The 299th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 17 September 2008 in the Taylor/Barlow Rooms, Polding Centre, Level 8, 133 Liverpool Street Sydney. The meeting was chaired by Bishop David Walker DD.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1) Special Education Funding

The Commission approved a new funding formula to be implemented from 2009. The new formula focuses primarily on the student him/herself. The formula takes into consideration the following factors:

- number of SWD students;
- the cost of support for SWD students which is higher in secondary schools than in primary schools; and,
- the cost of program delivery, which is higher in rural and remote regions than in Sydney or other major provincial areas.

In determining the relative remoteness of schools, the Commission has adopted ARIA, Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia, as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The new Special Education formula will be implemented over two years – 50% in 2009 and 100% in 2010.

In addition, the Commission has agreed to move towards using consistent individual SWD IPP data to more closely align funding to student needs. A new Working Party will be established *inter alia* to ensure that Catholic Education Authorities implement the IPP process consistently across the NSW Catholic school sector by 2012.

Finally the Commission also agreed that the current Special Schools funding arrangements be maintained for the period 2009 to 2012 inclusive. It also agreed that further work be undertaken to identify improved post 2012 funding models for Catholic Special Schools.

2) Literacy Funding for Congregational Schools

CEC allocates literacy and numeracy funds to Congregational schools from the LNSLN program of the Australian government. In 2008, approximately $1.6 million was allocated to Congregational schools. This level of funding will be maintained in 2009.
The Commission approved a new funding formula to allocate available funds to individual Congregational Schools from 2009. The new approach gives priority to Congregational schools with low SES scores, those in rural/remote areas and/or with Aboriginal enrolments. This is consistent with the Australian government’s funding priorities for the LNSLN program.

It is proposed that this new formula will be implemented over two years – 50% in 2009 and 100% in 2010. Also a base payment of $15,000 for all Congregational schools will apply.

3) CEC VET Strategic Directions Paper

A set of Strategic Direction Statements as outlined in the document, *VET in the Catholic Curriculum: Establishing Future Directions*, which outlines the CEC’s position on VET, were approved. This document will now be provided to Catholic Education Authorities to help guide the development of local VET implementation policies and strategies. The Commission’s Education Policy Committee will work with Catholic Education Authorities on implementation issues as required. VET support will also continue to be provided through the CEC’s Vocational Education Advisory Group (VEAG).

2008 NSW Training Awards

The NSW Training Awards were held at the Darling Harbour Exhibition Centre on 5 September 2008. Students from Catholic schools received prestigious awards.

Ben Buchhorn from Edmund Rice College, Wollongong was awarded VET student of the Year. Brenton Pearce from St Peter’s Catholic College, Tuggerah was awarded the NSW Australian School Based Apprentice of the Year Award. These achievements are indicative of both the high quality of VET provision in Catholic schools and of the work of Catholic school staff on behalf of students.

4) CEC 2007 HSC Data Analysis Report

The Commission received and accepted Dr. John DeCourcy’s (Director, School Accountabilities, CEO Parramatta) report on 2007 Catholic Schools HSC Data. This report will shortly be made available on the CEC website to registered stakeholders, namely High School Principals and other authorised senior education staff.

The Commission also approved inviting Dr. DeCourcy to submit a proposal to conduct analyses and reports for the HSC years 2008 to 2010 inclusive.

5) Country Areas Program (CAP)

The CAP program delivers some $1.5 million to the rural and remote Dioceses of Armidale, Bathurst, Canberra-Goulburn, Wagga Wagga & Wilcannia/Forbes to improve the education opportunities for geographically disadvantaged students. CAP is an Australian government program. The declaration of schools as CAP schools is, however, made by the State Education Minister. The Minister in turn is advised by the Country Areas Program State-wide Advisory Council (CAPSAC).

CAPSAC has adopted ARIA to determine a school’s degree of remoteness from towns with a population > 10,000. This new formula will mean changes to funding allocations for CAP Dioceses. Final funding allocations for schools will be advised by the Commission later this calendar year following consultation with CAP Dioceses.
6) **NAPLAN – National Testing Years 3,5,7 and 9**

Commissioners noted that Education Ministers and Education Departments released the 2008 NAPLAN results to the public on 12 September 2008. NSW results were generally high compared with most other States and Territories and were higher than the Australian mean in all categories and for all years. CEC hosted briefing forums for NSW Catholic Education Authorities on 12 September and 22 September 2008. Catholic School Authorities are analysing the data to inform future planning, resourcing and any remedial strategies as may be required.

7) **CEC Sustainability Forums**

Commissioners noted progress in planning forums on environmental sustainability. Commissioners also noted the high level of support for the proposed forums. The first forum is now scheduled for March 2009. This initial forum will be focused on developing the support of Bishops, Directors of Education and their senior staff, as well as the Commission Secretariat and representatives of other Catholic sector State level education bodies (including CLRI, ACSP and CCSP), for environmental sustainability strategies for Catholic schools. Country forums will follow later in 2009.

