The 311th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 21 October 2009 in the Clancy/ Gilroy Rooms of the Polding Centre. The meeting was chaired by Bishop Anthony Fisher OP DD.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. **CEC 2010 WorkPlan**

   The Commission considered and approved the CEC 2010 WorkPlan, which outlines the CEC’s Vision, Mission, Values and strategic objectives for 2010. This document will now go to the NSW/ACT Bishops for approval. It will then be made available on the CEC public website, probably by mid November 2009.

   The WorkPlan is an important document for the CEC Secretariat and the Commission. It guides the agenda of the Commission and work of the CEC Secretariat. Commissioners consider that the Vision, Mission and Values of the CEC are the prisms through which all matters discussed at the Commission should be viewed.

   The WorkPlan is not fixed in any way. New issues are dealt with flexibly and CEC Secretariat resources are redirected to changed priorities as necessary. This happened in 2009. National Partnerships and Building the Education Revolution were programs developed by the Australian Government after the CEC 2009 WorkPlan was approved by the Bishops.

   Routinely during the year, the Commission considers progress reports on strategic objectives included in its WorkPlan. CEC’s annual report is formatted so that the reader may understand the work of the CEC in terms of its key accountabilities.

2. **CEC 2010 Budget**

   The Commission considered and approved the CEC 2010 Budget. The Budget included six additional staff, accommodation and associated expenses to manage the expanded capital program, under the Commonwealth’s Building the Education Revolution (BER), on behalf of the Catholic Block Grant Authority NSW. These additional temporary costs will be recouped through the administrative allocations provided by the Australian Government as part of the new programs.

   The CEC 2010 Budget will now be presented to the NSW/ACT Bishops for approval.
3. **NSW State Low SES National Partnership Funding**

The Commission welcomed the NSW State supplementary *Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities National Partnership Program*, which will deliver approximately $15 million to the NSW Catholic schools sector over seven years. The Commission also welcomed the NSW Government’s decision to ‘de-couple’ the Commonwealth and State Low SES National Partnership funds, noting that this decision allows the Commission to expand the list of targeted NSW Catholic schools with the use of NSW State funds. This Program is in addition to the Commonwealth Program, which will fund 39 NSW Catholic schools until 2013. The Commission noted that schools funded under the NSW State Low SES NP must comply with all of the Commonwealth’s accountabilities and reporting requirements.

The Commission approved a funding methodology, which aims at producing an equitable distribution of funds across the NSW Catholic schools sector by:

- expanding the number of low SES schools that can be targeted for funding from the NSW State supplementary Low SES NP Program;
- broadening the reach of the Program across the Dioceses; and,
- allowing local decisions to be made on priority schools.

The CEC Executive Director was authorised to finalise contractual arrangements with the NSW Government by the end of October 2009.

4. **Teacher Quality National Partnership**

The Commission noted that the Teacher Quality National Partnership involves over 200 programs for NSW Catholic schools with total facilitation funding for CEC of about $6.0 million over four years. In addition, there are potentially substantial amounts of reward funding available to CEC in 2012 and 2013. However, the NSW Government is yet to determine how the reward funds will be allocated. The Commission also noted the close liaison occurring between the CEC and the CCER on the industrial implications of this Partnership.

The National Partnership State Steering Committee met on 16 October 2009 to finalise the Cross Sectoral Teacher Quality Plan. Some changes to the Catholic Sector Sub Plan occurred. This NSW State Plan is confidential until approved by the Deputy Prime Minister.

5. **NSW Community Languages Schools Advisory Board: CEC Nomination**

The Commission considered a request from the NSW Department of Education and Training to nominate a suitable candidate for appointment to the NSW Community Languages Schools Advisory Board. The Commission has submitted a nomination, which is confidential until considered by the NSW Minister for Education and Training.
6. **2010 LNSLN Program**

The Australian Government’s Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs (LNSLN) Program administered under the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*, provides funding for three (3) targeted programs:

- CEC’s Literacy and Numeracy Program;
- Special Education Program including Special Schools; and,
- Students With Disabilities [SWD] per capita funding.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has not yet confirmed estimates for 2010. Nevertheless, the Commission has approved program allocations for 2010, subject to confirmation by DEEWR. This was done to provide some planning certainty across the NSW Catholic schools sector.

7. **Commission Core Committees**

At its meeting on 22 September 2009, the Commission decided on a process for filling positions on certain Core Committees that are falling vacant on 31 December 2009. The Commission Secretary has called for nominations for impending vacancies on the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee, Education Policy Committee and Resources Policy Committee with a closing date of 30 October 2009. The Commission at this meeting appointed a sub committee to review nominations with the task of making recommendations for appointments to the 17 November 2009 Commission meeting.

