An estimated half a million voters across Victoria – families of 126,000 Independent school students, and 22,000 teachers, will be examining the education policies of parties and candidates in the state election in November.

During the lead up to the election, Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) have raised four issues with candidates before Victorians go to the polls on Saturday 29 November 2014.

The ISV represents more than 200 Member Schools across metropolitan Melbourne and in regional Victoria, with classes from Early Years to Year 12. ISV promotes and protects our interests and provides services and support.

The policy issues of interest to teachers, parents and families are shaped by the educational, social and religious diversity of the Independent sector. Member Schools follow different approaches to education, and include schools observing many religious faiths or are non-denominational. There are schools for students with learning difficulties and individual needs. Member Schools cover all socioeconomic backgrounds.

ISV encourages and assists the Independent Member Schools to let their local candidates know what they are hoping for from a future government. Their demands are not onerous. They seek a fair share of government funding to augment the cost of providing education, most of which is paid for by parents. They want an environment that allows parents to choose a school that meets the individual needs of their children while providing a quality education, care and wellbeing.

The issues raised by the ISV are:

1. The Victorian Government gives more money to a profitmaking early learning centre than to a centre attached to a not-for-profit Independent school. More than 6000 registered places for early childhood learning are part of Independent schools, mostly in early learning centres.

   In 2013, the Victorian Government provided $3091 per child annually to kindergartens run by local and state governments, local communities, Catholic schools and to profit-making, commercial organisations running kindergarten programs.

   But Kindergarten programs at most Independent schools received $1633 for each child. Some independent schools receive far less than this.

2. The Australian Labor Party has indicated that if elected, it will seek to amend Victoria’s equal opportunity laws so that:

   • religious bodies, including religious schools, will find it more difficult to employ staff in line with the entities’ doctrines, beliefs or principles;

(continued on the next page)
The Buildings’ Progress

Formal Opening—5b & 5c

Sarah Henderson MP was set to be at the College on November 18 to formally open our last two building projects, 5b and 5c, but unfortunately she has been re-called to Canberra during this time. These buildings were dedicated in June at our 175th celebrations, but according to government guidelines a formal event is still required where a Minister can be present to ‘cut the ribbon’ so to speak. This event will now be re-scheduled for sometime early in 2015.

The construction of buildings in our schools has relied heavily on grants through the Block Grant Authority and this Federal initiative makes it possible for our schools to exist. We have been blessed in our success with applications for grants from the BGA over the years and look forward to further success with these grants into the future.

Unfortunately government grants awarded for capital works for our schools barely reach 35% of the project cost overall so our school community is still required to fund a significant proportion of each build. We are certainly thankful though to the Federal Government for the provision of these grants.

What’s next?

Our next project at GLC is due to start in 2015 and will provide much needed classroom spaces for our senior students. Stage 5d as it is known, will be an addition to the current library space and will eventually be altered internally to become part of the expanded library resource centre. Our architects are currently preparing documentation for tender and these will be issued once the Minister signs off on the successful BGA grant for this stage.

Our next challenge will be to project future needs for the College and consider possible projects to apply for next year to enable construction in 2017.

State Election Day 2014 (cont.)

• a school will need to show that conforming to religious beliefs is an inherent requirement of an advertised employment position.
• Amending Victoria’s Equal Opportunity Act 2010 in this way will:
• impair faith-based schools from operating in accordance with the beliefs and tenets of their faith
• remove schools’ ability to decide whether religious beliefs are an ‘inherent requirement’ of an advertised position.

3. New eligibility conditions for subsidised transport for students in areas with minimal public transport in regional Victoria and Melbourne’s outer suburbs came into effect in 2013. Changes to the Conveyance Allowance being phased in over the next six years will reduce the number of students from Independent, Catholic and Government schools able to receive funding.

4. The Victorian Government has indicated that the $42 million in funding previously allocated through the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) would be rolled into the Victorian Government’s funding commitments under the National Plan for School Improvement (NPSI).

From 1 January 2015, it will provide extra financial support directly to Victoria’s neediest schools instead of providing the EMA to parents. This money is to be allocated through the schools’ core recurrent funding, with the neediest schools receiving the most.

The Victorian Government has determined how it will allocate the additional funding to government schools but is yet to announce precisely how funding will be allocated to non-government schools.

The re-allocation of this funding will be a significant issue for Independent schools beyond 2015.

The commitments we need from our electoral candidates are:

• ensuring that early learning centre funding for Independent schools matches funding for all other Victorian kindergartens, including profit-making, commercial organisations running kindergartens.
• allowing schools to employ staff in line with the school’s religious beliefs.
• allowing parents to choose schools that meet their religious, cultural and social values.
• reviewing boundary changes so that students are not put at risk travelling to school
• changing the Conveyance Allowance guidelines for ‘appropriate school’ so it is not based on religious denomination and considers other needs of the student and family
• changing the guidelines so that if parents elect to send their child to a school that is not deemed to be the ‘closest appropriate school’, they receive funding based on the distance to the ‘closest appropriate school’, rather than being refused any funding.
• urging a newly-elected government to address funding concerns of the non-government education sector.

[Independent Schools Victoria]
Thursday October 23rd 2014 marked the last day for our first group of Year 12 students graduating from Geelong Lutheran College. This day culminates many years of dreams and plans. It is so exciting for us, as a Lutheran School community, to have reached this momentous occasion.

On our first day of school on the 2nd February 2009 (a number of you will remember this) this milestone seemed forever away into the future. We began with 57 students from Prep to Year 7, a total staff of 6.2 (FTE) and the whole school accommodated into 8 rooms.

This year there are 373 students P to 12, 52 staff members and a myriad of rooms. The growth of our school is continuing for next year with an expectation of an enrolment in the mid 400s with the appropriate staffing increase to match.

