SUMMARY REPORT

The 330th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 28 September 2011 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. Additional Special Education Funding Allocation

The Australian Government as part of the May 2011 Budget announced the availability of $200 million in additional Students with a Disability funding for the 2012 and 2013 school years. The Commission has been developing its strategy for applying for these project funds. DEEWR has advised that projects must address one or more of the following areas:

- specialist services;
- specialist technologies;
- additional hours of in-class support;
- adapted curriculum.

An overarching DEEWR priority is “capacity building” especially the capacity of school staff. Capacity building is itself seen as a sustainability strategy given that funding ceases at the end of the 2013 program year.

DEEWR has now further clarified that the Guidelines require CEC to submit a single NSW Catholic schools sector implementation plan.

Diocesan and Congregational school submissions have been received by the CEC. The CEC Special Education steering Group is in the process of moulding submitted projects into a single CEC funding submission.

Commissioners noted that the funding application process is a modified National Partnership model. This model eliminates Reward funding as an implementation issue. It also eliminates the need for partnership with DEC and AIS.
However, the modified National Partnerships model presents the following challenges:

- the required development of a single CEC implementation plan;
- managing funding against targets / performance indicators over the life of the contract; and
- providing funding for a DEEWR scoped Evaluation.

The Commission endorsed the draft funding submission and agreed that a Catholic sector implementation forum be organised. The finalised funding submission will be presented for approval to the 15 November 2011 Commission meeting.

2. **Keep Them Safe Ombudsman’s Report**

Commissioners reviewed key child protection issues as identified in the August 2011 NSW Ombudsman’s Report. Particular attention was given to:

- Low DOCS responses rates, especially for older children;
- Frequently reported families, constituting 50% of all reports to DOCS; and
- The emerging priority of “educational neglect.”

With respect to the issue of “Educational Neglect” Commissioners discussed related Education Act amendment issues including new response delegations for School Principals. The point was made that the existence of these new delegations has created new compliance requirements for schools and new school authority response obligations. In this context the point was made that School Authorities could face liabilities for negligence if the new Education Act attendance response powers are not properly implemented by School Principals.

Given that School Principals will now be more proactive in the case of non-attendance issues, concern was expressed that an increased potential for parent and principal misunderstandings now exists. In this context the point was made that a focus on parent education in respect of the new school attendance requirements is needed.

The Commission requested the Catholic Education and Social Welfare Co-ordinating Committee to provide further advice on Keep Them Safe as identified by the Ombudsman. Commissioners agreed that school attendance compliance advice for parents is required. It was noted that the NSW Ministerial Working Party on School Attendance is developing advice for parents.

3. **Gonski Federal Education Funding Review**

Commissioners noted that the NCEC is scheduled to present a submission to the Gonski Review by 30 September 2011. This submission responds to the four research papers commissioned by the Panel. Commissioners made the following observations:

- each study was commissioned by the Panel, so they represent areas of specific interest to the Panel;
- these research papers cover :
  - how funds are distributed now;
o how a national schools model could be constructed that covers both government and non-government schools; and

o how special needs students are currently supported, noting that the paper actually failed to address this matter).

Minister Garrett at the recent NCEC National Conference confirmed that “no Catholic school will lose a dollar” from 2014.

Commissioners noted that the Allen funding model (Feasibility of a National Schooling Recurrent Resource Standard commissioned by the Gonski Panel from the Allen Consulting Group) was difficult to comment upon because it is theoretical and there is no implementation model. It was also agreed that NAPLAN and ICSEA are fragile platforms upon which to build a funding model.

Commissioners agreed that recurrent grants need to be indexed in line with the actual cost of education delivery for students enrolled in government schools. It was also agreed that Catholic schools should continue to be block funded and that substantial capital funding is still required to meet student growth projections, particularly in growth corridors.

Commissioners noted that the Allen Report deals with funding overall but does not look at proportions of funding allocated by the Commonwealth and the States. Private income is an issue for both government and non-government schools.

