



ASG PARENTS REPORT CARD 2018/19

**AUSTRALIAN PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE STATE OF
EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA**



WELCOME



For close on 45 years ASG has supported the education journey of more than half a million children. We remain passionate about giving children the best start in life through education.

Every child has the potential to succeed, and deserves the opportunity to grow, develop and realise their full economic and social contribution. And every parent, grandparent and caregiver wants this for their child or children.

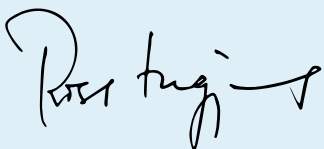
This lens is what makes the perspective of parents valuable and crucial to better understand when shaping the development of school education in Australia. Parents are the only stakeholder who can provide a comprehensive view into the state of the educational environment. They are uniquely positioned to observe, analyse and link together all aspects of their children's education.

Now in its fourth year, the ASG Parents Report Card continues to evolve, probing deeper into the big issues for schooling that have stood the test of time and emerging issues that are the focus of recent public commentary and debate.

The good news conveyed through this Report is that most parents are happy with their choice of schools and are satisfied that schools are supporting their aspirations for their children's futures. Some, however, are constrained in their choices, often because of cost. And some are concerned that the lack, or poor use, of funding is undermining performance.

Australian families hark from a variety of circumstances and hold different beliefs and values. The challenge for policies, schools and teachers is to provide every child the best start in life and be respectful of the preferences of parents.

The ASG Parents Report Card is the only one of its kind, analysing the education environment, as perceived by parents. By giving voice to their views, I am optimistic that it will continue inform public discussion and positively shape the development of school education in Australia.



ROSS HIGGINS
Chief Executive Officer, ASG



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RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHODOLOGY

The ASG Parents Report Card shares parents' perspectives on the state of education in Australia. The findings are based on the November 2018 survey responses of 2263 members drawn from all states and territories who have a child in school.¹ That is over 460 more respondents than our previous year's survey, providing us with a solid basis from which to draw insights. We are grateful to all members who took the time to complete the survey.



The ASG Parents Report Card 2018/19 is the product of a four-year evolution where we have progressively probed deeper into the big issues for schooling that have stood the test of time, and explored emerging issues that are the focus of recent public commentary and debate. Specifically, we sought parents' views on:

- the **cost of schooling**, including fees, voluntary contributions and ancillary costs, and whether these costs are a source of financial pressure;
- their levels of **satisfaction** with the schools their children attend;
- whether schools are supporting their **aspirations** for their children's academic performance, further learning and future careers;
- their propensity and ability to exercise **choice** regarding where they send their children to high school; and
- the **contemporary issues** in schooling, which have been the focus of recent public commentary and debate. The questions traversed funding, curriculum, the use of digital devices, and whose role is it to educate children on contentious matters.

Demographic information was sought from parents and used to cross-tabulate the responses to distil any differences in views based on factors such as location, sector, stage of schooling, and parental education, occupation and income. Key statistics are captured over the page. Respondent characteristics brought to light are that:

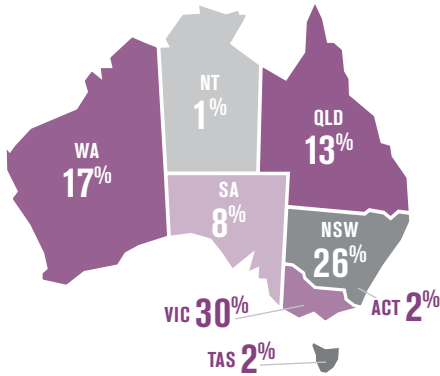
- more mums than dads, and a small handful of grandparents, completed the survey²;
- the gender mix of their children is spilt roughly down the middle;
- approaching half send their children to Government schools, and a little over a quarter each send their children to Catholic and Independent schools;
- more than half reside in two states – Victoria and New South Wales;
- most live in the major cities, and just under a fifth are regionally based;
- half live within 10 kilometres from their schools and, four out of five live within 20;
- children from all year levels are represented, with numbers generally increasing the higher the stage of schooling;
- many are well educated, with over half holding a bachelor degree level or above qualification;
- many are in high skilled roles, with more than half in professional or managerial roles; and
- just over half had a household income of between \$87,000 and \$180,000.

1. If parents had more than one child in school, we requested that they complete the survey in relation to only one of their children.

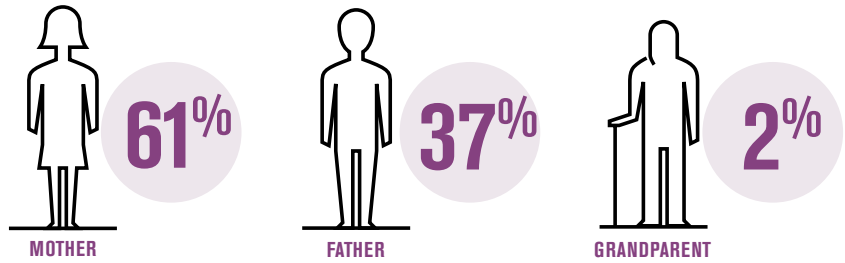
2. Use of the term 'parents' throughout this Report is inclusive of grandparents in caregiver roles.

FIGURE 1 – DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

BY STATE



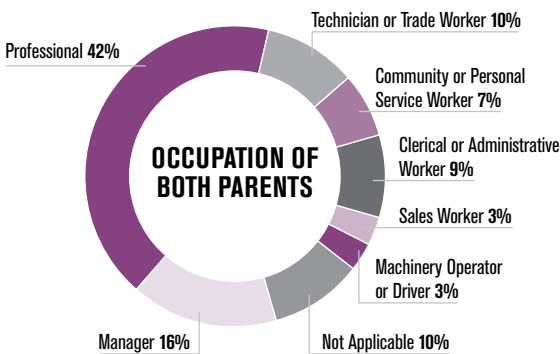
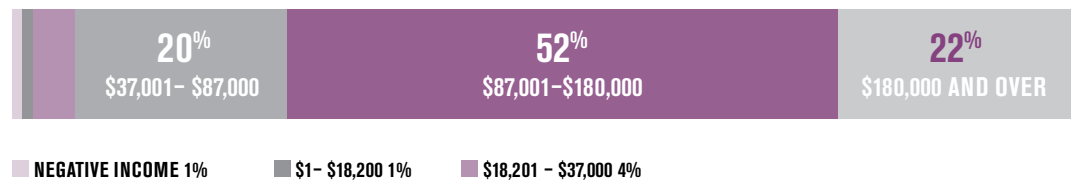
RESPONDENT RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD



