



MEDIA RELEASE

Catholic Schools Office Diocese of Armidale

9th May 2017

NEW FEDERAL FUNDING PLAN

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Education Minister Simon Birmingham announced a new ten-year school funding plan which has been the subject of much debate in the media and still does not have the support of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) or Catholic Education Commission NSW.

As a Catholic education system we are committed to a needs-based funding system where “all schools will transition to funding on an equal basis within ten years”. This approach should see schools with a limited resource base have greater financial capacity and expanded resources into the future. The Catholic Schools Office (Diocese of Armidale) has many challenges associated with providing quality education to students in rural and remote settings which are supported by a needs-based approach to funding. On behalf of Bishop Michael Kennedy, I (Chris Smyth) remain committed to a high standard of stewardship of public and private funds and to providing our students with a high standard of learning and teaching in all of our schools.

The promised annual indexation of funding increases from 2018 to 2020 will enable us to say to parents that our current processes for the setting of **school fees will remain unchanged** and that **any annual adjustment to school fees will be modest**. We do acknowledge that some Catholic schools in other dioceses with a high SES may be facing some school fee increases as a result of reduced funding. Beyond 2021 the indexation of the base funding amount will be a floating rate and may put pressure on the Catholic sector if the funding does not keep up with inflation and education costs.

We are concerned that the Federal Government is launching a new website that will list the Commonwealth funding provided to each school in Australia. This action, along with a letter sent directly to school principals today, is likely to promote uninformed analysis of how funding is allocated to diocesan schools by the government, CEC (NSW) and local CSOs. This approach ignores the benefits of systems that is supported by international research on school improvement and the ongoing positive feedback from schools on the value of their relationship with the Catholic Schools Office.

We are pleased that “funding of \$300M over ten years will be provided through an improved Commonwealth capital grants arrangement to help disadvantaged non-government schools”. The lack of capital for school development continues to impact on the Catholic sector in rural and regional areas.

I continue to encourage school principals to advocate for the extremely important role that government and non-government schools and the teaching profession play in preparing students for a good life based on values that enhance our Australian society.

Please be assured that we will continue to explore ways of enhancing the resources and funding that impact on student learning, wellbeing and faith formation for each student in our Catholic schools.

Chris Smyth
Director of Catholic Schools

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