THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY THIRD MEETING
8 February 2012

SUMMARY REPORT

The 333rd meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 8 February 2012 in the Clancy/Gilroy Rooms of the Polding Centre. The meeting was chaired by Bishop David Walker.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. Empowering Schools National Partnership

The Commission agreed to participate in Stage One of the Empowering Local Schools program for years 2012 and 2013. The Executive Director was authorised to submit to DEEWR the draft CEC Implementation Plan. The Commission also resolved that once the final Implementation Plan is agreed with DEEWR that a third Diocesan Implementation Forum will be held.

2. NSW Needy Schools Funding

In 2008, the NSW Government redirected $20 million from the abolished Back to School Allowance program to “needy” schools, with $2.9 million of the total amount to be allocated to Catholic schools. The CEC then agreed that the full amount of $2.9 million be added as supplementary funding to the pool for Special Education.

Commissioners agreed that the existing practice would apply to this year’s allocation, namely using the Special Education Integration Program formula. This formula is based upon 70% All SWDs, 20% Secondary SWDs and 10% Remoteness.

The Commission approved the recommended distribution formula for the estimated 2012 funding allocation, namely, $2,390,078 for Diocesan schools, $248,972 for regular Congregational schools and $168,450 for Congregational Special schools.

3. CEC Committee Appointments

The Commission appointed Commissioner Vince Connor as Chair of the Vocational Educational Advisory Group (VEAG). Vince is Director of Schools for the Wilcannia – Forbes Diocese. Commissioner John Mula was appointed as Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee. John is the Director of Schools for the Armidale Diocese.
4. **Ethics Classes in Public Schools**

During term four 2009, the then NSW Government commenced a trial of “Ethics Classes” in NSW public schools.

In November 2010, in the run-up to the 26 March 2011 State Election, the then NSW Government decided to amend the NSW Education Act 1990 to give legal status to “ethics as a secular alternative to special religious education.”

In November 2011, on the advice of the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools NSW (ICCOREIS) the NSW Director – General of Education and Communities agreed that “the guidelines and policy for delivering Special Religious Education will be strengthened.” This decision is consistent with current CCRESS policy.

The Reverend Fred Nile has introduced the _Education Amendment (Ethics Classes Repeal) Bill 2011_ into the NSW Legislative Council. CEC has been invited to provide input to a Parliamentary Inquiry into the proposed Nile amendment.

The Commission agreed that CCRESS will be the Inquiry response leader for the NSW Catholic sector. CEC will assist CCRESS with its response process and submission. The CEC Education Policy Committee will continue to coordinate CEC liaison with CCRESS on SRE and Ethics classes matters.

5. **NSW State Numeracy and Literacy Plan**

Following the March 2011 election, the NSW Government established the Ministerial Advisory Group - Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan. The Ministerial Advisory Group is to provide expert advice on early literacy and numeracy, consult widely, and provide the NSW Education Minister with a framework and advice on implementation plans, design evaluation strategies and regular progress reports.

The Commission at its 28 September 2011 meeting discussed Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan issues and endorsed the CEC’s written submission to the Ministerial Advisory Group.

Dr Boston met with the CEC Education Policy Committee on 1 February 2012 to discuss Action Plan development.

In his presentation, Dr Boston emphasised that current activity is focused on Step 2 (“Identify schools with the highest proportions of low performing students”) and Step 3 (“Target the resources against the needs”) as specified in the August 2011 Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan Initial Framework.

The three NSW school sectors have worked to develop a methodology to determine schools for participation in initiatives that will arise from the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan once it is approved by the Minister.

Commissioners noted that CEC will have an opportunity to comment on the next iteration of Dr Boston’s report during the last week of February 2012. The final Review Report will be presented in mid-March to the Hon. Adrian Piccoli Minister for Education and Communities. Minister Piccoli is expected to announce the NSW Plan, inclusive of targeted schools, on or around 26 March 2012, that is, the first anniversary of the election of the current NSW State Government.
6. **NSW School Certificate Reform**

Commissioners reviewed progress on reforming the NSW School Certificate. An amendment to the NSW Education Act is being drafted so as to remove the School Certificate and embed the Record of School Achievement (ROSA). ROSA will be an Education Act Credential and will be available to students leaving school after completing Year 10 and before being eligible to sit for the NSW Higher School Certificate.

