CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, NEW SOUTH WALES

THREE HUNDRED AND NINETEENTH MEETING
18 August 2010

SUMMARY REPORT

The 319th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 18 August 2010 in the Clancy/Gilroy Rooms of the Polding Centre. The meeting was chaired by Bishop Anthony Fisher OP.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. Report of Bishop Anthony Fisher OP

Bishop Anthony Fisher OP and Dr. Brian Croke met with the Hon. Verity Firth, NSW Minister for Education and Training on 27 July 2010 as part of their regular discussions. Minister Firth gave her agreement for NSW DET officials to brief the CEC Secretariat on the provision of the Kindergarten minus 1 classes in NSW government schools and the evaluation of the Ethics Program in NSW government schools. In addition, she agreed to convene a cross departmental and sectoral meeting on bushfire emergency management by NSW schools generally. The Commission will consider these matters in due course and how they apply to the NSW Catholic schools sector.

2. 2009 Brother John Taylor Award

On 29 July 2010, Bishop Anthony Fisher OP presented the 2009 Brother John Taylor Award to Tricia Maidens Principal of Xavier Catholic College, Llandillo. Tricia Maidens has built a College culture which is of the highest quality in terms of Catholic teaching, ethical behaviour and academic success, bringing out the best in her students and paying particular attention to special needs students. She has exerted strong influence and leadership among her fellow-Principals across NSW. Tricia Maidens represents an outstanding success story in Catholic education and she is congratulated. She stands well in the company of past winners such as Michael Addicoat, Peter Turner, Brother Michael Flanagan fms, and Brother Jude Butcher cfc.

3. Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership

Minister Verity Firth has announced a small grant from the Federal Government's Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership (YAAT) to allow Years 9 and 10 students enrolled in NSW Catholic schools to undertake Externally Delivered VET (TAFE). A $99,000 TVET grant has been allocated to NSW Catholic Schools to support Stage 5 VET.
The DET Skills Strategy Unit, in providing the funding, has advised that it must be committed or spent in 2010 and involve existing NSW Board of Studies Developed or Endorsed dual accredited VET courses. No new courses will be endorsed by the NSW BOS for 2010.

The Commission approved participation in the Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership. 2010 funds will be distributed only to those Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities and Congregational schools committing to implement Stage 5 VET activities in second semester 2010 as agreed with the NSW Education Minister and in proportion to their Stage 5 VET numbers.

4. **Special Education**

Commissioners considered a progress report from the CEC Special Education Working Party on:

- implementation of the Individual Planning process across Diocesan and Congregational schools;
- proposals for a validation process to occur each year in order to ensure that the level of need is consistently determined within and across schools; and,
- options for determining a funding formula for the 2013 Quadrennium.

Commissioners commended the Working Party for its excellent work. Implementation of Individual Planning will occur over 2010 to 2012. There will be a three level validation process firstly at the school level with a Principal certification, then a review at the Diocesan level followed at the CEC level by an appropriate review processes.

Also four funding models were identified to more accurately target students with low to high needs of support and with a loading for remoteness and for secondary schools.

Commissioners requested the Education Policy Committee to oversight IP implementation and develop a communications strategy. It was also agreed that a third Inter-Diocesan Special Education Forum be held in Term 2 2011. Modelling of funding options will occur during 2011 for implementation in 2013.

5. **CEC Languages Program**

Commissioners discussed the formula for distributing School Languages funds for 2011 and 2012. Commissioners agreed to quarantine $75,000 each year to fund two schools teaching Aboriginal languages in the Armidale and Lismore Dioceses. The balance of Languages funding will be distributed according to the current LOTE formula, pending a review for the 2013 Quadrennium.

Commissioners also discussed the desirability of having the Australian Government amalgamate the LOTE and NALSSP Programs into a single Languages Program noting that this has been the long term policy objective of both the CEC and the NCEC since 2007. In addition, Commissioners discussed the need to align emerging Australian Curriculum (ACARA) requirements for the teaching of languages with available government funding.