The Commission commended the principles and arguments underpinning the NCEC response to the Gonski Panel research papers.

4. Empowering Local Schools National Partnerships

Commissioners discussed the proposed Empowering Local Schools National Partnership for 2012 and 2013. Commissioners noted that this National Partnership assumed that all school systems are managed in a highly centralised manner. This is not the case with the NSW Catholic Schools System. Significant responsibilities are undertaken at the school level. The funds made available under the Partnership also assume a ‘one size fits all approach’ to governance reform.

Commissioners noted the conditions of the proposed Empowering Local Schools National Partnership and requested the CEC Executive Director to hold discussions with cross sectoral colleagues on approaches being considered by other sectors for the purpose of preparing a gap analysis report on governance arrangements proposed by DEEWR.

5. NSW Legislative Inquiry into School Safety Zones

Commissioners reviewed the terms of reference noting submissions are due 30 September. The point was made that this Inquiry is the result of a Coalition election promise to review School Zone implementation policy.

Commissioners were also advised that the Inquiry is most likely to attract a significant amount of media attention. It was also noted that there is a high probability of CEC being called to a public hearing.
Key matters discussed included:

- current CEC RTA Road Safety Education funding;
- NSW Audit Office Data on School zone casualties being 60 child “casualties” in school zones annually. 2000 school age casualties outside of school zones. In the last decade two school zone child deaths, one at a Catholic Primary School;
- the importance of road safety education embedded in the PD Health PE KLA;
- the particular needs of Primary schools;
- the link with young driver (“P” Plate Driver) issues around secondary schools;
- the need for predictability and certainty for all drivers across the state;
- the desirability of combining state-wide predictability with local input to planning for and implementation of school zones;
- the importance of engaging parents in school zone safety issues; and
- the need for better coordination between RTA, Local Councils and Police so that all schools can access consistent and coordinated advice and where necessary decisions regarding school precinct matters.

In summary, Commissioners expressed:

- continuing support for the existing school zone safety policy i.e. the common 40K speed limit;
- the importance of Road Safety Education embedded within the PD Health PE KLA; and
- the desirability of achieving local input to school zone planning and implementation noting that this could be promoted through the establishment of local (LGA) Coordinating Committees.

6. **Grant Funds**

The Commission approved:

- 2011 RTA grants; and
- 2011 – 12 Drug Education grants, as part of the CEC Student Wellbeing Program.

The Commission also endorsed the variation to CEC and NSW Government Sustainability Project Agreement for the purpose of increasing available funding to CEC by $19,000.
7. **NSW Numeracy and Literacy Review**

The NSW Education Minister has established the NSW Ministerial Advisory Group, under the chairmanship of Dr Ken Boston, on Literacy and Numeracy with the remit to:

- review the effectiveness of literacy and numeracy intervention programs; and
- advise on how to distribute Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership Reward Funds.

At their 31 August 2011 meeting, Commissioners reviewed matters arising from the 19 August 2011 CEC consultation with the Advisory Group on Literacy and Numeracy. The CEC written advice to Dr Boston was submitted on 15 September 2011.

Commissioners noted that the CEC has been asked to provide additional oral evidence to the Advisory Group on 11 October 2011.

8. **Students with Additional and Complex Needs: NSW Parliamentary Inquiry**

The CEC Secretariat with the advice of NSW Catholic sector Special Education Advisors has made a brief submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Transition needs of students with additional and complex needs.

Commissioners endorsed the submission as provided to the Social Issues Committee of the NSW Legislative Council and authorised the CEC Executive Director to nominate Catholic sector personnel to attend the 13 December 2011 Inquiry hearing.

