



# ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

*The parent voice on public education*

9 June 2014

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## ACT Budget Reply 2014-15

The ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations is the peak body of ACT public school parents and citizens associations. We promote the interests of parents and other school community members. We believe that the provision of equitable, high-quality education is essential to the long term prosperity of the ACT.

Council views this year's Budget in a generally positive light, however there are some areas which appear concerning.

### ICT Funding

Council commends the Government for allocating funding of over \$82 million towards improving physical and ICT infrastructure in public schools. In Council's budget submission, an emphasis was placed on increasing and enhancing ICT infrastructure in schools. Council is pleased that the Government has recognised the need to keep schools up to date in the fast-paced world of today.

It should be noted that the Budget makes no mention of computers or tablets. Whilst Council agrees that there should be an expansion of wireless access points in the ACT, it is no good to do this if the devices used to access the internet are not of a good standard. Increasingly parents are being asked to fund tablets and other devices which are being utilised as a core learning tool. If such devices are required for contemporary education programs then there needs to be adequate funding in the budget to allow for their provision.

### Infrastructure Improvements

Council commends the Government for their continued funding towards the modernisation of schools in the Belconnen region. Council would like to see similar modernisation programs take place in other regions around the ACT and reoccurring funding allocated to ensure that this takes place.

### Infrastructure Funding for Non-Government Schools

The Budget includes funding of over \$59 million towards improving physical and ICT infrastructure in non-government schools. The total infrastructure spending in this

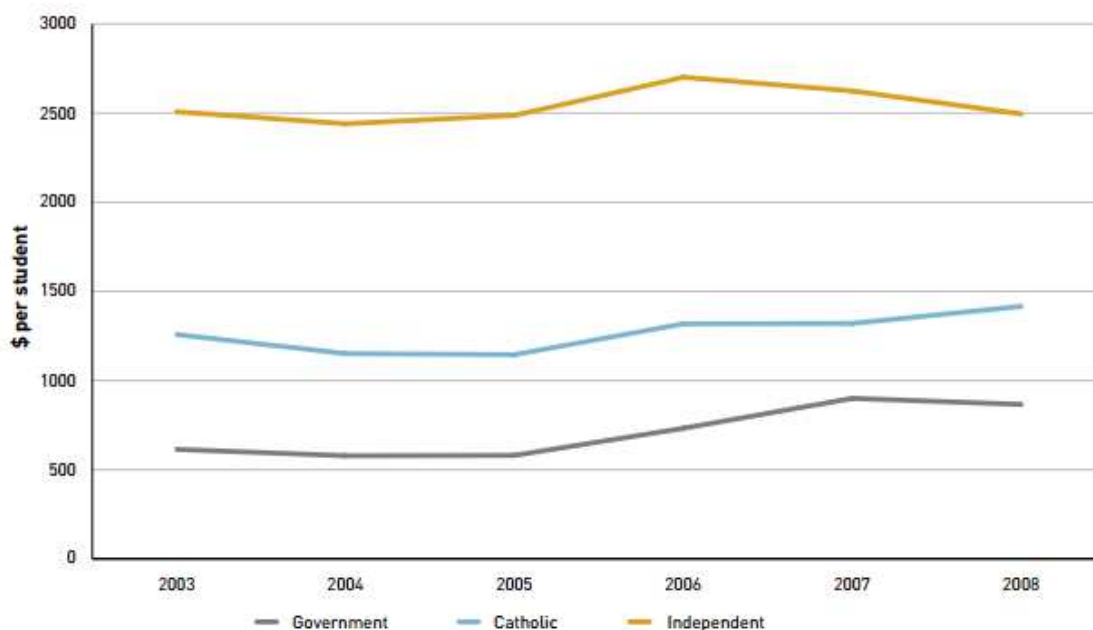
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ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is the representative body  
for Parent & Citizen Associations in the ACT.

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Budget is split 40-60% between non-government and government schools respectively. Evidently this funding model is based entirely upon enrolment numbers in the ACT, with non-government schools accounting for nearly 40% of enrolments and public schools 60%.<sup>1</sup> Council believes this is an ineffective and inequitable model of funding. As shown in the graph below, on average independent schools spend nearly three times as much on capital investment than government schools.

Figure 33: Average capital investment per student (in 2008 dollars)



Source: MCEETYA, *National report on schooling in Australia, 2003 to 2008*.

Research has shown that non-government schools are able to tap into a wide range of funding sources which are not readily available to public schools.<sup>2</sup> These include churches, school fees, private benefactors and loans. Infrastructure funding should not be based upon enrolment numbers but rather on need.

Recognising that every private and public school has different funding and financial arrangements, Council questions the amount of money provided to non-government schools for infrastructure improvements. Council implores the Government to assess infrastructure funding on a case by case basis, targeting schools that need improvements the most.

<sup>1</sup> ACT Education and Training Directorate, 2014, *ACT School Census – February 2014*.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011, *Review of Funding for Schooling*, 95.

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## Specialist Teachers

In its submission, Council suggested that targeted funding should be allocated to specialist teachers. Noting that funding has been directly provided to fund an early childhood scholarship program, Council is disappointed that a similar program has not been set up for specialist teachers, in particular at the primary level.

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