THREE HUNDRED AND TENTH MEETING
22 September 2009

SUMMARY REPORT

The 310th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 22 September 2009 at the Sebel Hotel Parramatta. The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Peter Turner.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. Parramatta Diocese Hosts CEC Commission meeting

Most years, the Commission holds one meeting in a Diocese. This year Bishop Kevin Manning DD invited the Commission to his Diocese for its 22 September 2009 meeting. Bishop Kevin attended the meeting for a short time on the Tuesday morning and invited all Commissioners and others to his Cathedral for mass, which he concelebrated with Bishop David Walker DD. The meeting which extended over two days included school visits. The Parramatta Catholic Education Office hosted school visits on both the Tuesday afternoon and on the Wednesday. Commissioners were very impressed with the quality of both the educational activities and facilities seen, including local Building the Education Revolution projects.

2. Keep Them Safe: Reform of Child Protection in NSW

The NSW Department of Community Services (DOCS) has announced regional “Keep Them Safe” forums to explain how new child protection arrangements will be implemented. Arrangements for students at non government schools will be different to those in government schools which will be supported by Child Wellbeing Units. By contrast, the non government sector should have access to an enhanced helpline managed by DOCS.

The NSW Government has offered $60,000 to help address CEC “Keep Them Safe” implementation costs.

CEC through the Catholic Education Social Welfare Coordinating Committee (CESWCC) is planning a Keep Them Safe Implementation Forum for early 2010. This Forum will explore NSW Catholic sector “Keep Them Safe” implementation options for both Catholic schools and Catholic Welfare Agencies. Commissioners noted that those Care and Protection legislative amendments which change the threshold for mandatory reporting to risk of significant harm will be proclaimed at the beginning of Term One 2010.
3. Chaplaincy Program

In 2007 the then Howard Government launched the “Chaplains in Schools” program. 81 NSW Catholic schools currently participate in the Program. On 21 August 2009, DEEWR wrote to CEC seeking views by 30 September 2009 on the possible future of the Chaplaincy Program given that it expires at the end of 2010. In reviewing the Chaplaincy Program, the Department of Education and Employment Workplace Relations (DEEWR) specifically invited reflections on options for supporting “Student Wellbeing”.

While noting earlier reservations about the Program, particularly the use of the term Chaplain, Commissioners agreed that where the Program had been implemented, various pastoral care benefits had occurred and this was welcome. However, this limited Program has also created longer term structural problems and is considered to be unsustainable over the long term.

Commissioners agreed that a longer term strategic framework needs to be developed for both pastoral care and student wellbeing. There needs to be a strengthening of links between the schools and families with a focus on teaching and learning. Any revised program adopted must be capable of general implementation, be a long term strategy and be sustainable. The Commission requested the CEC Executive Director to provide its views to DEEWR as requested.

4. CEC Testing Officer

The Commission established the Catholic Sector Testing Officer position to support and enhance Catholic sector involvement in Basic Skills Testing and more recently the National Assessment Program (NAP), specifically the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). This position is located in NSW DET.

The current occupant Mrs. Brigitte Ellis is about to retire. Given the importance of this role to the NSW Catholic schools sector, the Commission decided to continue funding this position and to replace Mrs. Ellis.

Commissioners made this decision in part because NSW DET has planned 2010 development involving online delivery of SMART2 2010 NAPLAN results. The new CEC Testing Officer will negotiate data access protocols with DET and ensure that the web-based delivery of SMART2 is accessible to all NSW Catholic schools in the same manner and timeframe as for NSW Government schools.

5. NSW BOS Primary Curriculum Committee

Ms. Kate Clancy (Principal Santa Sabina Strathfield) has concluded her role as CEC representative on the NSW BOS Primary Curriculum Committee. The Commission has nominated Mr. Andrew Fraser of the Broken Bay Diocese to the President of NSW BOS to fill the vacancy.

