SUMMARY REPORT

The 297th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 18 June 2008 in the Taylor/Barlow Rooms, Polding Centre, Level 8, 133 Liverpool Street Sydney. The meeting was chaired by Bishop David Walker.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1) Print and Digital Costs for 2008

Commissioners noted that the CAL invoice is now more transparent than in the past, however, the methodology used by CAL to determine the number of remunerable pages from the sampling undertaken by AC Nielson is not clear. As background, the CEC made approximately $4.5 million in copyright payments in 2007 on behalf of NSW Catholic schools. Of this amount, $3.1 million was paid to CAL for print copyright. To put these amounts in context, the Schools sector across Australia – both government and non government – made approximately $60 million in copyright payments last year.

AC Nielsen has completed its latest survey and CAL has analysed these results and produced their invoices for 2008. CAG is of the view that the methodology for determining remunerable pages needs to be more transparent. Commissioners support approaches by CAG to CAL to improve transparency.

2) NSW Review of the School Leaving Age

At its meeting on 16 April 2008, Commissioners confirmed the proposed structure of the CEC submission to the NSW Government on *Raising the NSW School Leaving Age*. Submissions are required to be provided to the NSW Education Minister by 30 June 2008.

Commissioners noted that the Education Policy Committee had canvassed with the Dioceses and Congregational Schools about the appropriate age for School Leaving in NSW and its effectiveness as a retention strategy. A number of options were considered by the Education Policy Committee including their likely consequences. Commissioners reviewed each option and agreed with the recommendation to leave the minimum school leaving age at 15 years; however, there would also be a mandatory requirement for all 15 to 17 year olds to participate in one of the following settings:

a) School;

b) TAFE;

c) Registered RTO; or,

d) Approved work.
Commissioners considered that part of the strategy for improving School retention could be to transform the School Certificate from end Year 10 to an end of schooling credential for those leaving before Year 12. Commissioners noted that this option was not being canvassed by the NSW Government at this time.

3) Commission Meeting Procedures

The Commission at its meeting on 21 May 2008 considered a Draft CEC Charter, made some modifications and recommended the Amended Draft CEC Charter to the NSW/ACT Bishops for their approval. At their meeting on 5 June 2008, the NSW/ACT Bishops accepted the Commission’s recommendation and approved the Revised CEC Charter. The Revised CEC Charter *inter alia* gives authority to the Commission to approve its own meeting procedures, subject to some guidelines included in the Charter.

Commissioners at this meeting considered and then approved Meeting Procedures, subject to some minor amendments.

Commissioners noted that papers on Committee Meeting Procedures, Terms of Reference for Core Committees and Financial Delegations are scheduled for approval at a later Commission meeting.

4) RTA Funding: Supplementary Grant for 2008

CEC has recently been advised that the new RTA/CEC Program Agreement will provide:

a) $400,000 per year for a 2 year contract, for the 2009 and 2010 school years; and,

b) a Supplementary RTA Grant of $500,000 for 2008/09 to support professional development activities provided by Diocesan Road Safety Education Advisers to teachers in both Systemic and Congregational schools. It is required that this Professional Development support RTA developed resources for both secondary and primary schools.

Commissioners welcomed increased funding for the Road Safety Program. Commissioners noted that the conditions of grant required that safety strategies be imbedded into curricula and programs to be developed must utilise electronic whiteboards. This latter condition is a problem because not all Catholic schools have an electronic whiteboard in each classroom. Like State Schools, this technology is being progressively implemented within Catholic Schools.

5) CEC/CCRESS Statement of Ongoing Collaboration

Commissioners noted that the Commission’s Standing Committee on Religious Education has now finalised its agenda. The CEC’s narrow remit for State and national matters in RE will be dealt with by the Education Policy Committee.

Commissioners see the relationship with CCRESS as being very important. Commissioners requested that the EDPOL Terms of Reference include reference to RE, codify the relationship with CCRESS, and set RE objectives and reporting requirements.
Commissioners considered the Draft CEC/CCRESS Statement of Ongoing Collaboration. Commissioners agreed to re-order priorities in the Draft Statement to emphasise consultative processes, identification of best practice and make a commitment to holding a biennial Forum commencing in 2009.

6) CEC Special Education Working Party

At its meeting on 16 April 2008, the Commission established a working party to review the formula used to distribute funds for Students With Disability under the Commonwealth LNSLN programme. Currently, 40% of LNSLN funding is set aside for SWD, with $3.272 million (23%) of the SWD component of funding allocated to Special Schools. The Working Party recommended that this level of funding for Special Schools currently drawn from LNSLN be maintained and indexed as per AGSRC. Commissioners agreed to this recommendation.

The Special Education Working Party considers that the longer term funding formula should be based upon the individual needs of the student rather than the particular school setting. The Individual Planning Profile (IPP) is regarded as a powerful instrument to assess the support requirements for individual students with disabilities, although it requires further refinement.

Commissioners agreed that using the IPP for determining funding in the 2009 to 2012 Quadrennium is not possible, given the short time available between now and the commencement of the Quadrennium – firstly to undertake all of the assessments on a consistent basis and then to agree on a formula using the results of the assessments. A short term formula therefore needs to be developed for the impending Quadrennium.

Commissioners agreed to advise the Special Education Working Party that it expects some version of the IPP to be part of the funding formula for distributing grants for Students With Disabilities in the 2013 to 2016 Quadrennium.

