SUMMARY REPORT

The 320th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 22 September 2010 at the John Paul II Catholic College in Coffs Harbour. The meeting was chaired by Bishop Anthony Fisher op.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. **New Guidelines: Responding to Children and Young People with Sexual Behaviour Problems**

The Commission approved two publications, subject to some minor editorial comments:


Both *The Guide* and *The Support Manual* will only be made available in the context of the CEC forum / workshop processes and both documents will only be made available online to Catholic personnel subject to appropriate access protocols and restrictions being agreed. In addition, some concise support/training materials will be produced as part of planned workshop/forum processes. Forums for Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities and Congregational schools are scheduled to be held in Term 4 this year.

2. **Vacancies: Education Policy and Resources Policy Committees**

The Education Policy Committee and Resources Policy Committee are Core Committees of the Commission. Membership is expert and not representative. These Core Committees provide strategic advice to the Commission on many issues relating to the management and financing of NSW Catholic schools. Membership is on rotation and the terms of four (4) members of each of the Committees cease on 31 December 2010. The Commission has decided to call for nominations from Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities, Congregational Schools, Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes NSW, Council of Catholic School Parents NSW and the Association of Catholic School Principals NSW. Nominations close on 29 October 2010.
3. **2009 CEC Annual Report**

The Commission approved the 2009 CEC Annual Report. It will shortly be forwarded to the NSW/ACT Bishops and be made available on the CEC public website.

4. **Keep Them Safe: Child Protection Reforms**

The joint CEC and Catholic Social Services NSW Keep Them Safe implementation forum was held on 17 August 2010. The forum theme was: “Connecting Catholic Agencies to Promote Child Wellbeing In The Context of Keep Them Safe”. Some 130 representatives, including School Principals, Diocesan Education Office staff, CentaCare and CatholicCare staff attended. The NSW Minister for Community Services Linda Burney addressed the Forum.

The forum distilled its discussion of Catholic sector KTS implementation challenges into five areas for Catholic sector multi-agency action, being:

- Regular Catholic sector inter-agency meetings;
- Sharing of advice/information between Catholic schools and Catholic welfare agencies;
- Development by Catholic Social Services NSW of relevant databases and resources;
- Regular local meetings between Catholic School Principals and Heads of Catholic Welfare services; and,
- Mapping and publication of available Catholic Sector Services.

Commissioners noted that Minister Burney has agreed that the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) will develop options for NGOs to record and share information on children who do not meet the new KTS reporting threshold. DPC will also provide advice on the capacity for non-government schools to commence legal proceedings in respect of chronic school non-attendance by children against their parents. Minister Burney also agreed on the need for more guidance on when chronic non-attendance meets the threshold for mandatory reporting.

The Commission considered the outcomes of the Catholic sector KTS Forum and the commitments by the NSW government. The CEC will develop a web based portal both to assist NSW Catholic School Principals better understand their KTS responsibilities and where to access appropriate Catholic Welfare support services. This Portal will be developed during 2011.

5. **2007 Bishops’ Statement Crossroads**

The Commission has approved a review project to determine how the Crossroads agenda has been implemented in NSW Catholic schools. This Study will also identify what successful learnings and strategies can be shared across schools. This is a multi stage review and will take at least twelve months. The project will commence with a focused implementation survey of Dioceses and CLRI in Term 4 2010.
6. **Australian Government Funding Review**

The ‘Gonski Review’ of School Funding is proceeding. The Commission received a progress report on the development of the Australia wide NCEC schools submission to the Federal Review Panel. The NCEC has carriage of this important task in consultation with State based Catholic Education Commissions. The NCEC has decided to forward their submission in two parts. Part A will address the aims and nature of Catholic education. Part B will propose a funding model. The NCEC is being assisted by a Melbourne consultancy firm. The Part A submission will be provided to the Review Panel prior to the NCEC meeting with the Panel scheduled for November 2010.

7. **Early Kindergarten Classes**

As agreed with Minister Firth, CEC Secretariat staff met with senior NSW DET Officers to be briefed on K minus 1 classes operating in a number of government schools. The Director General of NSW DET is currently directing DET Regional Directors to terminate arrangements for the provision of K minus 1 classes by government schools. CEC is seeking written confirmation of this advice from NSW DET.