Mr. Fraser is a senior educationist with significant leadership experience. He currently holds the position of Education Officer, Learning Pedagogy and Curriculum with the Broken Bay Catholic Education Office. His current duties involve supporting schools, in particular those schools involved with the Literacy and Numeracy and Low SES National Partnerships.
6. Commission Core Committees

The Commission has a number of Core Committees which provide specialist advice on particular issues. The membership of a number of current nominees concludes on 31 December 2009. Accordingly, the Commission has agreed on a process for filling the positions that are falling vacant.

The following Core Committees have memberships that are falling vacant at this time:

- Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee;
- Education Policy Committee; and,
- Resources Policy Committee.

The Commission Secretary has written to all current members concerned reminding them that their term ceases at 31 December 2009 and advising of the process decided by the Commission for filling their vacancies. Each retiring member has been advised that they are eligible for re-nomination. The Commission Secretary has also written to Diocesan Directors, the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes NSW, the Council of Catholic School Parents and the Association of Catholic School Principals calling for nominations. It is expected that the Commission will make Core Committee appointments later in 2009 for commencement on 1 January 2010.

7. National Partnerships (NPA Agreements)

The Commission received a progress report on the implementation of National Partnerships for Literacy and Numeracy, Low SES and Teacher Quality. National Partnerships for Early Childhood Education and Youth Transitions are also being monitored.

Commissioners noted the following CEC coordinated NPA meetings have taken place:

- 19 August 2009 forum of Congregational Schools;
- 26 August 2009 Diocesan Coordinators forum with both CCER and CLRI as participating agencies;
- 28 August 2009 Literacy and Numeracy NPA SMART analysis workshop; and,
- 8 September 2009 joint CCER and CEC officers meeting.

At the time of the meeting, a second CEC Diocesan NPAs Coordinators forum was planned for 28 September 2009.

Commissioners noted that Minister Firth will announce shortly the NSW State list of low SES schools.

Commissioners observed that a number of IR issues are being addressed in relation to the Teacher Quality NPA. Commissioners agreed that a process for determining Catholic Centres of Excellence needs to be finalised.
8. **Draft Aboriginal Education Program Accountability Framework**

For the 2009 to 2012 Quadrennium, the Australian Government has rolled its Indigenous Education Special Program into General Recurrent Grants (GRG). As a consequence, the General Recurrent Grants for all schools includes an element for Aboriginal education. Whilst making this policy change, the Australian Government has also set Aboriginal education achievement targets.

The Commission considered this policy change in 2008 and recommended to the NSW/ACT Bishops that the CEC retain its Aboriginal education targeted funding program for NSW Catholic systemic schools by quarantining funding from the GRG. This decision established the CEC Aboriginal Student Assistance Program (CASAP). In doing so, the Commission recognised that an Aboriginal Funding Accountability Framework must be developed to monitor progress by NSW Catholic schools system in achieving Commonwealth targets for Indigenous students.

Commissioners reviewed the CEC Draft Accountability Framework and welcomed its quality and thoughtfulness. Commissioners suggested that the Framework should include School Certificate and Higher School Certificate results as well as NAPLAN data. The Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and Education Policy Committee will consider the views of Commissioners and revise the Framework accordingly.

9. **Australian Government’s Funding Review**

The Australian Government has signalled that it intends undertaking a review of school funding. The review is likely to commence in 2010. The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) has commenced consultation processes with State Catholic Education Commissions.

Commissioners agreed that the Catholic schools sector welcomes full transparency on funding matters. The DEEWR Financial Questionnaire already validly discloses this financial data. However, DEEWR does not have a comparable system for disclosing the funding of government schools, which can only be achieved with proxy measures and apportionment of costs. This may result in non comparability of data between sectors and may result in a misleading funding debate.

Commissioners noted that the NCEC is planning a Forum of Diocesan Directors to be held in the first half of 2010. Topics are being developed. Arguments need to be prepared and a series of spokespersons identified to ensure a consistent and strong communications strategy is in place.
10. **ACARA National Curriculum**

ACARA has commenced consultation processes on the development of a national curriculum with Systems Authorities such as the CEC and other education peak bodies. ACARA has commenced issuing Position Papers and requesting bodies such as the CEC to respond within a given timeframe.

