SUMMARY REPORT

The 324th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on the 23rd of March 2011 at Josephite Mother House North Sydney, which is the resting place of St Mary of the Cross Mackillop. The meeting was chaired by Bishop Anthony Fisher OP.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. March Meeting Location

Commissioners noted that this meeting was being held in the Lochaber Room (the Lochaber braes was where Mary’s Parents were born) at Mary MacKillop Place. Pope Benedict XVI canonised Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop on 17 October 2010.

Bishop Anthony advised Commissioners that Saint Mary would soon *inter alia* be declared Patron Saint of Catholic Education in Australia. He opined about the appropriateness of this further step because, in contemporary parlance, she created the first National Curriculum in Australia with its prime focus on serving low SES communities. He outlined her many great qualities of self-sacrifice, hard work, heroic determination, and wanting to develop education facilities for disadvantaged children and young people thereby giving them the opportunity to reach their potential.

Commissioner Kristin Johnston rsj led the prayer in celebration of the life and achievements of Saint Mary MacKillop. She gave Commissioners an insight into the canonisation process and provided Commissioners with reflections on the life of Mary MacKillop from the early Sisters. These reflections have been published in *Memories of Mary by those who knew her. Sisters of St Joseph 1925-1926*.

2. Disability Discrimination Act Standards for Education

Since the adoption in 2005 of the Disability Standards for Education, under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, CEC has been closely involved with all aspects of the implementation of the Standards by NSW Catholic Schools. DEEWR released its “Review of Disability Standards for Education 2005 Discussion Paper” on 20 February 2011. Following an extension of time, submissions are now due by 21 April 2011.
The DDA Standards are meant to provide certainty with respect to how disputes over what constitutes those “reasonable adjustments” required by any child are to be resolved. In this respect feedback from CEOs and Congregational schools indicates that the Standards are achieving their purpose.

Commissioners discussed whether, given the inherent complexity of DDA cases, it is prudent and desirable to seek amendments to the Standards to better clarify:

- “On the same basis as”
- “Reasonable adjustments”
- “Unjustifiable hardship”
- “Best interests of the child”

It was agreed that given the diverse nature of both student disabilities and school circumstances, the guiding principle for DDA Standards implementation should be flexibility.

With respect to flexibility, Commissioners identified the need for the Standards to acknowledge explicitly that managers of a system of schools should be able to meet DDA requirements through the provision of a reasonable alternative setting. It was acknowledged that any alternative educational setting must be capable of responding to the particular student’s education needs.

In conclusion, the Commission advised that CEC feedback to the Review of the DDA Standards for Education will:

- advocate for the desirability of systems of schools being able to offer reasonable alternative settings;
- support flexible approaches to the achievement of “reasonable adjustments” ; and,
- identify the resource gap which inhibits the proper implementation of the DDA.

3. **Crossroads Strategic Summary Report**

At its 9 February 2011 meeting, the Commission received a collation of responses from Diocesan systems and some Congregational schools to the initial CEC Catholic Schools at a Crossroads survey, which was conducted during November 2010. Having considered this Report, the Commission agreed that a focused Report, based on the collated responses, be produced for the Bishops. Dr Berenice Kerr rsm was appointed to undertake this work.

Commissioners received and thanked Dr. Berenice Kerr rsm for her valuable work. Commissioners noted that the summary report provides much general evidence that the goals put forward by the Bishops in the 2007 Crossroads statement are being implemented. The Commission specifically noted that cited initiatives are not universal and therefore only constitute individual, local, responses the Crossroads challenge.

It was agreed that the Report to Bishops should provide all Bishops with an opportunity to read the detail of the findings and not just provide a summary. Commissioners agreed to submit the Crossroads summary report to the Bishops for their 9 June 2011 meeting.
4. CEC Special Education Project Steering Group

At its 16 November 2010 meeting, the Commission agreed that a “CEC Special Education Project Steering Group” should be established early in 2011 to progress the work of the previous CEC Special Education Working Group. It was also agreed that the following terms of reference should apply:

The provision of advice to CEC on the:

(i) implementation of the CEC IP process by all Dioceses and Congregational schools;
(ii) development of a CEC IP validation process for the purpose of ensuring the consistency of IP assessments across Dioceses and Congregational Schools;
(iii) modelling of Special Education funding formula options applying IP data, noting that any new CEC formula arising will not be implemented by CEC before 2013;
(iv) scripting of a Catholic sector Special Needs initiatives information strategy; and,
(v) co-ordination of NSW Catholic sector engagement with both the development of the National Definition of SWD and the Review of the DDA Education Standards.