Commissioners commended the innovative online delivery of languages study to students, noting the excellent service provided by the Lismore Catholic Education Office. Commissioners agreed that this concept should be adopted by other Dioceses.
6. **Australian Government Funding Review**

The ‘Gonski Review’ of School Funding is proceeding. The NCEC is developing the parameters for its submission in consultation with all local CECs. Data is being provided to a Melbourne consultancy firm for detailed funding model development. An NCEC reference group has been established for this project, including the CEC’s Crichton Smith.

Commissioners were appreciative that the Funding Review is focusing on the needs of schools as well as sectors, consistent with the Australian Government’s approach to addressing social disadvantage through education.

7. **CEC/CCRESS Forum**

Commissioners noted the proposed program for the CEC/CCRESS Forum (which has now been deferred until early 2011) and agreed with the format. The Program will provide opportunities to:

- continue local Diocesan discussions and collaborations;
- consider recent research findings by Dr. Shukri Sanber of the Australian Catholic University into RE and SRE practices; and,
- identify enablers and barriers around RE and SRE.

Commissioners noted that Dr Sanber’s paper will be a stimulus for Forum discussion and it is not intended to limit or constrict Forum outcomes.

8. **MySchool Reporting of Financial Data**

Commissioners noted the efforts made by NSW Catholic system schools to prepare financial data for submission to ACARA. ACARA has established a Financial Reporting Advisory Committee including NCEC and a Chartered Accounting Firm to guide it in ensuring that comparable financial data is reported for all Australian schools on the MySchool website. Public release of the financial data is expected on 3 December 2010.

CEC developed a template for Dioceses with assistance from Diocesan financial staff, ensuring consistency and comparability of data. CEC’s Resources Policy Committee is assisting in developing communication strategies to assist Bishops, Dioceses, Principals and other Catholic stakeholders in explaining the financial data and answering questions on comparisons among schools and the inevitable preparation of league tables by the media.

ACARA is making a direct approach to Congregational schools for access to Financial Questionnaire data provided directly by the Congregational schools to DEEWR.

9. **Agreements Signed**

The Commission endorsed the following agreements entered into by the CEC:

- MOU 2010 – 2012 Between NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water; and,
- 2011 – 2013 AGQTP Funding Agreement with DEEWR.
10. **ACARA Senior Secondary Curriculum**

The NSW Board of Studies has developed a program of consultations for the draft senior secondary years Australian curriculum for English, mathematics, science and history. The Board’s consultation processes will proceed until end September 2010. The consultation process will include the opportunity for teachers to participate in regional consultation meetings during August 2010. In addition, the CEC is represented at stakeholder meetings as follows: English – Ellen McGovern, Sydney; History – Tony McArthur, CECNSW; Mathematics – Yvonne Head, Lismore; Science – Anna Davis, Sydney

11. **NSW Attendance Working Party**

In response to a CEC request, Minister Verity Firth established a NSW Cross Sector Attendance Working Party to deal with the implementation of new school attendance requirements. The Minister has now approved the delegation to Principals in all sectors of the power to approve up to 50 school days exemption from attendance at school. Also new NSW Attendance Register Codes have been agreed. NSW DET will provide Guidelines for government schools regarding exemptions for enrolment and attendance at schools and these can be customised by Catholic school authorities. Meanwhile, the CEC will host a workshop for Diocesan Compliance Contacts on 20 September 2010 to explore implementation of the new school Attendance requirements. A separate workshop for Congregational schools will be provided in Term 4 2010.

12. **Professor Gerald Grace Visit**

On 6 August 2010 Professor Gerald Grace, Director of the Centre for Research and Development in Catholic Education (CRDCE) at the University of London, Institute of Education, visited the CEC. He had been in Sydney to speak at the ACU Leadership Conference. It was an opportunity to brief him in more detail on the current work of the CEC than was possible during his previous visit in 2009. Professor Grace discussed international comparisons of Catholic schools, the use of statistics in monitoring and planning Catholic education and the challenges facing research and writing on Catholic schools.