8. **MySchool Reporting of Financial Data**

Commissioners noted that the collection and submission of financial information for all NSW schools is largely complete, although a few technical issues are yet to be resolved. One or two changes in reporting will require input from Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities and schools, together with the resubmission of the adjusted information by the CEC. Commissioners agreed that the communication strategies are best organised and resourced at local level rather than centrally developed templates or resources materials. Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities are encouraged to share information in order to better address questions about the financial resources of particular schools.

Commissioners expressed concerns about how ICSEA scores are constructed, endorsed and understood for each school. Commissioners noted that CEC has given presentations to some Dioceses on both school financial data and ICSEA issues. CEC will also provide detailed explanations of ICSEA to Diocesan Catholic schools Authorities and Congregational schools.

9. **NSW State Elections 2011**

Commissioners considered that it is essential that CEC submits proposals to both the NSW Government and Opposition on education issues in the lead up to the March 2011 State election. The seven point priority list put forward by the Resources Policy Committee was supported.

Commissioners were particularly concerned about access to VET. It was noted that Catholic schools must pay TAFE for courses for their students and as a consequence the participation rate by Catholic schools does not match student need.

Commissioners also agreed that funding for Students with Special Learning Needs enrolled in Catholic schools is inadequate.

The Commission will develop submissions on the funding needs of Catholic schools to be submitted to the major political parties in the lead up to the March 2011 State election.
10. **Bushfire Emergency Response**

On 27 July 2010, the Executive Director outlined to the NSW Education Minister the Commission’s concerns regarding the use of the CEC as a conduit for emergency communications to NSW Catholic schools. Minister Firth offered to organise a cross sectoral and departmental meeting to address concerns. This occurred on 2 September 2010. This meeting firmed the government’s resolve to use the CEC as its portal for communicating with all NSW Catholic schools about emergency declarations. One change is that the issuing of a catastrophic notice does not automatically require an evacuation of any particular school. Each school will be required to consult with local authorities to determine appropriate local action.

Representatives from all Dioceses attended a CEC forum on emergency communications in Sydney on 8 September 2010. The forum enabled attendees to engage with the context of the CEC’s emergency communications system, the audit and risk implications of the communications system, the Rural Fire Services’ organizational structures together with the different responsibilities of Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities and schools. Catholic Church Insurances representatives also attended the forum.

Commissioners noted the communications system being developed by the CEC to manage its emergency communications with Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities. Commissioners also noted the responsibilities of both the CEC and Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities in managing emergency notifications to NSW Catholic schools. Commissioners noted that the CEC will be testing its communications system in the first half of October 2010. Diocesan representatives will be involved.

11. **Student Wellbeing Programs**

The commission approved allocations to Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities for the State funded FY2010-2011 Student Wellbeing programs. This fiscal year composite program encompasses 4 programs: NSW Drug Education [salary component], National Schools Drug Education Strategy [NSDES], Drug Education Forums and Values Education.

12. **Reporting School Incidents to NSW Police**

Commissioners considered the NSW DET’s Incident Reporting Policy. This DET advice has been developed in response to coronial recommendations. The Commission requested further information on this matter.

13. **Chaplaincy Program: Possible Litigation**

During the recent Federal Election both the Government and Opposition committed the Australian Government to the continuation of the Chaplaincy Program for Schools. On 5 September 2010, the Australian Council of State School Organisations announced its intention to explore a High Court challenge to the Chaplaincy Program. ACSSO was party to the so-called ‘DOGS’ case in the 1970s. Given the potential for any such challenge to re-open the issues canvassed in the 1981 High Court ‘DOGS’ Judgment – (Attorney – General (VIC), Ex Rel Black V Commonwealth (“DOGS case”)[1981] HCA 2 (1981 ) 146 CIR 559 ( 2 February 1981) CEC will monitor the development of any litigation focused on the Chaplaincy Program.
14. New Freedom of Information Legislation: Possible Implications

Around Australia Governments are replacing existing Freedom of Information (FOI) laws with a new generation of ‘Government Information and Public Access’ statutes which generally reverse the onus of disclosure, that is, all government information should be public. The new NSW law, ‘Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009’ came into force on 1st July 2010. This new legislation is referred to as the ‘GIPA’ Act/process. All Catholic agencies will need to familiarise themselves with GIPA requirements as these will, over time, impact the production and management of data and documents by Catholic Agencies.

Essentially GIPA means that:

- The public/ media will have greater access to Catholic Agency information held by Government Departments, Agencies and Statutory Boards (Grants to Catholic schools, school inspection reports etc).
- The public/ media will have a new access right to information held by Catholic Agencies where that information was developed pursuant to a contractual service agreement with Government.