All Curriculum and Accreditation requirements pertaining to the NSW School Certificate will transfer to ROSA.

The amending Bill is to be introduced to NSW Parliament during the current session.

The Commission requested the Education Policy Committee to monitor and report on ROSA implementation developments. The Executive Director was authorised to monitor the progress of the School Certificate amending legislation through the NSW Parliament and to take any necessary response action.

7. **National Partnerships**

Commissioners noted that the CEC National Partnership (NP) Coordination Group involving Diocesan, CLRI and CCER members most recently met on 24 November 2011 with the major agenda issues being:

- Reward payments;
- Literacy and Numeracy State Plan;
- Distribution of additional State Low SES funds; and
- National Partnerships Evaluations.

Commissioners also noted key initiatives since July 2011, being:

- the Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership has concluded. Advice on the use of Reward funds is contingent on the finalization of the NSW State Literacy and Numeracy Plan;
- National Partnership evaluation methodologies are being prepared by DEEWR in conjunction with consultants;
- The NSW 2011 Smarter Schools National Partnerships interim activity report provided to DEEWR in October 2011 has been accepted by the Australian Minister for Education;
- The COAG Reform Council (CRC) is currently conducting an audit of 2011 NSW Literacy and Numeracy National Partnerships L & N NP Reward Targets. The NSW State Government has signalled that it intends using the L&N NP Reward funds to cover costs associated with the intended NSW Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan;
• The CRC is also conducting the audit process for the approval of the 2011 Teacher Quality National Partnership Reward funding. NSW has provided data which indicates that targets have been achieved. The response from the CRC should be received by the end of March for a Reward funding payment to NSW prior to the end of the 2011-12 fiscal year;

• The NSW State Low SES National Partnership Program with $3,011,291 funding will support 15 new 2012 Catholic sector Low SES schools as well as providing additional funds for 11 Catholic sector Low SES schools. This brings total funds for Catholic sector Low SES to $68.1 million over the 2009 to 2016 period. Under this Program, 77 Catholic schools receive funding for four years;

• With the agreement of COAG, NSW has been offered a further $11,898,742 (three school sectors collectively) for the professional development of existing and aspiring School Principals as part of the Teacher Quality National Partnership. This initiative will also involve the trialling of AITSL Standards for School Principals. This funding will be made available over 2012-13 and will require amendment of the Smarter Schools National Partnership State Implementation Plan; and

• The Australian Government is about to launch its TeachNext initiative as part of the Teacher Quality reforms. This $15.9 million initiative will establish a new employment –based pathway into teaching for up to 395 skilled and experienced professionals who are seeking a career change into the teaching profession. The focus will be on Maths and Science teachers. This initiative commences in May 2012 and is to start in schools in Term Three 2012.

8. Sustainability Project

Commissioners last received an update on the sustainability project at their 31 August 2011 meeting. At that time, Commissioners noted the progress being made with the State Sustainability Project and expressed its satisfaction with the agreed Diocesan based management model. Despite this, it was also acknowledged that implementation required a greater focus on school – level outcomes.

A report on Project Implementation matters was considered by the Commission and it was agreed that the Project Steering Group should explore the development of on-line school-based sustainability communities for increasing local participation in the project.

9. Bishops/ CLRI Negotiations

Negotiations continue between the NSW/ACT Bishops and CLRI in relation to developing an option for non-systemic (Congregational) schools to become part of the NSW Catholic schools system for funding purposes. Following decisions at the Bishops’ meeting in November 2011, the CEC was asked, in conjunction with the CLRI negotiating group, to draft an agreement capturing Bishops’ decisions for further consideration by the Bishops at their 8 March 2012 meeting.
10. **ACARA Update**

Late 2011, the comprehensive 2011 NAPLAN Report was released with results for the relevant years of schooling made available in a searchable format. In late February 2012, the revised *My School* site will publish the 2011 *My School* data, including the 2010 financial data. Development of Australian curriculum has continued. The Languages curriculum is now at the writing stage. Regarding assessment, a validation report on the Foundation-Year 10 Achievement Standards has been made available. All ACARA requirements for NSW schools are being processed by the NSW Board of Studies.