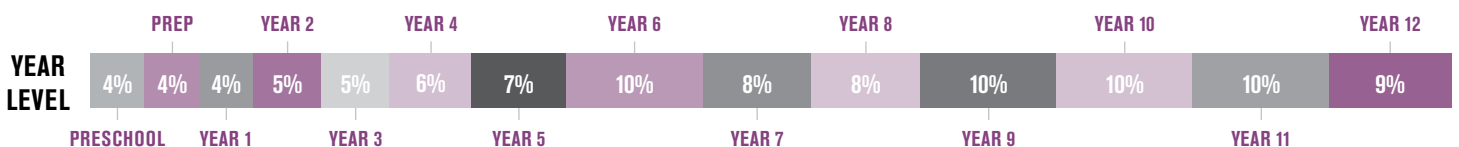
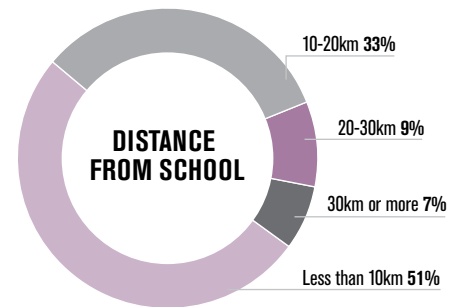
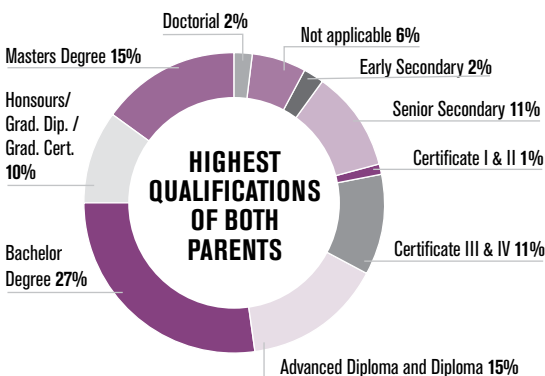
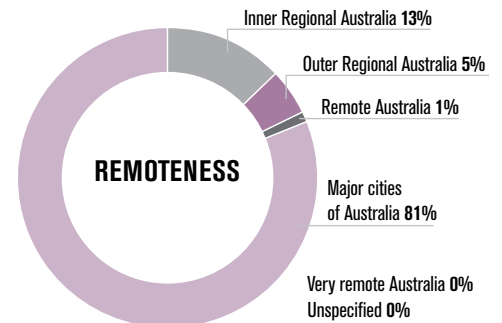
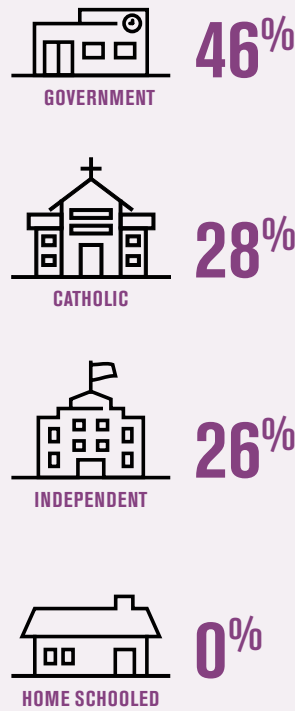
GENDER OF CHILD



HOUSEHOLD INCOME



SCHOOL SECTOR



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The ASG Parents Report Card is the only one of its kind, providing the perspectives of parents on the state of education in Australia. By giving voice to their views, our intent is to inform public discussion and positively shape the development of school education.

Now in its fourth year, we took the opportunity to take a fresh look at the areas covered to ensure they are relevant and contemporary. In addition to soliciting parents' views on the cost and quality of schooling, we probe deeper into their propensity and ability to exercise choice in their children's schooling, ask them whether they regard schools as supporting their children's academic and future success, and present their views on contemporary issues for schooling that have been the focus of recent public commentary and debate.

Key insights gained from the 2263 parents who took the opportunity to respond to ASG's survey are summarised under each of the headers below.

COST OF SCHOOLING

- The cost of schooling represents a substantial household expense, which varies depending on school sector, location and stage of schooling.
- More than two thirds of parents felt 'a little' or 'a lot' of financial pressure paying their students tuition fees or voluntary contributions.



SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL

- Four out of five of parents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the schools their children attend.
- The same five reasons top the list of parents with high levels of satisfaction as those with high levels of dissatisfaction – academic performance, teacher quality, student care and wellbeing, personalised learning and curriculum coverage.

SUPPORTING ASPIRATION

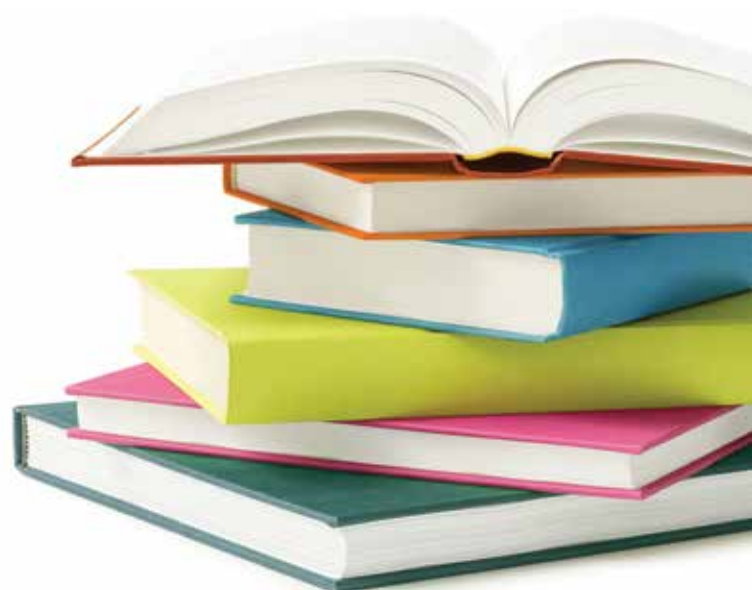
- Parents were similarly 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their children's academic progress.
- A smaller majority of parents conveyed satisfaction with how schools are preparing their children for further learning.
- A slim majority of parents were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with how schools are preparing their children for the future of work. Most of the remainder were neutral rather than dissatisfied.
- Parents were more likely to report high levels of satisfaction the more advanced their children's stage of learning, the greater their household incomes, if they were highly qualified, working in high skilled roles, and if their children were attending Independent schools.

EXERCISING CHOICE

- While many parents started to explore their options for where they send their children to high school prior to them commencing primary school, the scales were tipped in favour of those who delayed their exploration.
- Parents sought to inform their choices by speaking with friends and family and taking account of the information shared by schools of interest.
- The top three considerations influencing parents' choice of high schools were reputation, school sector, and school performance.
- Less than one in five parents reported that they encountered barriers in their choice of high schools for their children.
- The incidence of barriers encountered was greatest amongst parents with children in Government schools, suggesting that for some the public system was not their first choice.
- The most prevalent barrier was the cost of private schooling. Waiting lists and zoning were respectively the second and close third ranked barriers.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

- Many parents felt that schools should receive more funding or should receive more funding and put those funds to better use. Many argued that spending should be prioritised towards teachers.
- Seven out of ten parents supported embedding capabilities in the teaching of discipline specific subjects.
- Just under two thirds of parents supported the regulated use of digital devices. That is, they could be used as a pedagogical aid but otherwise banned.
- A variable majority of parents indicated it that they viewed it as a shared responsibility to educate children on Christianity, sex and sexuality, and cyber safety. More mixed views were forthcoming on the first. A clear majority supported the last.