7) NSW Anti-Discrimination Act Amendments

Commissioners noted that the Wesley Mission Case appears to have no impact on Catholic Schools; however, there are some implications for Church Agencies. The Wesley Mission Case will go to appeal in July 2008. The CEC Secretariat is monitoring developments.

8) 2007 CEC Annual Report

Commissioners reviewed and approved the Draft 2007 CEC Annual Report, subject to some minor amendments. The 2007 CEC Annual Report will be forwarded to the NSW/ACT Bishops shortly.

9) VET Strategic Directions

At its meeting on 20 June 2007, the Commission initiated a project to articulate the present and future role of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in NSW Catholic Schools, following a review of CEC support for VET prepared by Sr Berenice Kerr rsm and the emergence of Trade High Schools in the NSW Government schools sector. Since that time, the new Australian Government has also shown interest in this important education area.
The CEC hosted a Forum *Vocational Education and Training in NSW Catholic schools* on 27 March 2008. At its meeting on 16 April 2008, the Commission considered an interim paper. At that meeting, key recommendations were endorsed and a Draft VET Strategic Directions paper was requested for the 18 June 2008 Commission meeting.

The Commission welcomed the Draft VET Strategic Directions Discussion paper produced by the Education Policy (EDPOL) Committee. The Draft Discussion paper contained twenty six (26) focus issues. Commissioners provided feedback on these matters and requested the EDPOL Committee to look at VET in the context of comprehensive education, provide additional empirical evidence to back some recommendations and to look at the possibility of Parent partnerships. The final VET Strategic Directions paper is due back to the Commission later in this calendar year.

**10) National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)**

Commissioners noted that responses from Dioceses and Congregational Schools about the NAPLAN testing were more positive than negative. Commissioners also noted that results from the 2007 testing of Years 3, 5 and 7 indicate that 44,290 New South Wales students are judged to be below minimum standards. 6,800 of those students are in Catholic schools. This means that the NSW government and non government educations sectors in total are eligible for approximately $20.7 million in *An Even Start* targeted Commonwealth funds for tuition for those students. 1,600 Catholic school students to date have registered for tuition, primarily school based. The Commission requested the EDPOL Committee to monitor National, State and Sector reporting on the 2008 NAPLAN and advise the Commission later in this calendar year.

**11) National Goals of Schooling Working Group**

In April 2008, MCEETYA agreed to develop the new declaration on the national goals of schooling by building on the commitments made by the States and Territories in *The Future of Schooling in Australia Report* released by the Council for the Australian Federation in 2007.

On 22 May 2008, a Working Group met in Melbourne to develop a new declaration of the national goals for schooling to update the Adelaide Declaration, 1999. Dr Brian Croke is representing NCEC on the Working Group. The Group is overseeing a consultation process, drawing on Chapter 4 of *The Future of Schooling in Australia Report* in particular.

**12) Symposium on English in the National Curriculum**

A symposium entitled *A National Curriculum in English: Perspectives, Principles, Possibilities* was held at the University of Sydney on 7 June 2008. Hosted by the Arts, English and Literacy Education (AELE) Research Network in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney, the symposium provided a forum for discussion of issues concerning English, in the national curriculum. The Forum was attended by academics, teachers, system administrators, parents, students and members of the National Curriculum Board. After an opening address by Minister John Della Bosca, a series of panel sessions explored the challenges facing the National Curriculum Board in developing a national curriculum in English. Dr Brian Croke addressed the issue of how the national language and literature is treated in those countries, which already have a national curriculum. In preparation for his address, Dr Croke consulted with a small group of expert English teachers from across metropolitan dioceses.
13) NSW Planning Policy- New Legislation

Over the years, the CEC has expressed concerns to the NSW Government about the treatment of schools by local government planning authorities and the inconsistent rules and financial levies imposed on them by different local councils. The Government has recently been involved in bitter controversy with sections of local government over its proposed amendments to the NSW Planning and Environment Act.

One proposed amendment to the Act, which could be beneficial to schools, would see the introduction of joint regional planning panels that would have authority to oversee and overturn local government decisions or speed up a decision when that is the issue. The Environmental Planning & Assessment Amendment Bill 2008 has now passed the Legislative Assembly and moves to the Legislative Council. At the same time the CEC and AIS have been pursuing a matter in the State Environmental Planning Policy (Infrastructure) 2007, which guides local planning approvals and which allows local councils to treat non-government schools differently from government schools (Division 3, para. 27).

14) ICT Forum on User Policies

On 28 May 2008, CEC hosted a Forum on the responsible use of digital materials. The Forum was attended by Diocesan and Congregational school representatives. Presentations by Minter Ellison, Lawyers, and Diocesan officers reinforced the need to take prudent measures to monitor the use of digital materials on educational networks. The extra monitoring work involved was balanced against the benefits to be gained from the use of digital materials, provided safeguards to ensure responsible use were in place.

15) Australian Award

Brother Tony Whelan cfc was awarded an Australian honour in the Queens Birthday list for meritorious service to Catholic education. Brother Tony is currently Director of Schools for the Broken Bay Diocese and is a CEC Commissioner. The Commission congratulated Brother Tony on this great recognition of his service to Catholic education.

John Kitney
Secretary to the Commission
10 July 2008