Anticipating this approach, the Commission at its 17 December 2008 meeting empowered the Executive Director to establish CEC National Curriculum Reference Groups as required, under the guidance of the Education Policy Committee, to provide feedback on national curriculum matters.

These Reference Groups are being sourced from:

- Catholic Secondary Schools Association (CSSA) – in respect of Secondary School matters; and,
- CEC K – 6 Forums – in respect of Primary School matters.

Commissioners considered the ACARA position paper *National Curriculum in the Senior Secondary Years*. Commissioners noted that the ACARA curriculum list is not complete but represents a priority list only.

Commissioners authorised the Executive Director to respond this latest Position paper.

11. **NAPLAN Outcomes**

NSW NAPLAN school reports (SMART) were available for download from 11 September 2009. Reports to parents were distributed by schools from Monday 14 September 2009. NSW is almost always one of the highest ranked in the top three jurisdictions, with ACT and Victoria, on all measures. NSW is also almost always significantly above the remaining jurisdictions and the Australian average.

Commissioners welcomed the excellent results achieved by NSW schools generally in the NAPLAN results. It was also noted that NSW Catholic schools achieved better than the average NSW results.

Commissioners were advised that the CEC is planning a Forum in late October 2009 of Diocesan officers responsible for analysing 2009 data. Commissioners noted that Dr. John DeCourcy plans to expand his HSC analyses to correlate HSC outcomes with NAPLAN results.

12. **Copyright**

Commissioners noted and discussed copyright issues impacting NSW Catholic schools. The work of the MCEECDYA Copyright Advisory Group was reviewed and endorsed. It was noted that the CEC will host a NCEC copyright forum on 27 October 2009.
13. **NCEC and State CECs**

Commissioners discussed the workload of the NCEC and the division of responsibilities between the NCEC and its State counterparts. Commissioners considered that present arrangements work well in that the NCEC draws on expertise from the State CECs for particular issues. Commissioners noted with agreement the establishment of the following NCEC groups, namely, Aboriginal and Torres Islander Advisory Group, and Early Childhood Education and Care Working Party.

The Executive Director advised that currently there is no critical workload or priority issues for CEC arising from work undertaken on behalf of the NCEC. Also there have been no complaints from the NCEC about support provided by CEC. Further, there have been no major redirections of resources away from CEC priorities in order to undertake NCEC work. There is a good working relationship between the two bodies.

Commissioners considered that a systematic approach is required to clarify the division of responsibilities between the NCEC and State CECs so as to maximise efficiency and avoid duplication.

14. **Congregio De Institutione Catholica Circular Letter**

Commissioners discussed the recent circular letter on the role of Catholic schools forwarded by the Congegatio De Institutione Catholica of the Vatican. Commissioners noted that this letter contains important advice on Parent choice, rights of the child and the importance of faith formation of young people in Catholic schools. Commissioners welcomed the conversation that the circulating letter elicits and agreed to distribute it to NSW Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities, Congregational schools and peak Catholic bodies.

15. **VET in Schools Funding Agreement 2009**

The VET in Schools Program Funding Agreement 2009 is a once-off extension of the 2004-8 quadrennial VET funding agreement for schools. It has been provided to CEC for signature, after which funding totalling $1,583,937.65 ex GST will flow to dioceses in two payments to support VET in Schools. These funds must be spent by year’s end and reported financially against the major elements of the VET in Schools Funding Agreement.

The CEC has written to NSW DET requesting details of 2010 VET in schools funding arrangements in the context of the new COAG VET National Partnership.

16. **Financial Health Assessment**

The Commission endorsed the Executive Director’s response on behalf of the NSW Catholic Schools System that the System will guarantee the financial viability of those system schools judged by DEEWR to be in categories 2 and 3 of its financial health assessment framework.

John Kitney  
**Secretary to the Commission**  
13 October 2009