The 340th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 19 September 2012 in the Clancy/Gilroy Rooms of the Polding Centre. The meeting was chaired first by Commissioner Peter Turner then by Bishop Anthony Fisher OP.

Bishop Anthony and Brian Croke were required to attend an urgent education meeting in Canberra with Prime Minister Julia Gillard and so were late for the Commission meeting.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. **Early Childhood Working Party**

Commissioners noted that the Early Childhood Forum was held on 18 September 2012. The Forum was facilitated by Anne Lane pbvm and the recorder was Dr Berenice Kerr rsm. 36 delegates attended the Forum which was the first activity of the Early Childhood Education Working Party. The main purpose of the Working Party is to develop CEC advice for the NSW/ACT Bishops on the nature and scope of CEC’s new responsibilities for Early Childhood Education.

Nominations were called for the Working Party in August 2012 from Diocesan Directors, Congregational Principals, CatholicCare, CCSP, ACU and Notre Dame. The Working Party will hold its first meeting on 22 October 2012 at CEC.

Commissioners confirmed the membership of the Early Childhood Education Working Party and agreed its terms of reference. As noted, the Working Party will next meet on 22 October 2012 and an initial report is to be presented to the 21 November 2012 Commission meeting.

2. **2013 CEC Draft WorkPlan**

Commissioners noted that the CEC has made good progress with the 2012 WorkPlan. A half year progress report was presented to the 18 July 2012 Commission meeting, as has been the practice in past years.

Discussion took place on the question as to the extent to which much of the detail of the draft WorkPlan is still relevant given recent State events impacting the funding available to schools.

Commissioners agreed that since the CEC WorkPlan is a living document and that unanticipated issues arise which can be major in nature that Working Plan implementation requires flexibility both in relation to the priorities of the CEC Secretariat and with respect to the setting of the Commission agenda.
Commissioners concurred with the proposed change of format with part one being the strategic issues to be addressed by the Commission and part two being exclusively CEC Secretariat operational activities. In doing so Commissioners noted that all activities must be within the remit of the CEC Charter.

Commissioners agreed that school funding is now the central planning issue for 2013 especially given the recent decision by the NSW government to cap State grants funding for four years. The critical importance of the processing of the Gonski Report in respect of Commonwealth funding from 2014 was also discussed. In this context Commissioners agreed to recommence the previous Commission practice of having a Commission Planning Day as part of the annual process to prepare the CEC WorkPlan.


Commissioners noted commencement of negotiations with State and Territory governments on Gonski Review implementation issues.

Commissioners noted that the NCEC is now completing its external expert research and data analysis work. The final two pieces of work now under final review are

- University of Canberra (NATSEM): Review of the Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA); and
- Ernst and Young: Analysis of separate SES values for primary schools within the Gonski model.

It is anticipated that the analysis work over the next three months will include quite specific modelling. This will largely be done by State and Territory CECs as they check data and projected funding outcomes against both statistical modelling and local knowledge.

4. **NSW Per Capita Grants**

On 4 September 2012 Minister Adrian Piccoli NSW Minister for Education advised the Executive Directors of both CEC and AIS that the pool of funds for per capita grants to support NSW non-government schools would be cut by $67 million from 2013. Organised opposition to this decision ensued and on 11 September 2012 the Minister announced a revised approach involving a freeze of non-government school grants for four years commencing with the 2013/14 financial year.

Commissioners reviewed the State Government events of the previous two weeks. In recognizing that Catholic education is entering a changed funding environment, the Commission agreed that certain issues require urgent consideration. These issues include:

- Counteracting Government cutbacks;
- Minimising the impact of the State freeze on the non-Government sector pool;
- Ensuring that Catholic school expenditure is as efficient as possible;
- Catholic School Fees and the capacity of Parents to pay;
- CEC Public Policy Committee Review;
- CEC access to media strategic advice and management options;
- Political engagement by schools; and
- Update advice for Bishops.
5. **School Attendance: 100 Day Exemption from Attendance**

In 2010 the NSW Education Minister, under s25 of the *Education Act*, delegated to all principals of Registered non-government schools, and to each person or body appointed under s40 of the Education Act to be the approved authority for a system or proposed system of non-government schools, the power to grant and cancel a Certificate of Exemption from being enrolled at and/or attending school for periods totalling 50 days in a twelve month period.