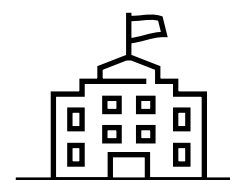
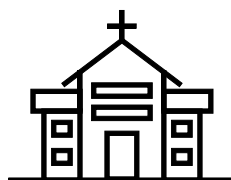
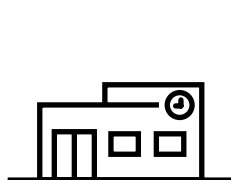


COST OF SCHOOLING

The cost of schooling represents a substantial household expense. Tuition fees vary depending on school sector, location and stage of schooling. All parents, regardless of where they send their children to school, meet significant ancillary costs. These are the often overlooked hidden costs of schooling and include the costs of uniforms, stationery, excursions, transport, musical instruments and instruction and, significantly, digital devices.

Survey data on the ancillary costs of schooling was used to supplement research by Monash University on tuition fees and voluntary contributions to derive a total cost of schooling for a child commencing Preparatory in 2019 and completing Year 12 thirteen years later in 2031. The outcome of this analysis is captured in Table 1.

TABLE 1 – TOTAL COST OF SCHOOLING



	GOVERNMENT		CATHOLIC		INDEPENDENT	
	METROPOLITAN	REGIONAL	METROPOLITAN	REGIONAL	METROPOLITAN	REGIONAL
ACT	\$55,064	-	\$126,064	-	\$209,978	-
NSW	\$66,470	\$73,808	\$114,531	\$112,248	\$461,999	\$203,654
NT	\$42,628	-	\$96,061	-	\$140,916	N/A
QLD	\$75,601	\$65,410	\$115,034	\$113,211	\$209,608	\$186,226
SA	\$54,938	\$51,615	\$131,498	\$95,349	\$221,415	\$159,009
TAS	\$48,241	\$40,489	\$96,290	\$86,694	\$276,338	\$131,673
VIC	\$70,604	\$47,224	\$121,547	\$88,581	\$438,390	\$248,543
WA	\$54,134	\$53,094	\$109,097	\$101,137	\$208,080	\$114,410
Nat	\$68,727	\$57,994	\$127,027	\$109,877	\$298,689	\$201,210

Bearing in mind that these costs are indicative only, points of interest highlighted are that:

- The estimated sum of voluntary contributions and ancillary costs of Government met by parents over their children's years of schooling in each state and nationally are considerable.
- The calculations for the fees included in the costs in Table 1 are based on the median or average of the schools in each sector. There are low, medium and high fee Independent and Catholic schools. These fees vary considerably, as can be seen in the *Good Schools Guide*.³
- Parents who send their children to Catholic schools pay a premium relative to those who select a Government school.
- The total cost of attending an Independent school is on average more than twice that of Catholic schools and four and a half times that of Government schools.
- The total cost of schooling in regions is generally less than the same in metropolitan locations.

3. See www.goodschools.com.au/

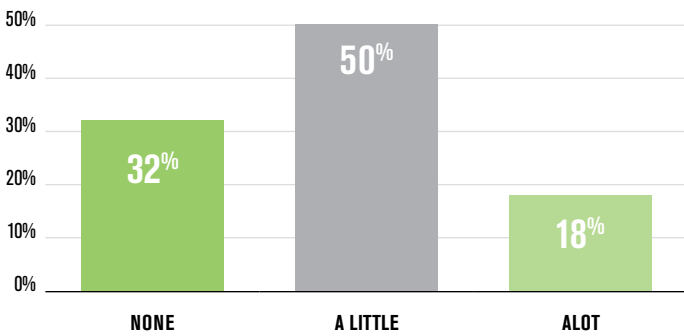
AFFORDABILITY

More than two thirds (68 percent) of parents indicated that they felt between 'a little' and 'a lot' of financial pressure paying their students tuition fees or voluntary contributions.

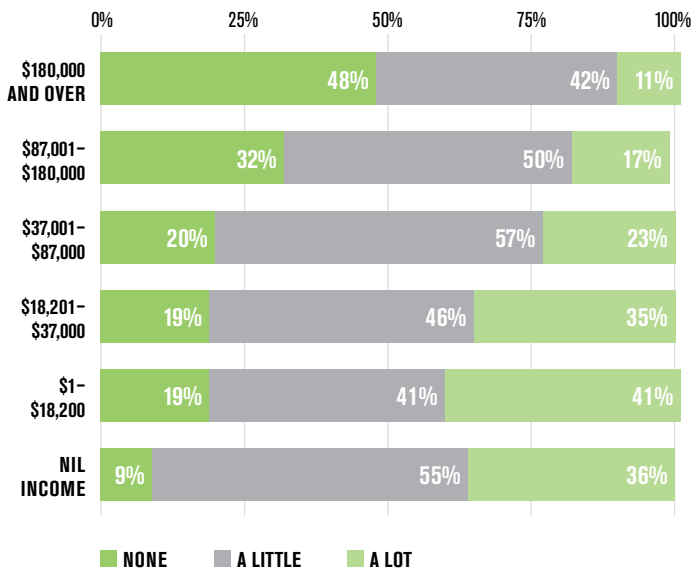
Unsurprisingly, parents were more likely to experience financial pressure the lower their household income. Nine out of ten (91 percent) of parents reporting nil income indicated 'a little' or 'a lot' of financial pressure, compared with just over half (52 percent) of families with an annual household of \$180,000 or more.

FIGURE 2 – FINANCIAL PRESSURE FROM SCHOOL COSTS

ALL PARENTS



BY ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Note: Variance is due to rounding error



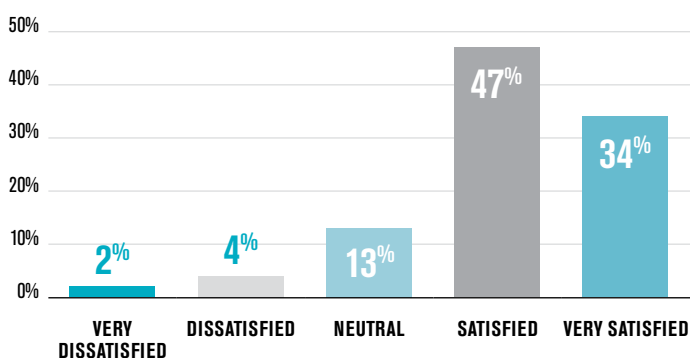
SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL

Four out of five (81 percent) of parents were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the schools their children attend. To the extent that parents were able to exercise choice in their selection of school, this result is perhaps to be expected.

