



# NEWS RELEASE

## Australia's unique education funding model that makes independent schools accessible for low-income families a lesson for Canada

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For immediate release

**TORONTO**—Australia's government funding of independent and religious schools, which is adjusted based on the socioeconomic status of the communities in which students live, offers more school choice for parents, particularly lower-income families, finds a new study by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

"Parents choosing independent schools across Canada—even in provinces where partial government funding is provided—face financial barriers since they have to pay not only their regular taxes, but also a portion of their children's tuition costs. This is particularly difficult for lower-income families whose financial resources are limited," said Deani Van Pelt, director of the Barbara Mitchell Centre for Improvement in Education at the Fraser Institute.

The new study, *Regulation and Funding of Independent Schools: Lessons from Australia*, examines that country's education system and highlights its unique funding model for non-government (independent and religious) schools.

In Australia, government funding of independent schools varies between 20 and 90 per cent per student (for operating expenses) depending on the average income of the neighbourhood in which the student lives.

"This means that students from poor areas can have as much as 90 per cent of their tuition at independent schools covered by government," explained Van Pelt.

In Canada, by comparison, provincial governments partially fund independent schools in five provinces—British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec—with the range of funding between 35 and 70 per cent, though most of the funding occurs at the 50 per cent level.

None of the provinces that provide funding for independent schools adjusts the funding for the economic status of communities or individual families. That can and most likely does leave independent schools out of reach for low-income families.

"With more and more Canadian parents choosing independent schools for their children, policymakers across Canada should consider alternative funding models that make independent schools more affordable for families and take into account their ability to pay," Van Pelt said.

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### **MEDIA CONTACT:**

Deani Van Pelt, Director of the Barbara Mitchell Centre for Improvement in Education  
Fraser Institute

*For interviews with Deani Van Pelt, or for more information, please contact:*


Bryn Weese

Media Relations Specialist, Fraser Institute

Office: (604) 688-0221 ext. 589

Cell: (604) 250-8076

[bryn.weese@fraserinstitute.org](mailto:bryn.weese@fraserinstitute.org)



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