9. **NSW Review of Early Childhood Education**

On 15 August 2011 the NSW Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli announced an independent review by Professor Deborah Brennan of the way more than $220 million in early childhood education funding is allocated. The date for submissions to the review has been extended to 18 November 2011. A joint Catholic agencies submission is being prepared by:

- Council of Catholic School Parents, represented by Danielle Cronin;
- CEC, represented by Ian Baker and Rosalie Nott;
- CCER, represented by Nevine Piperides, and
- Catholic Social Services is represented by Deidre Cheers and Jan Faulkner.
10. Preventing Young People Becoming Involved in Crime

The NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice has commenced a process to examine the best way to prevent young people from becoming involved in crime. CEC has been asked to provide input on the crime prevention for young people and possible improvement to existing youth crime prevention approaches. CEC with Catholic Social Services will be making a submission. The CEC Nominees are:

- Ian Baker, Director Policy and Programs CEC;
- Elizabeth Rowe, Team Leader Student Services Catholic Education Office Parramatta;
- Paul Mastronardi, State Coordinator Student Wellbeing CECNSW;
- Michael Cashin, Service Manager - Out of Home Care Services Centacare Broken Bay;
- Jim Doyle, Principal Boys Town Engadine; and
- Frank Pearce, CEC Aboriginal Education State coordinator.

11. NCEC National Convention 2011

The 2011 National Catholic Education Convention was held in Adelaide from 21 to 23 September. The convention was distinguished by a large attendance from around the nation including nine from the CEC Secretariat and a number of Commissioners. The keynote speakers supported the development of themes in Catholic Identity and the Catholic school today, the changing nature of Australia and the Catholic community and the hope and challenge of continuing the transformative work of Catholic education. A highlight was the concelebrated mass in St Francis Xavier’s Cathedral led by Archbishop Celli and ministries by students from South Australian Catholic schools.

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

The Commission noted the briefing from the CBGA:

CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAM

The CBGA was able to increase the size of the funding pool to a maximum amount of $34.5 million due to the receipt of the first funding under the NSW Building Grants Assistance Scheme in June 2011 (2010/11 financial year). This additional money covered the remaining 2010 Round grants which were unable to be submitted to DEEWR because of “negative supplementation”. This released a further $6.5 million on top of the base $28 million.

The CBGA has now been able to submit the remaining projects from the 2010 Round as funding has been released under legislation for the Capital Grants Program for 2012-2014.

NSW BUILDING GRANTS ASSISTANCE SCHEME

Commissioners noted that the CBGA Delegate has written to the NSW Minister for Education expressing thanks for the first release of funding under the Building Grants Assistance Scheme and seeking confirmation of the Scheme allocation for 2011/12 and projected annual allocations thereafter. He advised that the next meeting with the Minister would include discussions on the operation of the Scheme, in particular an arrangement to maintain the real value of the Scheme through the annual application of a Building Price Index or similar mechanism.

BER PROGRAM

P21 Program

The status of the projects is as follows (previously reported figures from the 20 July 2011 Commission meeting are bracketed).

- 256 (178) at full acquittal status;
- 391 (450) at completed status; and,
- 72 (91) under construction.

Expenditure claims on BER projects is at 95%. Almost all project construction will be completed by the end of 2011.

TRADE TRAINING CENTRES

The anticipated announcement by Minister Garrett of a Round 4 TTC application process by the end of August 2011 did not eventuate.

The CBGA has issued to Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities and CBGA member Congregational schools copies of draft guidelines and application form to assist their forward planning of applications. The CBGA anticipates that there will be a minimum time from the Minister’s announcement to application submission date.
Whatever the final form of the TTC guidelines, the Round 4 conditions emphasized at the 31 August 2011 Commission meeting remain:

- substantially reduced budget;
- a requirement for project ‘readiness’ with contracts to be signed by April 2012; and
- construction to commence soon after; and
- CBGA to prioritise projects under DEEWR specified criteria.

Not all schools will or can be funded to the Government’s notional maximum amount of $1.5 million.

John Kitney  
Commission Secretary  
14 October 2011