8) **Catholic Network Australia - Broadband for all Schools**

Commissioners considered a presentation on the development of a national Broadband network for the Catholic education sector. This initiative is early in the planning stages. The Australian government has offered substantial support to government and non-government schools to establish high speed fibre optic networks across Australia.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference’s Commission for Administration and Information has given a remit to one of this Commission’s members Gregory Whitby, Executive Director of the Parramatta Catholic Education Office, to undertake planning for the Catholic Network Australia (CNA). This Bishops’ Commission has consequently given Mr. Whitby authority to progress planning on behalf of the NSW Catholic schools sector. Mr. Whitby will develop a business case and present it to this Commission for approval once he resolves planning, resourcing, timetable, contractual and costing issues.

Commissioners noted that CNA also has the obligation to provide Broadband coverage for non-school agencies of the Church.

9) **Draft 2009 CEC WorkPlan**

Each year the Commission develops a WorkPlan for the forthcoming calendar year for which it seeks approval from the NSW/ACT Bishops. This approval is sought at the Bishops’ meeting in November, in conjunction with seeking approval for both the Annual CEC Budget and those CEC levies which are to be invoiced to be paid to CEC by the NSW Catholic Education Authorities.

Commissioners considered the 2009 Draft WorkPlan and made some editorial amendments. The redrafted WorkPlan will be presented to the October 2008 Commission meeting for final approval.

10) **2009 Road Safety Program**
The total core 2009 grant allocation to CEC of $400,000 remains the same as in 2008.

$330,000 will be distributed to Dioceses with a base of $10,000 for each Diocese and the balance proportional to current K-12 enrolments. Allocations will be distributed to Dioceses in two equal instalments in 2009.

$70,000 will be retained by CEC as a contribution towards the salary of the Program Manager, together with Diocesan Advisers meeting costs and other related administrative costs. Funds to the Dioceses are to be used in support of salaries for Advisers managing Road Safety Education in each Diocese.

Diocesan staff supported by this program are expected to focus on the following priority areas:

- Delivery of professional development to secondary school teachers to support the implementation of RTA resources for late Stage 5 and Stage 6 students;
- Professional development support to primary and secondary schools;
- Feedback to CEC on the development of new RTA resources;
- Activity Reports to CEC following professional development activities;
- Evaluation feedback arising from school workshops, as well as NSW Centre for Road Safety and CEC Adviser workshops.

The RTA’s expectation is that 80% of activity will focus on supporting schools, including the delivery of professional development to teachers.

The RTA has also provided a supplementary grant of $500,000 to further support the delivery of road safety education professional development to the staff of NSW Catholic schools. This grant has been indicatively allocated to Dioceses according to K-12 enrolments. Payment of this supplementary grant to Dioceses will be on a reimbursement basis.

Diocesan grants and activities must support RTA initiatives for all Catholic schools both Systemic and Congregational.

11) 2008/09 Commonwealth and State Drug Education Grants

The following grants are applicable to the 2008/09 fiscal year:

- $220,000 from NSW Department of Health; and,
- $89,890 from the Commonwealth’s NSDES program.

The State funds are allocated with a base of $5,000 to each country Diocese and the balance proportional to K-12 enrolments across all Dioceses. This funding is a contribution towards the salaries of Diocesan Drug Education Advisers.

The Commonwealth funds are allocated in response to submissions arising from Dioceses.

12) National Catholic Education Commission
The most recent meeting of the NCEC was held in Darwin on 11 September 2009. Among many issues discussed, were options for Church engagement to support families with children under school age through “pre-school” initiatives. There was also discussion of issues arising from the National Curriculum Board’s consultations and the work being undertaken to revise the National Goals for Schooling. NCEC is also considering the funding of Catholic education in the coming quadrennium. In this context it considered a paper describing the contributions of State and Territory governments to school funding. NCEC prioritised the MCEETYA paper, “Measures to Guide School Evaluation, Accountability and Resource Allocation” for both analysis and consultation with DEEWR. NCEC also reviewed its budget planning for 2009 and has agreed to advise ACBC that the NCEC levy be raised from $1.07 to $1.22, a rise of 14%. This rise is to allow NCEC to finance “National Education Revolution” consultancies and project work.

13) Supplementary Assistance Grants for Indigenous Students

There are indications from Canberra that for the coming quadrennium 2009 to 2012, there will be an additional single allocation within General Recurrent Grants (GRG) called Indigenous Supplementary Assistance. This GRG element is likely to replace the present separate Targeted Program grants for Indigenous Supplementary Recurrent Assistance, including the Tutorial Assistance Scheme, In Class Tuition, Home Work Centres and Parent-School Partnerships. Any new payment within GRG, while specified, will not be tied to any specific Commonwealth program. It is probable that State and Territory Commissions will have to agree to targets linked to particular initiatives for Indigenous students. Enabling legislation is expected to be introduced to Parliament before the end of September 2008.

14) VET Funding

CEC is also awaiting advice regarding VET funding for 2009-2012. There is a possibility that this funding too could also be included in GRG payments.

John Kitney
Secretary to the Commission
24 September 2008