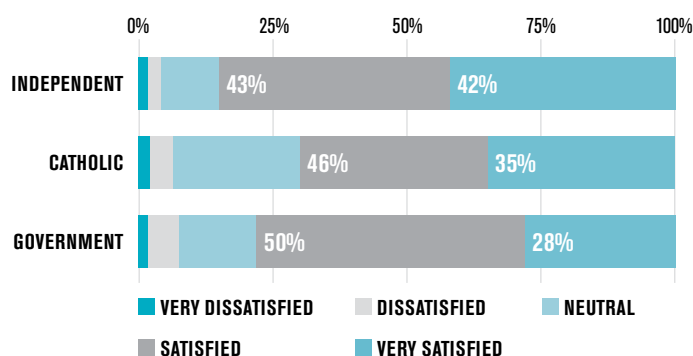
Satisfaction is greatest amongst the parents of children attending Independent schools (with a large 85 percent of parents indicating they are either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'), and least but, nevertheless, still high (at 78 percent) for the parents whose children attend Government schools.

FIGURE 3 – SATISFACTION WITH SCHOOL

ALL PARENTS



BY SCHOOL SECTOR



The same top ranked reasons why parents say they are 'satisfied' to 'very satisfied' with their children's schools are also the highest ranked reasons should parents feel 'dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied', albeit in a different order. For instance, if children were progressing well academically parents were likely to hold the schools their children attend in high regard. If, however, their children were struggling to progress, then they might take a dimmer view. This indicates the vital importance parents place on their children's academic performance, teacher quality, student care and wellbeing, personalised learning and curriculum coverage.

TABLE 2 – TOP 5 REASONS FOR 'SATISFIED' TO 'VERY SATISFIED' PARENTS

RANK	REASON	RESPONDENTS
1	Child's academic progress	1363
2	Teacher quality	1264
3	Student care and wellbeing	1208
4	Personalised learning	964
5	Curriculum coverage	951

Note: Respondents could select multiple reasons.

"Students are always encouraged to push their boundaries and to do their best in their own individual areas of learning"

"I think the school has excellent, caring, committed teachers who teach the girls thoroughly and continue to challenge them"

TABLE 3 – TOP 5 REASONS FOR 'DISSATISFIED' TO 'VERY DISSATISFIED' PARENTS

RANK	REASON	RESPONDENTS
1	Teacher quality	97
2	Personalised learning	95
3	Child's academic progress	77
4	Curriculum coverage	59
5	Student care and wellbeing	57

Note: Respondents could select multiple reasons.

"Teachers are not teaching. Little attention to basics. No creative engagement with teaching"

"The quality of teacher knowledge and care about student progress and wellbeing is poor – too much emphasis on cramming in everything and not enough on providing quality education/support for the students when they don't understand things"

SUPPORTING ASPIRATION

It is natural for parents to want what is best for their children. They want them to succeed academically, and leave school fully prepared for work or further learning. ASG asked parents to share their thoughts on whether schools are supporting their aspirations for their children's success.

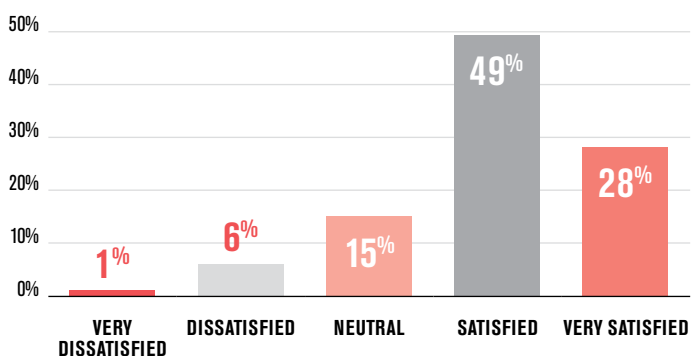
ACADEMIC PROGRESS

As we have just seen, academic progress made the 'Top 5' lists of reasons why parents are either satisfied or dissatisfied with their children's schools.

When separately asked their level of satisfaction with their children's academic progress most (78 percent) indicated they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. Dads who completed the survey conveyed a rosier view than mums (81 percent versus 76 percent). Grandparents were more discerning (65 percent). Parents indicated higher levels of satisfaction for the academic progress of their girls than their boys (81 percent versus 76 percent). Parents at the top end of the qualification ladder (who hold doctorates), in the most skilled roles (are managers and professionals) and who earn \$180,000 or more had the highest levels of satisfaction. This is perhaps as a result of them exercising careful choice in their children's schools.

The two big reasons given for high levels of satisfaction were that their children were excelling, and that they were making positive progress. Other reasons were the quality of teachers, engaging learning environments, extension opportunities and the innate characteristics of their children, including intellect and drive.

FIGURE 4 – SATISFACTION WITH ACADEMIC PROGRESS



Note: Variance is due to rounding error

"She is gaining results well above year level in all her subjects"

"Compared to the previous year school and academic performance, my son has improved a lot this year at his new school"

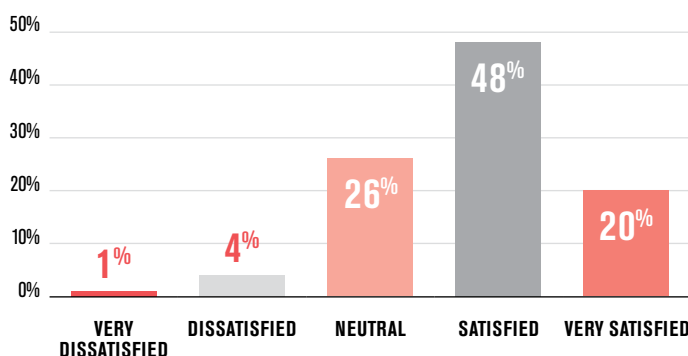
"She is stretched and given a broad range of opportunities and non-mainstream opportunities"

PREPARATION FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Official employment projections are that more than 90 percent of new jobs over the next five years will require post-school education. Projected employment growth is strongest for occupations requiring a bachelor degree or higher.⁴ Schools clearly play a vital role in preparing students for further learning.

A smaller majority of parents than recorded against other measures of satisfaction (69 percent) were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' that schools are preparing their children for further study. While few were dissatisfied, just over a quarter were sitting on the fence.

FIGURE 5 – SATISFACTION WITH PREPARATION FOR FURTHER STUDY



Note: Variance is due to rounding error

"... lots of information given to students, helped with interviews, scholarships and applications for further education"

"She has a thirst for learning that will sustain her through the challenging future ahead ..."