As indicated above at (v), the Steering Group will assist with two national reform issues:

- National Definition Project; and,
- DEEWR Review of Disability Standards for Education.

The previous Working Party had provided the Commission with a set of possible funding formulas for 2013 and beyond for detailed modelling. Commissioners noted that the individual planning project is well underway. Further modelling of financial options will be undertaken during 2011, applying the data arising from the individual education plans of special needs students.

Commissioners also agreed the composition of the CEC Special Education Project Steering Group as follows:

Peter Hill (Chair) Commissioner and Diocesan Director Bathurst
John Sheridan CSO Armidale, Resources Committee nominee
Margaret Schirmer CSO Wagga Wagga Head of Team Access and Equity
Debbie Gilmore CEO Sydney Head; Diverse learning Needs
Danny Rankin CSO Broken Bay
Kathy Freeman Principal St Edmunds Special School and St Gabriel’s Special School
TBA Regular School Principal from Parramatta CEO
TBA Regular School Principal from a country area
Ian Baker CEC NSW (ex-officio)
Paul Rodney CEC NSW (ex officio)
Geraldine Gray (Executive Officer) CEC NSW
Fran Moloney (Consultant) Project Officer
5. NEW DET Suspension and Expulsion Procedures

Commissioners considered the new DET Suspension and Expulsion of School Students Procedures which have been in force since 14 February 2011. These procedures contain specific advice on matters reportable to the Police.

Since July 2003 CEC has been party to a Memorandum of Understanding for the purpose of “increasing safety in schools (by) ensuring that relevant information sharing occurs between schools and the New South Wales Police Force”. The Schools and Police MOU is currently under review.

Commissioners commented on both:
- The DET Suspension and Expulsion Guidelines; and,
- The Draft for the revised Schools and Police MOU for the exchange of information.

Whilst noting the observations of the NSW coroner in the Wildman case in respect of how student behaviour which may amount to criminal conduct should be responded to by public schools, Commissioners expressed the view that NSW Catholic schools need to more fully consider carefully how they might best balance pastoral and legal imperatives before finalising advice on these matters for Catholic schools.

The Commission agreed that the School Police MOU redrafting process continue. It also requested that the DET approach to School and Police interaction be monitored. Further, the Commission agreed that further advice on issues arising be provided to the Commission when the revised Schools and Police MOU is presented for approval at a future Commission meeting.

6. MySchool

Commissioners discussed financial reporting and the calculation and application of the ICSEA scores for NSW Catholic schools. It was agreed that over time each of these measures will evolve and that the NSW Catholic schools sector needs to be proactive in relation to their further development.

With respect to Financial Reporting, Commissioners expressed strong reservations about the stated intention of the Australian Government to extend financial reporting to include “school assets.” It was also noted that MySchool reporting is planned to expand to include the reporting of parent, school and student satisfaction with their school. A number of Commissioners expressed reservations about such satisfaction reporting given a range of methodological challenges.


Following the 9 February 2011 meeting and in accordance with the advice of Commissioners, the Executive Director sought nominees to represent the Catholic sector on DEEWR ICT Innovation Fund Project: Anywhere, Anytime Teacher Professional Learning Project (PLANE) implementation committees.

The Commission considered the most recent Project Brief approved by DEEWR for the PLANE Project. A 1 April 2011 planning group meeting of the NSW Catholic sector representatives was agreed.
Commissioners noted and endorsed the developing close collaboration between CEC and CEnet on “PLANE” implementation and management matters.