Recently, the NSW Education Minister approved the extension of this power to delegates in the non-government school sector to exempt students from attendance at their school of enrolment for periods totalling 100 days in a twelve month period.

Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities are considering how they will exercise their extended delegations and associated legal duties.

6. **Agreements Endorsed by the Commission**

The Commission endorsed the following:

- the MoneySmart Schools National Partnership Agreement between the State of NSW and the Catholic Education Commission;
- the Focus Schools National Partnership Agreement between the State of NSW and the Catholic Education Commission NSW;
- the variation to the National Partnership for the Teacher Quality Funding Agreement;
- the Accountability Report in respect of the annual State Government Drug Education Grant; and
- the 2011 Certificate of Compliance with the Australian Government in respect of educational accountability requirements.

7. **Commonwealth Charities Bill Update**

It was noted that following Catholic sector representations the Australian Government intends to make important amendments to the current Charities Bill. Key advised amendments are:

- Basic Religious Charities (BRC) – The definition will be amended such that a BRC can operate any DGR fund endorsed under Division 30 of the Income Tax Assessment Act providing the total turnover of the DGR fund does not exceed $250,000 per annum.
- Reporting by non-Government schools – The legislation will be amended such that the ACNC must accept (rather than “might” or “may”) reports prepared for the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) for the initial period of 3 years of transition.
- Governance – Additional amendments around consultation and a specific requirement that the Minister must be satisfied that those affected by new or changed regulations have been appropriately consulted. It was noted that any regulation would still be a disallowable instrument and it was also noted that most religious charities would not be subject to regulations prescribing governance standards

ACBC and NCEC continue to monitor passage of the Bill. CEC implementation advice for schools will be developed during term four, assuming the amended Bill passes through Parliament.
8. The Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

At its 3 August 2012 meeting, the Standing Council for Schools, Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) approved “The Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework.” This Framework identifies the processes needed to build an effective performance and development culture within all schools. In addition, the Framework promotes the central role of professional learning in improving teacher and school leader practice. All NSW Catholic schools will need to work with this Framework as part of the Australian Government’s “Better Schools” agenda.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
22 October 2012
Catholic Block Grant Authority NSW (CBGA) Briefing to the Commission

The Commission noted the briefing from the CBGA:

GENERAL CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAM

Commissioners considered the six new places projects being recommended by the SPC to the CBGA Delegate (total project value of $15,155,091 and total grants value of $10,608,564). Commissioners also considered the seven existing places projects being recommended (total projects value of $30,046,603 and total grants value of $18,941,110).

The Commission endorsed the recommendations of the SPC in relation to the 2012 capital grants and noted that new procedures put in place for the 2013 capital grants round require DA approval before submission to the CBGA and consideration by the SPC.

BER P21 PROGRAM

The status of the P21 projects as at 31 August 2012 is as follows (figures presented to the 23 August 2012 Commission meeting for July are bracketed):

- 686 (662) at full acquitted status;
- 34 (58) at completed status;
- 1 (1) under construction.
- 99% of projects are fully acquitted or 92% by value.

TRADE TRAINING CENTRES

The CBGA has paid over $2.2 million in project funds during August 2012.

Construction also commenced during August on Round 4 projects at Red Bend Catholic College, Forbes and St Joseph’s Catholic High School, Albion Park.

DEEWR is collating case studies of TTC projects so as to assess educational outcomes, and several schools have supplied student quotes and photos to be used in DEEWR publications.

DIGITAL EDUCATION REVOLUTION

CBGA proposed several administrative improvements about DER funding, and DEEWR has now formally accepted these improvements for the additional $17 m in DER funding to sustain the number of computers in schools.

CBGA will soon advise Diocesan Directors and Principals of Congregational Schools of the amount they will receive for the sustainment of computers.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
22 October 2012