It is now 12 months since I wrote an article for VIM in which I briefly explored the topical and emotional issue of education funding in schools with particular reference to the state of play for the independent sector of which we are a part. Since writing that article in 2012 there has been a change of the Federal government yet the uncertainty of the funding levels for independent schools prevails. The strengths of All Saints’ College remain uncompromised despite the uncertainty and public debate around funding for education.

There has been considerable commentary in the media about the federal review of education funding and the “Gonski Review”. The objective of the review was honourable with the intention to devise an approach facilitating better access to high quality education for all students in Australia. The Gonski Review looked to overcome problems and perceptions of inequity in the three sectors of education (government, systemic Catholic and independent schools). A more transparent and equitable funding model to assist the advancement of education for all students was the desired outcome. In addition to this, the identification of support for students with disabilities was a particular area the Gonski Review was seeking to address. Many recommendations of the Gonski Review have not happened and are unlikely to be implemented due to limitations in available funds. The Gonski plan has evolved into something today that bares only partial resemblance to its original state.

The reality for us now is the existing funding model for education that has been in place for well over a decade is likely to be replaced by a more complex funding model attributed to “Gonski” but not completely consistent with the proposed changes. The change of Federal government has added an additional flavour to the mix and there is greater uncertainty of the funding model than before. The new Federal government has the challenge of committing to a funding model that supports all students in Australia and advance opportunities for all our young people beyond school because of their experiences at school.

Despite this debate our school continues to provide the highest quality educational experience possible for our students. All Saints’ College has an unmatched reputation for the quality of the overall educational experience of its students. This experience includes a very positive learning environment for students. Outstanding staff members perform their role as classroom teachers, sports coaches, mentors, facilitators and pastoral leaders to foster a school in which they are aspirational for their students. A consequence of this is that a very strong feature of our school is how the nature of relationships between staff and students facilitates an environment in which students are aspirational for each other. This is not common in other schools. In fact, it is very rare and a real treasure.

I wrote last September: “All Saints’ College is an independent school. This means that we can make decisions within our school about the allocation of our resources, unhindered by a large bureaucracy removed from the school.” We are in the fortunate position where we can cultivate a school environment for young people to feel valued, listened to and supported by their teachers and peers. This culture is not a new development but a part of the character of our school since its commencement in 1874. This social dimension to the school lays the foundation for opportunities to engage in the curriculum and contributes to the outstanding academic success of our students.

The outcome of the conversation about educational funding is uncertain. It is an important discussion because it will influence the level of support we receive for the provision of our excellent school experience for students. At the same time, I am always seeking to ensure our school remains as accessible to a cross section of our community. A transparent and equitable funding model will assist in achieving this objective and serving our students so they may advance to greater opportunities beyond school because of the positive experiences they have enjoyed at All Saints’ College.