

Last-minute website for private schools



Parents now able to find discount spots at private schools: Scots School Bathurst. *Photo: Rural Press*

Just like finding a last-minute flight or accommodation deal, parents will now be able to find last-minute vacancies and discounts at some NSW private schools.

Launched on Tuesday, the School Places website will offer discounts of between 10 and 40 per cent at private schools. The discount is for two years at most of the schools and there are often vacancies at all levels.

Already 500 NSW parents have registered to be told when their school of choice has a discounted vacancy following the launch of the site in Victoria earlier this year.

Schools in NSW include Macquarie Grammar, Scots Bathurst, Masada College, Macquarie Anglican Grammar and Lakes Grammar but the operators say many more will be available after the September holidays when schools work out their student numbers for next year.

The website's chief executive, Natalie Mactier, said although many private schools could be difficult to get into, places were opening up all the time due to a transient population.

"People are moving into, out of and around NSW all the time which leaves many private schools with vacant places they are very keen to fill," Ms Mactier said.

Ms Mactier said the toughest year to secure a place at a private school was usually year 7 but parents were often worried unnecessarily with tales of impossibly long wait lists.

"Wait lists are a little bit of a myth because they are only as good as how warm you keep them," Ms Mactier said.

"While many parents prefer to lock in their options well ahead of time, School Places caters to those who prefer to keep their options open or who need to find a new school in a hurry."

Ms Mactier said while the benefits of securing a discounted place were obvious for families, it was also a win for the school .

"The cost of running schools is growing faster than family incomes, so the kinds of fee increases we've seen in recent years just aren't sustainable," Ms Mactier said.

"Schools need to find new ways to increase their revenue and ensuring every vacant place is filled is a very good option."

School Places was the brainchild of company founder Jeremy Wein, 25, who was inspired to apply the ease of travel websites such as Wotif.com to the complex world of securing private school placements.



Illustration: Cathy Wilcox.