

Independents cater for all

One could be forgiven for thinking, based on what we read and hear in the media, that independent schooling is only about the 'big end of town'. This is far from the reality.

With more than 440 independent schools in NSW – and more than 1000 Australia-wide – there are schools catering for every part of our community.

While there is a place for the traditional, well established schools that we often hear about, such as The King's School, or Canberra Grammar School or Ascham, the vast majority of independent schools are actually small, low fee and entirely representative of the broader community.

Among the diversity of independent schools are those catering for students with disabilities, indigenous schools, parent-run community schools, as well as the more commonly known Christian, Anglican, Islamic and other faith-based schools.

There are low fee and high fee independent schools and everything in between, and most have an open enrolment policy.

The similarities between independent schools and government schools are also far greater than their differences.

All are registered by the NSW Board of Studies and they all teach the NSW curriculum – soon to be the

Australian Curriculum. They all educate the children in our community and seek to do the best possibly job they can do.

The main factor that differentiates independent schools from others is that they are primarily funded by parents through fees and donations.

They also receive some government funding – as little as a couple of thousand dollars per student up to around \$7000, depending on the socio-economic status of the school community.

This is an effective use of government funding as those students, if they were enrolled at a government school, would each cost the taxpayer

in excess of \$12,000 each per year on average.

The growing attraction of independent schools, evidenced by the continuing increase in enrolments in that sector, can be largely attributed to their ability to reflect the particular values and ethos that parents are seeking.

This often has its basis in that faith or religion of the family, but equally it may be due to a school being able to cater for an individual student's particular needs and ability to help a child reach his or her potential.

For parents, this may be the most important decision they can make for their child.

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Mulwaree High School

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Mulwaree High School **Ph: 4821 4499**
40 McDermott Dr., GOULBURN NSW 2580
Principal: Martin Purcell
www.mulwaree-h.schools.nsw.edu.au

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