11. **Charities Legislation**

The CEC, with other State and Territory Commissions, has been working with the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference (ACBC) to respond to the Australian Government’s proposed Charities Legislation. The ACBC response recommends that a Statutory definition of a Charity should expand rather than limit the range of charitable purposes recognised by the law. In particular, Charities should not be limited in their ability to lobby political parties or evaluate Government policies provided this activity is relevant to their charitable purposes.

Peak bodies such as CEC should be accepted as charitable organisations provided that their work assists the work of charitable organisations which are part of their membership. ACBC recommends that legislation should recognise existing charitable organisations, including schools and be clear that registered not-for-profit non-government schools should be recognised under the proposed legislation as Charities.

12. **CEC Emergency System**

The recent and current flood situations in northern NSW have provided the opportunity for the first operational use of the CEC’s Emergency Management System (CECEMS). CEC has transmitted warning messages received from the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC). It ought to be noted that CEC only transmits information it receives from SEOC. CEC is not an emergency agency but is a conduit for messages from emergency agencies. Meanwhile, the construction of the Diocesan Emergency Management System (DEMS) is proceeding on schedule for commencement in March 2012.

13. **Transport for Students with Disabilities**

Unexpected problems with new DEC contractual arrangements have resulted in around seven per cent of disabled students not being able to access their required transport to and from school. About 60 students in Catholic Schools across New South Wales have had issues, as a result of the disruption. As of 6 February 2012, it is believed that all affected Catholic students have now been offered either vouchers or transport through school owned vehicles. Meanwhile, the Minister Adrian Piccoli has initiated an Inquiry into how this unfortunate situation occurred. Former Director-General Dr Ken Boston AO is conducting the Inquiry.
14. **Brother Tony Whelan cfc**

Brother Tony stands down as Broken Bay Director of Schools on 2 March 2012. As a result, this was Brother Tony’s final meeting as a Commissioner. He also chaired his final meeting of the CEC Audit and Risk Management Committee on 7 February 2012. Commissioners thanked Brother Tony for his most valuable contribution to the work of the Commission over the last six years and paid tribute to his contributions to Catholic education in NSW and Australia.

15. **Other Actions**

The Commission endorsed:

- the CEC/CESWCC submission to the Early Childhood Funding Review;
- the request to the NSW Department of Education and Communities for the renewal of the VET in Schools Program funding; and
- the renewal of the CEC QBE Work Experience / Placement liability policy.

John Kitney

**Commission Secretary**

2 March 2012
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 as at 31 January 2012 is as follows (figures presented to the November 2011 CEC meeting are bracketed): 421 (311) at full acquitted status; 270 (355) at completed status; and 33 (55) under construction.

The percentage of projects at acquitted or completed status is 95.6%. Expenditure claims on P21 projects is at 99.2%. $7 million is yet to be claimed on projects completed or under construction, apart from retention amounts amounting to $29 million.

**NSW BUILDING GRANTS SCHEME**

The NSW 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. DEC has released its Guidelines for the Program.

**TRADE TRAINING CENTRES**

The Minister announced the outcomes for Round 4 on 16 December 2011. Nine of the ten CBGA applications were supported for a total of $11.15 million, $760,000 on top of the prescribed budget. One application was not approved on the grounds of duplication of courses/TTC facilities in the local area. The CBGA argued strongly with DEEWR before the Minister’s decision to have all 10 submitted applications funded.

Commissioners noted that nominated grants are ‘up to’ amounts, depending upon the detail of the final school project agreement with DEEWR. A DEEWR template for the next stage of the process requesting MOUs, plans, detailed costs and so on will be with projects and the CBGA by mid to late February 2012. The CBGA is expected to manage the process of ensuring that all required information is provided by the project sponsors and forwarded to DEEWR in a timely manner.

**DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION**

The Australian Government has promised additional funding for “sustainment” of the computer program in the 2012 - 13 financial year. The CBGA has been notionally allocated $14 million for the financial year, anticipating $7 million in second half 2012 and the balance in first half 2013. There are no funding guarantees beyond that period.

Commissioners noted that “sustainment” funding means replacing computers more than four years old at a rate of 70% of a DEEWR yet-to-be-determined computer cost. In first half 2012, DEEWR is reviewing the extent of “sustainment” and will determine a cost for replacement computers.

John Kitney  
**Commission Secretary**  
2 March 2012