"Students are encouraged to think for themselves and problem solve. They are also encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and actions"

4. Department of Jobs and Small Business, "Future jobs growth to favour skilled workers", 16 October 2018 (www.jobs.gov.au/newsroom/future-jobs-growth-favour-skilled-workers)

Satisfied parents variously referred to the concerted efforts of schools (such as taking students on campus), schools' focus on promoting Independent learning and well-rounded individuals, and the drive and self-directed efforts of their children.

There were discernible differences in parents' perceptions based on student, respondent and school characteristics. That is, satisfaction was greatest:

- for students in their secondary years;
- when respondents were highly educated, working in high skilled roles and were well off; and
- if parents had sent their children to Independent schools.

Table 4 captures the comparisons for both further study and the future of work (discussed next).



TABLE 4 – SATISFACTION WITH PREPARATION FOR FURTHER STUDY AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

Share of respondents 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' by selected characteristics

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS		FURTHER STUDY	FUTURE OF WORK
YEAR LEVEL	Secondary	73%	64%
	Primary	63%	52%
RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS			
HIGHEST LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION	Bachelor degree level or above qualification	71%	60%
	Secondary or vocational qualification	65%	55%
OCCUPATION	Managers and Professionals	71%	60%
	Other occupations	63%	54%
HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$180,000 and over	75%	63%
	Up to \$180,000	67%	57%
SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS			
SECTOR	Independent	74%	64%
	Catholic	70%	59%
	Government	65%	54%

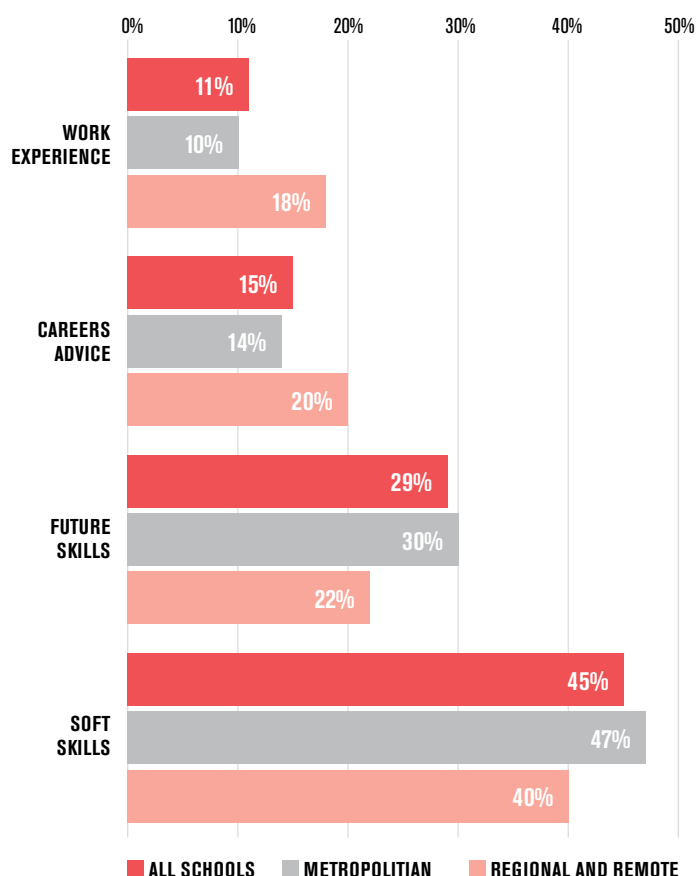
PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

In the early 1990s science fiction writer, William Gibson famously observed that “The future of work is here – it’s just not evenly distributed”.⁵ Fast forward quarter of a century, the future of work is here, and it lies before us. It is widespread, and it is morphing at a rate that is only going to get faster and faster. New technologies and ways of doing things have made some jobs (such as typists) redundant, diminished others (bank tellers, for instance) and have enabled the creation of new roles, many impossible to predict with foresight. For example, jobs such as 3D printing designers or big data analysts, have only recently emerged, but are growing rapidly. One estimate is that 85 percent of the jobs that will exist in 2030 have not yet been invented.⁶

The role that technology and innovation plays in the birth and demise of jobs is not new. What is new is the accelerating pace of change. The role schools play in preparing students for this uncertain future of work matters today more than ever. And, in the future, it will never matter as little as it does today.

We asked parents how schools are preparing students for this future. The reported emphasis of all schools, regardless of sector, was on 'soft' skill development, such as communication and problem solving, followed by 'future' skills, such as digital literacy and data analytics. Differences in emphasis were apparent between metropolitan-based schools, and schools in regional and remote areas, where responses indicated that careers advice and work experience play a larger part in preparing students for the future of work.

FIGURE 6 – HOW SCHOOLS ARE PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

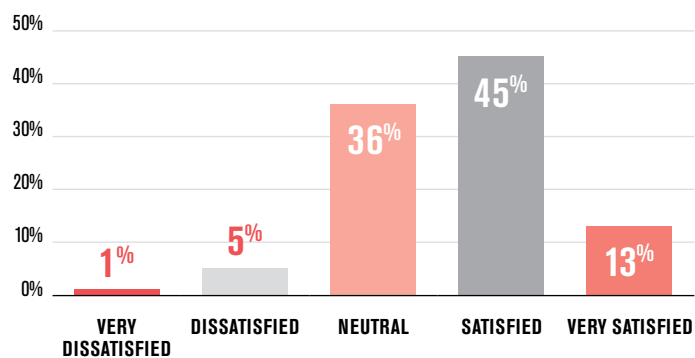


Note: In order to ascertain emphasis parents could only nominate one category in their responses. In their comments many pointed out that schools were engaging across multiple, if not all, areas.

Despite these differences, there was no discernible pattern that links location to respondents' satisfaction with how schools were preparing their children for the future of work. The same characteristics that differentiated parents' satisfaction with how schools were preparing their students for further study, differentiate their satisfaction with how they were being prepared for the future of work. The major difference highlighted by Table 4 is that in every instance the share of parents 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' was less.

Overall, a small majority (58 percent) of all parents were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied'. Accounting for most of the rest were parents who ticked the 'neutral' box. Only a few registered any dissatisfaction. The comments left by parents provide clues to what lies behind this distribution. They variously revealed that parents: were unclear what schools were doing; do not believe the full burden of responsibility rests with schools; regarded it was too difficult to prepare students for an uncertain future; or were not convinced this should be a priority focus when children are young.

FIGURE 7 – SATISFACTION WITH PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK



"The school recognises that work futures are changing and is adapting to this through subject offerings and social and interpersonal skill development"

"As much as a school can provide this completely, there is also community and parent responsibilities here as well"

"Hard to know what the future holds for workers, but the school is certainly preparing them for life after school"

5. He reportedly first said this in an interview on Fresh Air, NPR that aired on 31 August 1993.

6. Institute of the Future, *The Next Era of Human-Machine Partnerships. Emerging Technologies' Impact on Society & Work in 2030*, report prepared for Dell Technologies, 2017.