13. **Australian Catholic Historical Society**

Dr. Brian Croke and Crichton Smith gave a presentation to the Australian Catholic Historical Society in Sydney on 15 August 2010 entitled ‘Extending the Perspective on Australian Catholic Education’ which focussed on (1) new opportunities and technologies for collecting and using historical photographs of Catholic schools and schooling; and (2) how historical statistics can help illuminate the history of Catholic schooling. The CEC has recently acquired (gratis!) from the Sydney Office of the Australian Bureau of Statistics a library of statistical reports and publications back to the 1840s. These volumes contain significant historical data on Australian Catholic schooling and Religion.

John Kitney  
**Secretary to the Commission**  
14 September 2010
Catholic Block Grant Authority NSW (CBGA) Briefing to the Commission

The Commission noted the briefing from the CBGA:

Capital Program

The State Priority Committee (SPC) has completed its recommendations for the 2010 application round. The CBGA Secretariat is working through final costings and adjustments with project proponents. The CBGA will table recommendations for consideration at the 22 September 2010 Commission meeting.

The current Government and the Opposition have committed to extending the current 2009-2012 quadrennium by one year to include 2013. The CBGA will request clarification from DEEWR of the implications of this commitment for the Capital Program.

Funding beyond this quadrennium will be subject to the decisions of any new Government in the light of recommendations from the Funding Review (Gonski).

Federal BER Taskforce

The BER Taskforce issued an interim report at the end of July 2010. The Taskforce advised that it developed a model to define what it thinks the community perceives as a reasonable definition of value for money. The Taskforce believes that value for money involves three criteria: quality (is the building fit for purpose); time (has the project been delivered in accordance with agreed timeframes); and cost (has the project come in on budget and relative to historical cost benchmarks). For any project it is apparent there is a necessary balance between quality, time and cost.

The Taskforce developed a cost analysis model which contains the details from over 400 BER P21 projects from all over the country. Over the next three months, the Taskforce will enter an additional 600 projects into the database.

The Taskforce’s assessment is that where education authorities have had the capacity to implement an extended ‘business as usual’ procurement and delivery model, and where principals’ and parents’ views have been carefully considered in project decisions, and where available flexibility in the BER Program Guidelines has been taken, schools have secured higher quality educational infrastructure outcomes and better value for money.

The Taskforce’s analysis suggests BER P21 is delivering quality infrastructure within the timeframe constraints set. For some of the 22 education authorities, project costs are materially higher than would have been obtained pre-BER in a business as usual environment.

Commissioners noted that the BER Taskforce interim report appears to be a reasonable summation in the time available of the implementation of BER. There appear to be no immediate implications for the CBGA apart from the requirement to provide school specific project cost data for the next stage of the analysis by the Taskforce.

Commissioners noted that the Taskforce will continue to gather and analyse BER and pre-BER project data to enable it to have a more definitive view on ‘value for money’ for the BER program as a whole for inclusion in the Review’s November 2010 report.
BER External Reviews

The CBGA has met its commitments to provide information to the NSW Upper House BER Inquiry, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and the BER Implementation Taskforce (Orgill Review).

The CBGA appreciates the cooperation from all diocesan education offices and schools in providing the extensive information required at short notice.

Trade Training Centres

Following submissions from BGAs across Australia, DEEWR has proposed significant changes in the administration of Trade Training Centres (TTCS) and the assessment and selection of projects for funding. Rather than submissions being made through a national assessment process, each education authority (including BGAs) would be given an annual allocation and would prioritise and select projects for funding.

The proposed policy change emerged just before the election shutdown and has no status without Ministerial approval. The policy will be considered by the Catholic BGAs nationally (with NCEC) before a response is made to DEEWR after the Election.

John Kitney
Secretary to the Commission
14 September 2010