8. **NSW Education Act Amendments: Attendance**

Commissioners welcomed the proposed amendments to the NSW Education Act. All amendments are aimed at improving safeguards for the wellbeing of students. It was noted, however, that there are now three statutory information sharing obligations involving schools in NSW:

- **Education Act Part 5A**, in respect of students who pose a risk of harm;
- **Education Act Section 22A**, in respect of students not attending school; and
- **Children Legislation Amendment Act 16A**, in respect of students who may be at a risk of harm.

The Section 22A amendments provide for an exchange of information so that school reporting officers may have a clearer picture of the behaviour, as well as the needs, of individual students. Under the amendments, the NSW Minister for Education and Training and the Director General of NSW DET are being given greater powers over students across all school sectors.

Commissioners continue to be concerned that while increased responsibilities are being placed on School Principals, their access to information on an individual student in respect of whom they have reporting obligations may be limited and not necessarily timely. Moreover, Catholic School Principals do not have access to the same level of support as Government School Principals. In particular, the NSW Catholic schools sector does not have access to Home School Liaison Officers. These concerns are being raised at the highest levels of Government.
9. **ACARA Reporting Requirements for Schools**

Commissioners noted the new ACARA financial and educational accountability requirements for individual schools. Commissioners also noted that the CEC Secretariat has successfully negotiated an alignment of reporting requirements which involves a common reporting template for both the Australian and NSW Government accountability requirements.

Commissioners were advised that a workshop of Diocesan officers was held on 8 October 2009. A workshop for Congregational schools is planned for 10 November 2009. These workshops aim at achieving a common understanding of minimum reporting requirements for the purpose of ensuring compliance across all NSW Catholic schools.

Commissioners noted that school annual reports must be available to the public by June in relation to the previous year. Commissioners agreed that it is most desirable for both the Australian and NSW Government’s reporting requirements to be satisfied through the one ACARA website process.

10. **Australian Government Quality Teacher Program (AGQTP)**

Commissioners noted that Australian Government Quality Teacher Program (AGQTP) will continue for non government schools only for the period 2010 to 2013. Commissioners also noted that:

- funding will be based on the percentage of student enrolments across Catholic and Independent Schools; and,
- AGQTP priority areas will be aligned with the objectives of the Quality Teacher National Partnership (see 4 above).

Commissioners were advised that annual AGQTP activity plans will continue to be required. Commissioners also noted that DEEWR intends to simplify reporting requirements.

The Commission authorised the Executive Director to finalise the 2010 to 2013 AGQTP agreement, once funding guidelines become available.

11. **Keep Them Safe Reforms**

Commissioners noted a progress report on the implementation of the *Keep Them Safe* reforms to child protection procedures in NSW. The NSW Government’s Regional Engagement Tour has already commenced with implementation of key responsibilities and changed reporting requirements to commence progressively from 1 January 2010. Commissioners also noted that the formal offer of a $60,000 grant to assist NSW Catholic schools implement the *Keep Them Safe* agenda has now been received from the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Commissioners expressed concern that detail on the functioning of the proposed enhanced help line is not yet available to the non government schools sector. Commissioners continue to take the view that all schools need to be supported similarly in order for the NSW Government’s Keep Them Safe agenda to be effective.
Commissioners understand that Child Wellbeing Units are effectively triage teams. Child Wellbeing Units are also an excellent means of gathering comprehensive information from a range of sources on an individual student at risk.

Commissioners expressed the view that the following issues need to be addressed for NSW Catholic schools to effectively implement the Keep Them Safe reform agenda:

- clear guidelines on how to deal with the assessment of significant harm;
- training on how to identify and deal with significant harm matters;
- application of Catholic values to be an integral part of the process of dealing with students at risk;
- recognition that all Principals have a shared level of responsibility for students under their care;
- common care and support structures for all students; and,
- school sectors to be provided with the same support structures to ensure:
  - timely and cross agency information on a student is available to all Principals;
  - each Principal has adequate support structures to provide him/her with advice on a given situation; and,
  - once identified as being at risk, each student has high quality help, irrespective of his/her economic circumstances or school of enrolment.

These concerns are being raised at the highest levels of Government.

12. **NSW Board of Studies**

On 6 October 2009, the President of the NSW Board of Studies, Tom Alegounarias announced the appointment of Carol Taylor to the position of Chief Executive, replacing the recently retired John Bennett. Carol first came to work in the Board’s Assessment Unit in 1990. Since then she has been Manager of Assessment Branch, Director, Assessment and Reporting, Director, Assessment and Examinations and more recently Director, Curriculum and Assessment. Carol brings to the position of Chief Executive nearly 20 years of senior management experience. She is well known and well respected across Catholic schools. The Commission welcomes her appointment.