EXERCISING CHOICE

Respect for the liberty of parents to choose their children's schools is a fundamental human right.⁷ It allows parents from different ethnic, religious, cultural and other backgrounds to choose schools that best meet the needs of their children and reflects their values. The exercise of choice encourages schools to lift their game, improve performance and be responsive to parent and student needs.

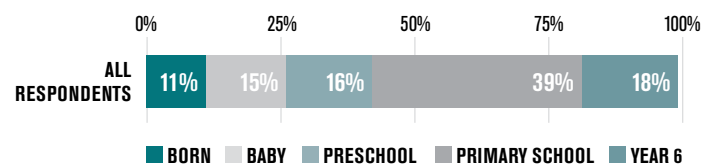
However, it is not always possible for parents to realise their preferences. This takes time, requires good information and the unencumbered exercise of choice. Here we explore how all three factored into parents' choice of high schools.

TIME TO CHOOSE

While many parents started to explore their options prior to their children commencing primary school, the scales were tipped in favour of those who delayed their exploration.

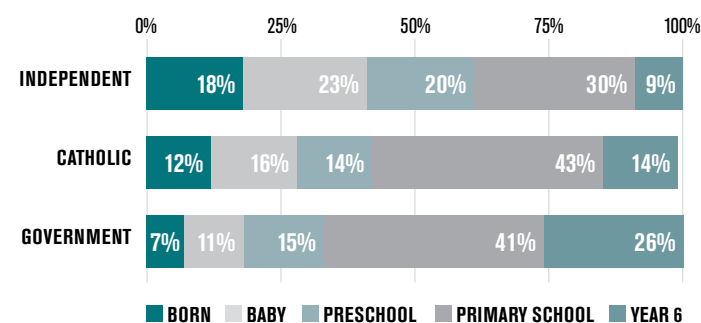
The scales tip in the other direction for parents whose children attend Independent schools. Parents in managerial and professional roles and high income households were also likely to bring forward in time their exploration. The occupation of parents also held some, but not significant, sway.

FIGURE 8 – WHEN PARENTS STARTED TO EXPLORE THEIR OPTIONS



Note: Variance is due to rounding error

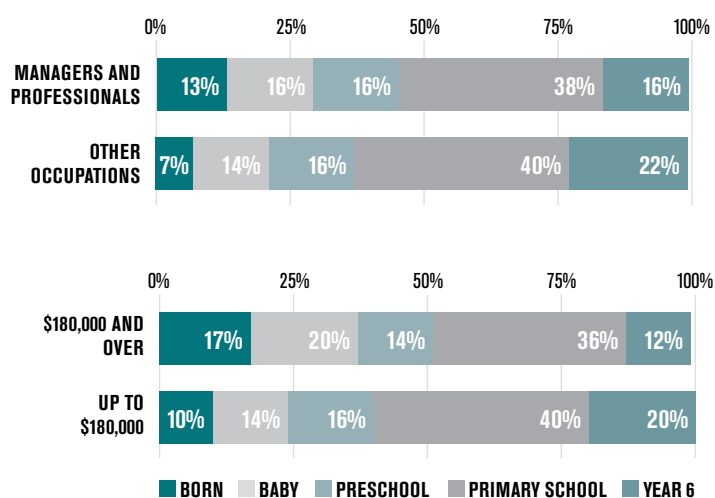
BY SCHOOL SECTOR



Note: Variance is due to rounding error

7. Parents' right to choose is included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS



Note: Variance is due to rounding error

SOURCES AND INFLUENCERS

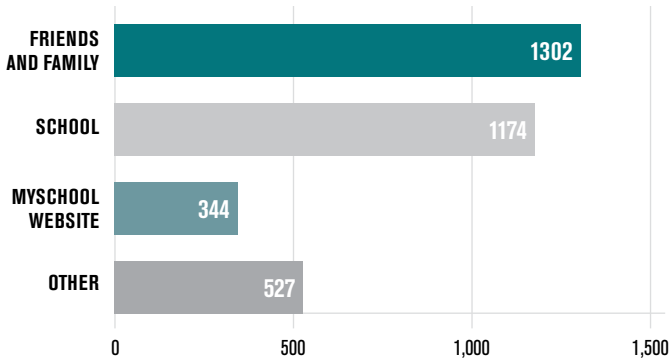
When looking into their options for where they send their children to high school, parents sought to inform their choices by speaking with friends and family and taking account of the information shared by schools of interest. Information available through the MySchool website played a lesser role. Prevalent in the 'Other' category were school visits and tours and parents own research.

The top three considerations influencing parents' choices were reputation, school sector, and school performance. Dominating the 'Other' category was location and accessibility and family tradition (that is, either a parent, sibling or other relatives went to the school). The first explains why we saw (in the section on Methodology) that most families lived within 20 kilometres of their children's schools and over half within 10.

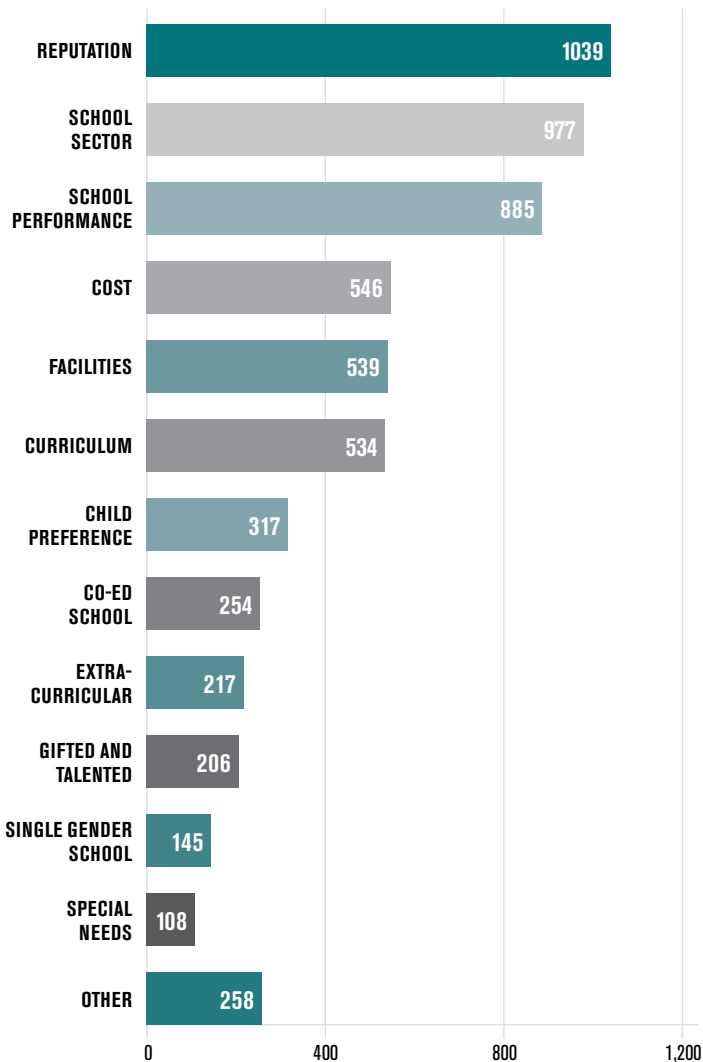
Across both the sources and influencers, a number of parents felt that they had limited or no choice (for example, if they were in catchment areas), while others with young children said that they either had not started to explore their options or had not yet decided.

