supporting schools to transition to NAPLAN Online, CESE has co-ordinated the cross-sector professional learning sessions for NSW schools. AISNSW has worked collaboratively with CESE in the development and implementation of these sessions.

CESE manages access to the literacy and numeracy data visualisation tools available to government schools, and at a cost to non-government schools. CESE staff deliver a train-the-trainer model with AISNSW staff to enable AISNSW to support independent schools. In addition to AISNSW providing the professional learning, AISNSW also provides a helpdesk, with costs borne by AISNSW, to assist independent schools access the CESE tools via the NSW Department of Education's portal, SCOUT.

As CESE research papers and evidence guides are published on the CESE website, AISNSW can access these documents.

Question 4:

Mr CARR: We have had John Hattie attend a number of our conferences. He is one of the foremost thinkers in terms of improving outcomes for kids. So we would be silly not to use people like John. We have used the research, over in the States of—I am sorry, I have forgotten the name.

The CHAIR: Take that on notice too. You can give us the main influences and some of the methodology in defining best practice and perhaps some of the content, phonics, direct instruction, if there is any role there for inquiry-based learning.

...

The CHAIR: If you can take on notice that set of parameters that would be useful for us to know, very useful indeed.,

Mr CARR: We will get a brief paper back to you.

AISNSW Response

AISNSW is a research and data-informed organisation, relying on a broad base of both internationally recognised and locally generated evidence. AISNSW supports independent schools by providing specific research-based initiatives in which they can participate, consultancies and professional learning opportunities that are informed by rigorous evidence supporting good practice, and disseminating research and evidence through various channels (for example, conferences and symposia featuring notable national and international experts; research synthesis, reports and publications; newsletters and bulletins; social media channels).

AISNSW supports an explicit approach to the teaching of foundational literacy and numeracy skills. AISNSW encourage teachers to explicitly teach the whole class in small steps, differentiated for various learners to maximise opportunities for teaching and learning. The AISNSW developed ESTA-L[®] app assists teachers to map students' phonological awareness and phonics skills, which are fundamental to ensuring all children learn to read.

In implementing best practice, inquiry-based approaches play an effective role in supporting students to transfer and generalise new learning to embed it into their long-term memory. The AISNSW Research to Practice Initiative utilises the OECD-recognised inquiry framework Spiral of Inquiry, created by Dr Linda Kaser and Dr Judy Halbert, to focus on improving primary science and technology at independent schools. AISNSW also offers the Designing for Deep Learning Network to NSW independent schools. This Network is part of a global community of educators focusing on implementing work by Dr Michael Fullan to support the teaching of competencies and capabilities in NSW independent schools.

AISNSW supports schools to undertake in-school research to provide contextually relevant and implementable evidence for best practice. AISNSW offers a competitive application process for School Based Research Projects each year, in which schools establish an internal research team, supported by university-based academic mentors and AISNSW researchers, and meet the rigorous standards for professional research. Projects are in areas of education which improve student outcomes and make substantial contributions to new insights in and beyond individual schools.

AISNSW consultants are familiar with the broad range of impactful researchers and evidence in their specialty areas. This evidence informs consultancies, face to face and online learning opportunities. Consultants also facilitate conferences featuring well-respected local and international academics – for example Professor John Hattie, Professor Louise McWhinnie, Professor Toby Walsh, Dr Peter Ellerton, Dr Christine Evans, Professor Joseph Lo Bianco, Professor Pasi Sahlberg, Professor Mary Ryan, Professor Christopher Day and Dr Michael Fullan.

Research is also shared with AISNSW members and the wider education community via the range of AISNSW communication channels and social media feeds including research syntheses based on comprehensive literature reviews (*The Link* and *The Brief* publications), reputable international research reports from organisations such as the OECD and The Education Endowment Foundation, articles and publications from open source journals and academic institutions, and research reports and publications produced as outputs from the AISNSW School Based Research Project.