Of course, more importantly than acknowledging a milestone, as significant as this one is, is to look up at the horizon and consider the journey we are on and where it may lead. For our first ever year 12 graduates, their ‘schooling’ journey has come to an abrupt end. They have completed their 13 years of formal education, seven in primary school and six in secondary—they’ve sat their exams, had their graduation and now ... the world!

So is it the end? Of course it’s not. VCE only serves as a stepping stone to the future and GLC plays a significant role in preparing our students for the next step.

At the end of the Camino de Santiago in Spain you can continue on to Finisterre where Spain meets the Atlantic ocean. The milestone (pictured) reads 0.00km! It’s a great sense of achievement to reach the end but all there is left to do then, is to turn around and go back to where you came from.

Historically, pilgrims then set off to walk all the way home again.

Unlike the Camino, our lives continually move forward and unfortunately, we cannot ever turn back or re-trace our steps. The end of our schooling then is actually a stepping stone to the future. For these Year 12 students, the College has fulfilled its purpose, it has nurtured them, encouraged them and equipped them. Now, the rest of the journey is up to them and we send them on with the blessings of God and our College community.

But what about us as a school. Our first Year 12 is a significant milestone there is no doubt about that, but for us as a school, it is also only a beginning. The challenge that is before us now is to continue to build the capacity of our school, to continue the demand for higher expectations and to ensure that the quality of our school grows as its size grows.

Q: Do high expectations lead to better academic performance?
A: Students perform better when expectations are higher.

Ms Ripley studied students in high performing countries on the International Schools’ Assessment like Finland, Poland and Korea and compared their schooling with the United States. Although she was critical of the pressure placed on students in some of these countries, she overwhelmingly concluded that more importantly than a number of other factors was the importance of high expectations placed on students. An article in The Age in August 2013 also reported that even students in low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to do better when expectations are set at a higher level.

Of course, students still need to be supported, have quality teachers and attend effectively resourced schools.

We have been given the task, and in many ways, the unique privilege to make Geelong Lutheran College in partnership with St John’s Lutheran School really great and positive contributors to the lives of all who step across our threshold to learn, to teach, to encourage, to nurture and to support our young people into the future.
Across the road from the house where I grew up was the Hopetoun Railway Station. As a young kid in primary school I loved to play at the railway yards, because each day a huge steam train would arrive from somewhere way down the track, probably Portland or maybe even Geelong, and I would watch the trains for hours as they indignantly chugged back and forward hissing and spitting and belching huge amounts of smoke and steam into the air. I especially enjoyed watching them ‘shunting’ as they swapped carriages, or slowly chugged onto the ‘turntable’ so they could head back from where they came. Trains were fascinating and great entertainment.

One of the main reasons these huge trains came to my hometown was because of the grain farmers. Every year from late November into December the farmers would harvest their fields, load the grain onto trucks, drive into town and park across the road from our house. They seemed to sit there for ages waiting their turn to unload the wheat into the huge silos so the wheat could be pumped into the train carriages and shipped to the ports of Geelong and Portland.

Next to the Silos was a huge old shed. It was pretty rundown and in bad condition. The photo on the page is one of the new sheds which was much stronger than the original and would have been too difficult for us to ‘get into’, but the original old shed was much, much easier. The wheat or oats were dumped out of the trucks into a pit and then an auger (pictured) would churn away and move the grain onto a huge pile inside the shed … and I mean huge. It was like a small mountain made of slippery round grain. It was dusty, had a strong smell of wheat and mice … yes the mice used to love running all over it and eating as much as they could. In fact sometimes, if you shone your car lights there at night you would see millions of mice running everywhere—particularly during the mouse plague years. No one was allowed to go into the sheds because big piles of grain can be dangerous. The grain can cover you very quickly when it moves and there were times where people had been suffocated under piles of grain before. It was forbidden for us to play on the piles of grain.

However, the best thing about this pile of grain was what we loved to do. Mostly on the weekends, my brother and I would duck across to the shed and squeeze through a narrow opening in the wall. We would run up to the top of the piles and slide or roll down … it was great fun. The best thing though, was to find sheets of corrugated roofing iron, drag it to the top of a pile, jump on the sheet and slide merrily down to the bottom … just like a toboggan in the snow! It was fun, it was thrilling, it was crazy, and it was dangerous – not only was the grain itself dangerous, the corrugated iron was usually rusty and had sharp edges – if one of these ‘toboggans’ had collided with anyone they would have been gashed very badly … as it did one day to my older brother, but that’s another story!

My parents must have been very suspicious of us when we came home smelling of wheat & mice with little bits of grain falling out of our pockets and stuck in our hair. I guess they knew what we had been up to, but like most mums and dads, they still loved us anyway. Our Mum and Dad didn’t love us because we were perfect or even because they expected that we would be perfect (thank goodness), they loved us because we were theirs, because we were special to them. We didn’t actually try to be naughty – well, most of the time anyway. We really wanted to do the right thing, it just didn’t seem to ever happen that way! In the same way, God loves us, not because we are perfect but simply because we are his through baptism. Jesus took our sinfulness and our badness and our tendency to often get things wrong, on his own shoulders. Because of Jesus, when God looks at us, he actually sees us as absolutely perfect! We have been covered over in purity and perfection because of what Jesus has done for us. Which is just as well, because being perfect is not something any of us can actually do or achieve!

Does that mean that we are now free to do and be what we want? That it doesn’t matter how we behave or what we do because God will forgive us anyway? That it doesn’t matter how evil we become because God sees us as pure – without any sin? No. When we are thankful for what Christ has done, we actually want to be better people and begin trying to be that way. The really good news is though, that when we get it wrong, God gets it right.

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