CEC is seeking further advice on ‘GIPA’ implementation issues. Briefings on ‘GIPA’ practice issues for Catholic school authorities will be provided as the new statutory requirements are clarified.

15. Winners Future Leaders Awards 2010

Future Leaders is a philanthropic initiative about leadership and the future of Australia (http://www.futureleaders.com.au/index.php). It seeks to involve, inform and inspire Australians. It offers a number of awards annually for school students. In the category of Future Leaders Role Model Awards, two NSW Catholic school students have been successful in achieving awards: Elizabeth Mora, Bethlehem College, Ashfield (Sydney) and Ellen Scobie, St Paul’s College Kempsey (Lismore).

16. 2010 Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards

Early in September young poets from across Australia travelled to Gunnedah, an area from which the poet Dorothea Mackellar drew inspiration to write her iconic poem My Country, to be presented with their prizes in the 2010 Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Competition. Known as Australia’s oldest and most prestigious national poetry competition for school students, the awards this year attracted 8000 entries, many of whom adopted the chosen theme “I Hear Music.” The Upper Primary section for years 4-6 students (including Yr 7 in QLD & WA) attracted 4,300 entries with the winning poem “The Dressage Day” being submitted by Lily Hartwell, 11, of St Mary’s Star of the Sea Primary school, Milton, NSW (Wollongong).

John Kitney
Secretary to the Commission
11 October 2010
Catholic Block Grant Authority NSW (CBGA) Briefing to the Commission

The Commission noted the briefing from the CBGA:

2010 Capital Application Round

A final list of recommended projects will be brought for consultation to the 20 October 2010 Commission meeting. The CBGA will then forward its recommendations to the Australian government.

Ministerial Responsibility for BER Program

There are suggestions that the BER Program is to be moved from its mainstream school education portfolio location DEEWR to the Department of Tertiary Education, Skills, Jobs and Workplace Relations. This change is yet to be confirmed.

There is a possibility that the Trade Training Centres Program may also change portfolio.

There is a meeting of national BER Coordinators in Melbourne on 23 September 2010 where the administrative location and operation of the BER Program will be discussed. At the same meeting the Australian Government is expected to make its response to the recommendations of the BER Taskforce (Orgill) Report. Any outcomes affecting schools and projects will be immediately advised.

A. BER PROGRAM

During the pre and post election periods project commencements and payments have continued to schedule, with the CBGA liaising with DEEWR units.

The National School Pride Program is now complete but for one project of $47,000. Under NSP, 1,111 projects were approved for a total grant of $84,375,000.

Of the 29 approved Science & Language Centres, 5 projects are complete and construction has commenced on another 23. All but one project is anticipated to be completed by the end of the year closing date. An amount of $27.4 million has been paid in progress payments, that is, 57% of the total grant funding of $47.6 million.

The P21 Program has an approved 725 project components and grant funding of $888.2 million. At the end of August:

- 106 components were completed (15% of total);
- 50 recognition ceremonies had been held;
- On-site construction commenced on 590 components (81% of total);
- Payments of $420.5 million have been made (47% of total funding); and,
- 45 components are yet to commence on-site construction

Commissioners noted the importance of submitting Completion Certificates to the CBGA as soon as all work is complete.

B. DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION

Round 1 of the National Secondary Schools Computer Fund (NSSCF) has been completed and $13.8 million paid out to schools. Rounds 2 and 2.1 are very close to completion and $10 million paid out to schools.
For Round 3, close to 50% of the available funding of $35 million has been paid out and the computers installed in schools. Round 3 continues over 2010 and 2011.

C. TRADE TRAINING CENTRES

The CBGA is waiting on Government advice on the four applications submitted for Round 3 which closed on 4 June 2010. Following the election, there may be policy changes in the way the TTC Program is administered with more responsibility for assessment and grant recommendations given to Block Grant Authorities.

Of the 16 TTCs approved in the NSW Catholic sector, most have met the milestones required under their agreements. The TTCs at Burwood, West Gosford, Singleton and Five Dock have commenced delivery of school based training while construction of the facilities is being completed. Facilities at Emu Plains and West Wollongong are planned to be completed by November 2010.

Outlays by the CBGA in 2010 total $20.6 million.

John Kitney
Secretary to the Commission
11 October 2010