SUMMARY REPORT

The 332nd meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 15 November 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. NSW/ACT Bishops Meeting of 3 November 2011

Bishop Anthony advised that the Bishops approved the CEC 2012 Budget and WorkPlan, including a levy increase of 25 cents per student. The Bishops concurred with the Commission’s recommendations arising from the 2010 Quinquennial Review recommendations.

The Bishops also approved the following appointment / reappointments as Commissioners:

- Jenny Allen  Bathurst Diocese
- Alan Bowyer  Wagga Wagga Diocese
- Ray Collins  Maitland- Newcastle Diocese
- Dr Anne Wenham  Lismore Diocese.

2. 2012 Funding Programs

The Commission approved the allocations of:

- $1,597,589 in supplementation for the 2011 CEC Aboriginal Student Assistance Program (CASAP);
- $11,274,406 as the initial estimate for the 2012 CASAP Program; and
- $525,153 for 2012 Road Safety Education and Student Wellbeing Programs.

3. Empowering Local Schools National Partnership

Commissioners discussed the Australian Government’s proposed Empowering Local Schools National Partnership. A working party was established and the Commission will consider this matter again at its 8 February 2012 meeting.
4. **Early Childhood Funding**

Commissioners considered a draft submission to the NSW Early Childhood Funding Inquiry and approved its transmittal to the inquiry Secretariat, subject to some clarifying amendments. The submission is a public document and is available for viewing on the CEC website [www.cecnsw.catholic.edu.au](http://www.cecnsw.catholic.edu.au).

5. **Google Sketch Up Pro K – 12 Licensing Agreement**

Commissioners noted that the NSW Minister for Education has signed an agreement with Google for a K-12 licensing agreement that provides free access to Google Sketch Up Pro for all NSW Government schools. Google wishes the licence to be accessed by all NSW Schools. Commissioners agreed that CEC should sign an agreement with Google to make Sketch Up Pro available to all NSW Catholic schools. This licence restricts use to education purposes only and excludes parents, non-teaching staff and anyone outside the school from use. It is the responsibility of each Catholic School Authority to ensure compliance with the licence restrictions.

6. **School Attendance Regulations**

The CEC has been engaged with the reform of NSW School Attendance requirements since February 2011.

Recently the NSW Cross Sector Attendance Working Party applied to the NSW Minister for Education for an extension of the delegation of power to both School Principals (all sectors) and to Diocesan Directors for the purpose of exempting students from attendance from 50 days to 100 days. This amendment is expected to take effect from Term One 2012.

The Commission requested the Executive Director to advise Catholic Schools Authorities of:

- Final School Attendance Exemption Delegations advice; and
- Processes for accessing DEC legal action to address habitual non-attendance.

In addition, both the CEC Education Policy Committee and the Catholic Education and Social Welfare Coordinating Committee were invited to monitor student attendance implementation issues in 2012, including linkages with ‘Keep Them Safe’ implementation, and provide advice to the Commission as necessary.

7. **National Health Work and Safety Law**

On 28 July 2011 representatives of the CEC Secretariat, CCER, AIS and DEC met to consider the implications of the new National Work, Health and Safety Law for schools. Since then a cross sectoral consultative group involving CCER, AIS and DEC has been established.

The Schools Work Health Safety Network has identified a set of issues for discussion with NSW WorkCover.

Under the auspices of Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, the meeting of Diocesan Financial Administrators has obtained a detailed legal opinion addressing the implications of the new National Work Health and Safety law for Church Agencies.

Commissioners reviewed the advice provided, including the legal opinion obtained by ACBC.

It was noted that CCER is coordinating the provision on advice on this matter.
A joint DEC, AIS and CCER advisory group for schools has been established. This advisory group is establishing close liaison with NSW WorkCover. This Schools’ Group is known as the NSW “WHS Education Sector Working Group.” This Group is expected to provide practical guidance to Catholic School Authorities.

8. Anti-Bullying Working Party

At its meeting on 18 May 2011, the Commission established an Anti-Bullying Working Party. This action followed the St Patrick’s Campbelltown case and the outcomes of the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Bullying.

The CEC Anti Bullying Working Party has been focused on developing both an anti-bullying policy template and a set of model anti-bullying procedures to guide diocesan and school based policies and responses.

Commissioners considered a progress report at this meeting. It was noted that finalisation of advice for CEC cannot occur until the NSW Board of Studies (BOS) determines how BOS School Registration Manual (“Safe and Supportive Environment”) requirements will be amended to include Anti-Bullying requirements.

A consolidated report of advice arising will be provided to the 8 February 2012 Commission meeting.

9. NSW School Certificate

Commissioners noted that the Board of Studies has just released its final School Certificate Reform Consultation Paper: “NSW Record of Achievement: A Pathway to the HSC, A Pathway to Employment. Implementing a Proposed NSW Record of School Achievement.” Responses to the BOS School Certificate reform proposal are required to be provided to BOS by 12 December 2011.

Commissioners reviewed the BOS consultation document “Implementing a proposed NSW Record of School Achievement.”

The point was made and agreed that what is being proposed by BOS is consistent with the earlier School Certificate reform advice endorsed by this Commission.

While supporting the reform directions as outlined, Commissioners noted the following matters:

- The administration requirements for schools arising from the “NSW Record of School Achievement” need to be kept as simple (user friendly) as possible by BOS.
- Unintended workload impacts for teachers of Year 10 and 11 need to be avoided.