FIGURE 9 – WHAT INFORMED AND INFLUENCED CHOICES

INFORMATION SOURCES



INFLUENCERS



Note: Parents could select multiple information sources and were asked to nominate up to three influencers.

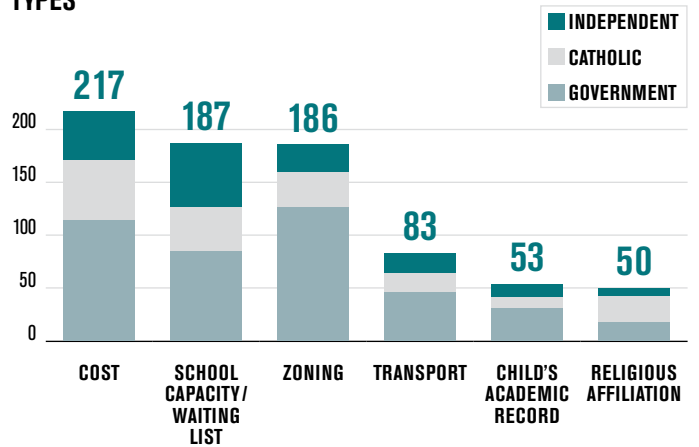
BARRIERS TO CHOICE

The good news is that less than one in five (17 percent) parents reported that they encountered barriers in their choice of high school for their children. The incidence of barriers encountered was greatest amongst parents with children in Government schools, suggesting that for some the public system was not their first choice. Figure 10 indicates incidence and the types of barriers encountered by school sector. The (literally and figuratively) grey area is where parents indicated the question was not applicable, often because their children were young and they not started looking into the alternatives.

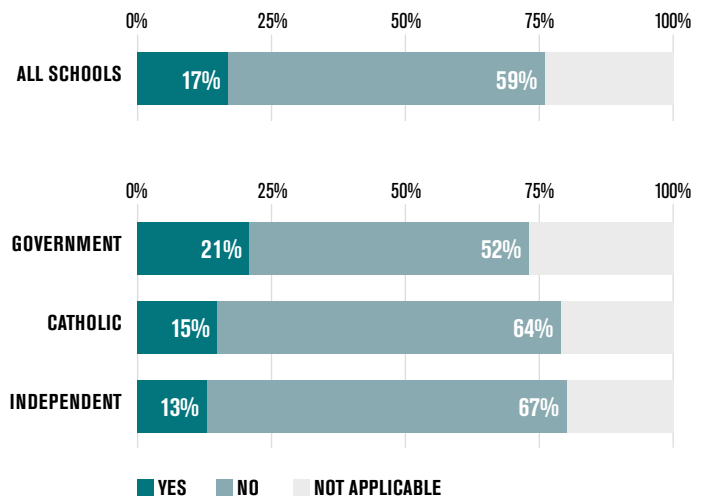
The most prevalent barrier was cost. Parents commented that they did not have the finances necessary to meet the cost of private schooling. Waiting lists and zoning were respectively the second and close third ranked barriers.

FIGURE 10 – BARRIERS

TYPES



INCIDENCE



Note: Respondents could select multiple types of barriers.

CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Few issues evoke widespread national debate as contemporary issues in schooling. All of us have had a first-hand experience of a school education. The interests and engagement of parents are particularly acute as they impact the learnings and experiences and shape the futures of their children. It is, therefore, critical that they are given voice and are heard.

We sought parents views on:

- the link between funding and performance;
- the place of capabilities in the curriculum;
- the use of digital devices in the classroom; and
- whose role is it to educate children on Christianity, sex and sexuality, and cyber safety – parents and/or schools?

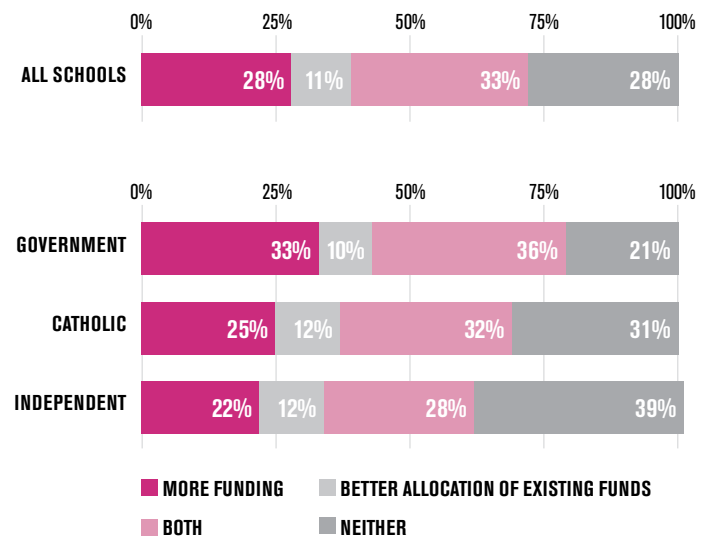
FUNDING AND PERFORMANCE

Gonski lit a fire under the school funding debate that continues to burn today and may flare up in the wake of an election.

Many (61 percent) parents who responded to ASG's survey felt that school should receive more funding or should receive more funding and put those funds to better use. The parents of children attending Government schools were more inclined to take this view. Over a quarter of all parents felt neither more nor better use of funding was required. A larger share of parents who send their children to Independent schools were inclined to hold this view.

A theme of many of the comments offered by parents in favour of both more and the better use of funding was to prioritise expenditure on teachers, reflecting the importance of teachers to student outcomes. This included funding to meet the costs of: more teachers to enable lower class sizes and personalised learning; specialist teachers; high performing and experienced teachers; and professional development. More than a few lamented funds being spent on buildings and meeting other non-education related expenses. However, those who advocated for more funding only, were more likely to support spending in these areas. Sector-related arguments swung both ways: some argued for greater Government support for private schools, while others argued that funding should be prioritised towards the public system. Parents supporting no change were either happy with school performance and/or the uses to which funds were being put.