13. **Overseas Students**

The CEC is the registered CRICOS (Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students) provider of schooling to overseas students for all systemic schools in NSW and most Congregational schools. CEC has been advised by the NSW Vocational Education & Training Accreditation Board (VETAB) of changes in the administration of the VET Act. The effect of these changes is to enforce a new registration condition relating to a maximum enrolment of overseas students by each provider. The CEC, as the registered CRICOS provider, has an approved maximum level of 820 overseas student enrolments. At present our total enrolments stand at around 550. The NSW Minister for Education and Training has requested VETAB to audit, within the next 12 months, every NSW registered training organisation approved to deliver vocational education and training to overseas students. VETAB is yet to provide details of the audit process, so how this may impact individual schools is not yet known.
There have also been amendments to the Commonwealth *Education Services for Overseas Students* (ESOS) *Act*. The CEC will be required to re-register as a CRICOS provider by 31 December 2010. Full details of the registration process in terms of the undertakings that providers will be required to accept are yet to be advised.

14. **New Remote Communities National Partnership**

The Commonwealth has released information on a proposed new National Partnership for Remote Communities. To date, 29 communities have been identified; 15 in the Northern Territory, 6 in Western Australia, 6 in Queensland, 2 in South Australia and 2 in NSW. The NSW communities are Walgett and Wilcannia. The aim of the proposed new National Partnership is to build infrastructure, community services and associated facilities. The challenging initial task is to develop baseline data on education and training and submit a report to DEEWR by 13 November 2009.

15. **CEC Website**

The CEC has launched a new public website. The CEC considers that its website is a very important portal for disseminating vital education information and providing interactive services for Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities and Congregational schools as well as other catholic organisations and the general public. Confidential communications with accredited Catholic agencies and educationists will be via a secure portal called MyCEC.

John Kitney

**Secretary to the Commission**

28 October 2009
Catholic Block Grant Authority NSW (CBGA) Briefing to the Commission

BER UPDATE GENERAL

With many projects nearing completion, the CBGA is turning its attention to Completion Certificates, Accountants Certificates and Recognition Ceremonies. Briefing session on the electronic system devised to provide the required certificates is being organised for the end of October 2009.

NATIONAL SCHOOL PRIDE ELEMENT (NSP)

The NSP requires 85% of schools to have completed their projects by the end of December 2009, with the balance to complete by 1 February 2010. To date, the CBGA has paid out $35 million (40%) of the $86 million allocated to this Program.

P21 ELEMENT

The Commission noted that there have been actual construction starts in 128 schools, 28% of schools and that the CBGA has to date paid out $43 million in expenditure claims for projects.

SECONDARY SCIENCE AND LANGUAGE CENTRES ELEMENT

The Science and Language Centres Program (29 schools) requires projects to be completed with 12 months of approval. All projects are required to be activated by the end of October 2009 for completion by 30 June 2010. As at mid October, only 6 projects had been activated and drawing down funds.

DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION (DER)

DER has reached the stage where two Rounds of computer purchases have been funded. The Rounds were to bring each secondary school with Years 9-12 to a ratio of 2 students per computer.

All Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities and Congregational schools have received their full allocation of Infrastructure Support Funding to assist the physical introduction of the already purchased computers and future purchases to achieve the 1:1 ratio, and to allow for some replacement of computers beyond 2011. In order to receive the full Infrastructure Support Funding, all school authorities are required to submit via the CBGA to DEEWR an implementation plan and progress report on the computers received for the 2:1 ratio, outlining the use of the infrastructure funding and the plan for moving the schools to the 1:1 ratio.
TRADE TRAINING CENTRES

The NSW Catholic schools sector (under the administration of the CBGA) has seven Trade Training Centres from Round One (Phases One and Two) with contract signed and building program underway or near to starting. Six were approved in Phase Two, with Southern Cross Catholic Vocational College, Burwood approved in Phase One. Catholic schools are also involved with clusters where non-CBGA schools are the lead school. Round Two applications closed early June 2009 with no approvals yet announced.

DEEWR has advised that it will not be approving the Round Two applications until all contracts nationally for Round One (Phase Two) have been signed. Eight applications with Catholic schools as the lead schools were submitted in Round Two. The value of submissions was $37 million and involves 25 Catholic secondary schools. DEEWR has not advised when a Round 3 will open. DEEWR is, however, revising the TTC Application Form and Guidelines for Round 3.

GENERAL CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAM

The State Priority Committee has reviewed capital grant applications for the 2009 Round. The CBGA Delegate Bishop Anthony Fisher OP DD has submitted recommendations to the Deputy Prime Minister through DEEWR. These recommendations are confidential. It is expected that the Deputy Prime Minister will announce government decisions before the end of 2009.

John Kitney
Secretary to the Commission

28 October 2009