It was agreed that further advice on implementation issues needs to be gathered through the Education Policy Committee. Commissioners agreed that School Certificate reform should be further discussed at the 21 March 2012 Commission meeting.
10. Other Actions

The Commission endorsed:

- the CEC response to VET Foundation Skills Training Package;
- the NSW Catholic Schools Sustainability Project Contract Agreement;
- the “More Support for Students with Disabilities” CEC funding submission, with the Executive Director being empowered to undertake any necessary further negotiations with DEEWR; and
- the CEC submission provided to the “NSW Smart and Skilled VET Review.”

11. External Audit Arrangements

Compliance with new international audit standards means that the CEC’s external auditors HLB Mann Judd can no longer rely upon certifications made by local auditors or independent public accountants to Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities or to Diocesan Bishops in respect of government grants expended within each Diocese, including CBGA grants. HLB Mann Judd may only rely on local audits where local auditors report to HLB Mann Judd in accordance with Auditing Standard ASA 600 Special Considerations – Audits of a Group Financial Report (Including the Work of Component Auditors).

Senior CEC staff held discussions with HLB Mann Judd on 2 November 2011 to resolve audit issues and streamline processes. HLB Mann Judd will:

- develop audit instructions to be issued to Diocesan Auditors, together with an audit template to be completed by Diocesan Auditors;
- draft audit provisions for dioceses to include in their external audit contracts which will govern the relationship between CEC’s external auditor and those of the Dioceses as well as making clear respective responsibilities and accountabilities.

On receipt of the HLB Mann Judd audit instructions and provisions, Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities will need to hold discussions with their external auditors and make changes to their audit arrangements so that CEC and CBGA can satisfy their grant acquittal requirements.

12. Charity Law Reform and schools

The Australian Treasury has produced a consultation paper on the Definition of a Charity including the notion of a ‘public benefit’ test as a prerequisite for charitable status. This means, among other things, that education and religion may no longer be presumed to be charitable activities. Similar legislation already exists in the UK. The closing date for submissions is 9 December and a Catholic Church response will be co-ordinated through the ACBC National Tax Working Party. CEC will be contributing comment to NCEC on education sector advice to be incorporated into the ACBC response. Given the concerns and difficulties such legislation has posed for independent schools in the UK, including Catholic schools, the possible application of any ‘public benefit’ tests needs to be carefully weighed so that it does not adversely impact on Catholic schools. A key question is: how can Catholic schools demonstrate that their mission and work constitutes a ‘public benefit’ sufficient for them to maintain their charitable status?
13. **NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People**

On Monday 14 November 2011, the NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People, Ms Megan Mitchell, accompanied by Mr Gregor Macfie, Director of Research and Policy at the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) met with the Catholic Education and Social Welfare Co-ordinating Committee (CESWCC). The meeting explored current CCYP priorities and identified issues of common concern for both CCYP and CESWCC. The following key matters were identified for ongoing consultation:

- Finalisation of the new working with children check inclusive of both employees and volunteers to be implemented from August 2012;
- Responding to the recent NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the “Middle Years”; 
- Initiating an Inquiry into children and the built environment; and
- Developing processes and procedures for capturing data on child injuries and response processes.

14. **Common Financial Reporting Framework**

The CEC Resources Policy Committee has been for some time progressing work related to common financial reporting among the diocesan education systems for both the Annual Financial Questionnaire of Non-Government Schools (FQ) and the provision of financial information to ACARA for MySchool. A number of common reporting practices have by necessity been introduced with FQ changes in 2011 and for reporting system financial data for MySchool in 2010 and 2011. A joint meeting of all Heads of Finance and members of the Commission’s Resources Policy Committee has been agreed and will take place on 6 December 2011. This meeting aims to further develop a common reporting framework incorporating some Accrual accounting mechanisms as necessary. A chartered accounting firm has been engaged by the CEC to undertake a consultancy to advise and assist the Commission and the eleven NSW Diocesan Catholic School Authorities. The desired outcome is “A Manual of Agreed Accounting Procedures for Catholic Systemic Schools for FQ and MySchool Reporting Purposes.”

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

The Commission noted the briefing from the CBGA:

**BER P21 PROGRAM**

The status of the P21 projects is that the proportion of projects at acquitted or completed status is 92% and expenditure at 97.3%.

**NSW Building Grants Assistance Scheme**

The Government has recently advised an amount of $11 million allocated for capital works under the Scheme for 2011/12 of which $6.88 million (62.5%) is for NSW CBGA member Catholic schools.

The Government has released guidelines for the operation of this Scheme which places its administration under the respective Catholic and AIS BGAs.

Commissioners noted that the Resources Policy Committee at its 1 November 2011 meeting gave extended consideration to a draft proposal from the CBGA for the allocation of BGA grants. The Committee was unable to reach an agreed position and will consider the issue further at its scheduled 6 December 2011 meeting. Commissioners also noted that the Resources Policy Committee will in time bring forward a recommendation to the Commission for the allocation of the State grants in the 2012 funding round.

**TRADE TRAINING CENTRES**

The CBGA has processed all applications received for Round 4. As anticipated in the October Commission paper, the CBGA received 12 applications for around $17 million in grants. The CBGA has available $10.39 million to allocate. All applications received were thoroughly assessed by an independent group with experience in VET and facilities provision and put into a priority order.

The closing date for the CBGA to submit applications to DEEWR is 11 November. The CBGA is in the final stages of negotiating with some applicants any clarifications and adjustments required before final submission. Subject to adjustments, the CBGA will be submitting 8 or 9 applications within the available budget. Under DEEWR guidelines the CBGA is required to submit the applications going forward in a priority order.

John Kitney  
Commission Secretary  
6 December 2011