FIGURE 11 – LEVEL AND USE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDS



Note: Variance is due to rounding error

"Teachers should be better paid, and they should retain their job based on their performance"

"Higher staff : student ratios would enable more time to be spent on providing individualised and differentiated learning opportunities and experiences"

"A great deal of focus on buildings and expansion. Getting back to the basics would be better"



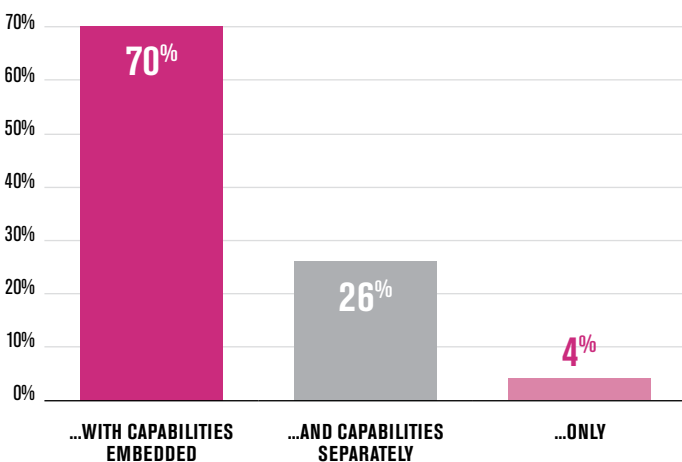
CAPABILITIES IN THE CURRICULUM

The discussion on parents' Aspirations elicited the broadly shared view that the top ranked foci for schools when preparing students for an unknown future of work were soft skills and future skills development. This begs the question of how those skills should be taught – separately, embedded in discipline specific subjects or not at all. ASG asked that question and the answers that came back were bordering on unanimous that capabilities need to be taught. The preference of seven out of ten parents was that they should be embedded in the teaching of discipline specific subjects. Just over a quarter thought they should be separately taught.

In their comments, many parents argued that there should be both integrated and separate subjects. For some this was capability dependent. For others it depended on the stage of schooling.

The parents who supported an embedded approach variously pointed to the value of holistic learning, and that integration reflects life and work. An argument in favour of separation was teacher capability. The few favouring discipline specific subjects only pointed to an already over-crowded curriculum and the need to focus on getting the basics right. Many, across all categories, indicated that they were either unsure or did not understand the question.

FIGURE 12 – DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC SUBJECTS



"Initially they should be introduced to these separately but as they advance through school their learning of both these areas should become integrated"

"I think integrated resembles more the actual work force and ultimately that is what they need to be equipped for"

"Children should be learning the basics in primary school. Too many subjects are bombarding children at a young age"



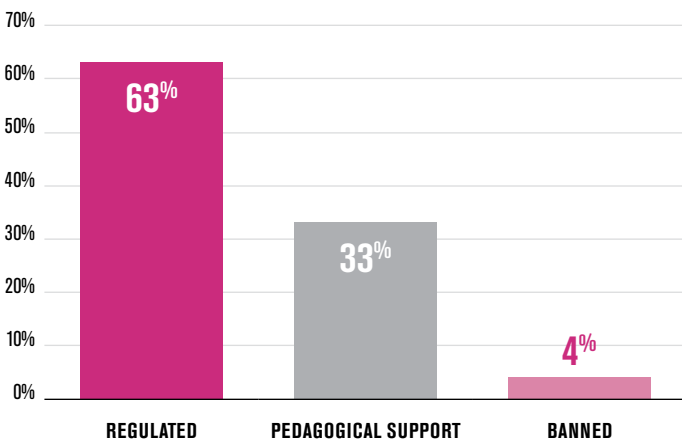
DIGITAL DEVICES IN THE CLASSROOM

Is it reasonable to expect today's students to put away their mobile phones when they go to school? Should teachers adapt their practice to support tech-savvy students? Or does the answer lie somewhere in-between? This is a lively debate in education circles and amongst parents where there is no shortage of impassioned perspectives.

So ASG asked its parents. The answers that came back placed just short of two thirds (63 percent) of them in the 'in-between' category. That is, that digital devices could be used as a pedagogical aid but be banned in other instances. Another third (33 percent) backed digital devices as a pedagogical support. Very few called for an outright ban.

Parents' comments spanned the full length of the spectrum. Advocates pointed to the realities of the digital age. Moderates called for perspective – devices are one tool in many to support learning. Parents sitting towards the other end of the spectrum feared the loss of basic skills, including handwriting, and raised concerns about how social media can be distracting and addictive.

FIGURE 13 – USE OF DIGITAL DEVICES



"Digital devices are everywhere in the workplace – it would be stupid to ban them in schools – children need to be digitally literate"

"... digital tools are just that – tools – and they do not replace the ability to organise thoughts, discern accurate and relevant information, manage time, and construct solutions to problems"

"Children are led to rely on devices to spell for them and add for them and then they also don't have to be neat or legible in their writing style"

WHOSE ROLE IS IT ANYWAY?

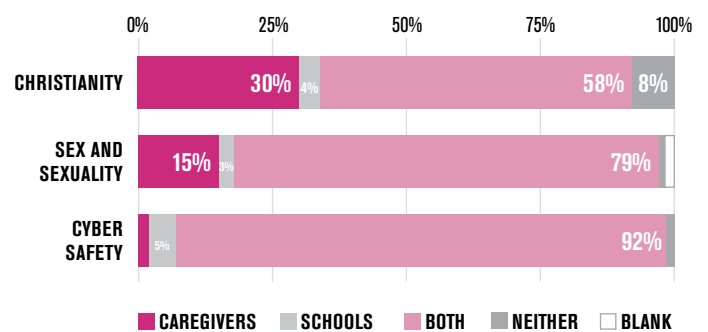
Whose role is it to educate children on Christianity, sex and sexuality, and cyber safety – parents, schools, both or neither? The answer in each instance, to varying degrees, was that these are shared responsibilities. While many stressed the importance of "partnership", others argued the need for schools to reinforce the perspectives of parents.

This view was least strongly held for Christianity. The parents of children attending Catholic schools were the most adamant that it's a shared responsibility, with four out of five parents holding this view. This came through in comments to the effect that this is why they chose a Catholic school. Slightly more parents of Government schools claimed this as their responsibility not a shared responsibility. In their comments some expressed frustration that Christianity is imposed on their children. Others argued that all faiths should be taught without bias.

Near on four out of five (79 percent of) parents regarded educating their children on sex and sexuality as a shared responsibility. School and respondent characteristics had little bearing on perspectives held. The weight of comments, however, leaned in the opposite direction. Some supported "sex" education but aired opposition to the Safe Schools program.

More than nine out of ten (92 percent of) parents saw teaching their children about cyber safety as a shared responsibility. A number acknowledged that schools may be more expert than they.

FIGURE 14 – WHOSE ROLE IS IT TO EDUCATE CHILDREN ON ...



Note: Variance is due to rounding error

"It takes a village to raise a child"

"Religion should have no place in Government schools"

"all the gender issues and "Safe Schools" programs do not sit comfortably with me or my family"

"Schools have better ways of teaching about cyber safety and are better informed"

ASG would like to acknowledge and thank Mary Clarke, Principal DXP Consulting, for her valuable contribution to the ASG Parent Report Card 2018/19.



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