The Commission endorsed the NSW Catholic schools sector project nominees as follows:

**Professional Learning Centre Co - Leader**
Mark Woolley  
Wollongong Diocese

**Project Control Group**
Dr. Doug Ashleigh  
Sydney Archdiocese

**Technical Advisory Group**
Ian Gregory  
CEnet

**Professional Learning Advisory Group**
Laurie Wales  
Maitland_Newcastle Diocese

The Commission also agreed that CEC in collaboration with CEnet should continue to progress NSW Catholic schools sector participation in the “PLANE” project.

8. **2011 NAPLAN Management and SMART Services Agreement**

The Commission endorsed the CEC-NSW DET service agreement for the provision of 2011 NAPLAN services to all NSW Catholic schools (systemic and Congregational). Through this agreement NSW DET will provide testing facilities for NSW Catholic schools. The CEC has a seconded staff member as part of the NSW DET Testing Unit.

9. **RTA Funding Agreement 2011 - 2013**

The Commission adopted the 2011 to 2013 RTA Funding Agreement for the provision of Road Safety Education to students enrolled in NSW Catholic Schools K to 12. This agreement provides for an annual grant of $400,000. Funds received must be expended for the purposes set out in the agreement.

10. **TVET funding Allocations for 2011**

Each year, the Commission receives a State grant for the purpose of assisting Catholic schools with the purchase of VET courses from external providers and in particular from TAFE.

For 2011 the grant is $2,448,133. Following advice from both VEAG and the Education Policy Committee, the Commission approved a new distribution formula for 2011.
11. NSW Board of Studies: Brother John Taylor Prize 2010

The annual Brother John Taylor prize was established in 1994 by the NSW Board of Studies to acknowledge the achievement of a student who overcame significant personal adversity to succeed at the HSC. This year’s Brother John Taylor Memorial prize for the 2010 Higher School certificate was presented to three recipients on 23 March 2011 at NSW Parliament House.

This year’s winners were:

*Riana Head-Toussant of Killarney Heights High School* (a paraplegic since twelve months of age who has become an exceptional ambassador for her school and the Northcott society, whose results indicate her outstanding academic development and motivation);

*Zachary Newton of Nowra High school* (received a traumatic brain injury, as a result of a bike accident in 2009 and has fought emotional, personal and physical issues to achieve a most impressive HSC).

*Georgia Cranko of St Scholastica’s College Glebe* (born with cerebral palsy, which effects her mobility, and writing but most profoundly her ability to communicate. She needed specialist support from Rivendell Acute care for two years before attending St Scholastica’s where the excellent collaborative support given to Georgia and her family by the College allowed her to become part of the school community and to graduate with such success).

12. CEC Emergency Notification System

Commissioners noted a presentation of the impending Catholic school sector internet based emergency notification system. This system provides for the CEC to be the conduit for the transmission of Catastrophic Notices from the State Emergency Operations Centre to Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities that are in turn responsible for notifying all affected Catholic schools in their area.

John Kitney  
*Secretary to the Commission*  
14 April 2011
Catholic Block Grant Authority NSW (CBGA) Briefing to the Commission

The Commission noted the briefing from the CBGA:

**CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAM**

Commissioners noted that the Schools Assistance Bill extending the quadrennium is already in the Commonwealth Parliament and is supported by both the Government and Opposition. The Bill makes provision for the extension of the Capital Grants Program for both 2013 and 2014.

**BER PROGRAM**

**P21 Program**

Commissioners noted that the status of the 723 projects as at 22 March 2011 includes:

- 59 at full acquitted status (50 at 8 February);
- 414 at completed status (306 at 8 February); and,
- 233 under construction (325 at 8 February).

**Science and Language Centres Program**

Commissioners noted the 93% completion rate. The CBGA has YTD paid out $45.3 million (92%) of the $49.4 million available for SLCs.

**DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION**

Computer purchases under funding rounds 1, 2 and 2.1 are at 100% with $24.5 million paid out by the CBGA YTD.

In the movement to 1:1 computer purchases, 70% of the $37.1 million has been expended to date with 25,000 computers installed.

$60.1 million in infrastructure costs have been fully allocated in advance to Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities.

John Kitney  
Secretary to the Commission  
14 April 2011