SUMMARY REPORT

The 348th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 24 July 2013 in the Clancy/Gilroy Rooms of the Polding Centre. The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Peter Turner.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. Commonwealth’s ‘Better Schools’ Funding

Commissioners noted the press release from the NCEC dated 23 July 2013 welcoming the commitment by all State and Territory Catholic Education Commissions to the Commonwealth Government’s ‘Better Schools Plan’ funding arrangements for 2014 to 2019. In NSW, these new arrangements will deliver a modest $19 million real increase in school funding for 2014. From 2014 to 2019, the agreement will progressively deliver increased Commonwealth funding to each State’s Catholic education system based upon common measures of student need across all education sectors.

Commissioners requested the CEC Resources Policy Committee to consult widely on 2014 funding allocation options and involve all Diocesan Chief Financial Officers and the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes. This consultation will be an opportunity for stakeholders to be involved in the process of funding allocation planning.

Commissioners agreed that the use of the $19 million real increase in Commonwealth funding for NSW Catholic schools in 2014 needs to be clearly targeted given that more substantial increases will from 2017 be attracted to the NSW Catholic Schools System. Whilst the Commonwealth Education Minister will not dictate the CEC allocation method, the Commission formula needs to be approved by DEEWR consistent with Education Act requirements.

The proposed MOU with the Catholic sector will need to cover the principles of allocation at a high level including the equity issues to be addressed by the CEC funding formula. Commissioners noted that a staged implementation will be required given the structural changes that are implicit in the new funding formula and the need to be described in the MOU. Diocesan Plans will nest within the CEC MOU.

Commissioners expressed thanks to all Catholic representatives involved in the consultative process with the Australian and NSW governments.
2. Students with Disabilities Funding from 2014

Commissioners discussed two long standing and ongoing review projects which have been informing engagement with SWD support, funding and DDA compliance matters:

(1) The CEC Special Education Project; and
(2) Catholic Special Schools Review Matters.

As part of the new National Funding Model (the “Gonski reforms”) an innovative process and mechanism for determining the funding loading for students with disability is being developed. Implementation is taking place in stages from 2013 – 2015. For NSW Catholic Schools, this DEEWR process closely aligns with the CEC Students with Disabilities planning / profiling process.

It was agreed that Commissioners also need to assess options for the management of the SWD Loading for Regular schools for 2014.

Commissioners discussed Students with Disability Funding issues in the context of the new National Funding Model, including the following matters:

- the interim nature of the 2014 186% loading and the fact the resulting funding is likely to be atypically high compared with projected funding from 2015;
- work load issues at both Diocesan and School levels with regard to the implementation of the New National Data Collection for SWD. In this context the point was made that DEEWR should be asked to approve System level aggregation of the $400 per school implementation support funding; and
- the possible need to stage implementation changes over two or more years: “That is how much change can be accommodated for 2014?”

Discussion also focused on the ongoing work of the CEC Special Education Project Steering Group. Key issues being considered by this group include:

- Management and funding of Aspect Autism Satellite Classes, including responsibly for provision of teacher aids;
- Individual Plan implementation and support issues;
- SWD data collection Privacy issues; and
- Emerging NDIS issues, including any implications for the funding of and eligibility for student special transport.

3. Early Childhood Education

Commissioners noted the draft versions of the Early Childhood Education and Care Report and the Supplementary Report on Out of School Hours Care being advice developed by the Early Childhood Working Party and the Education Policy Committee.

With regard to finalising the Early Childhood report, Commissioners noted that:

- there is evidence that, increasingly, some Catholic agencies, including parishes, are experiencing difficulties in sustaining Early Childhood services. There is a possible expectation that local Diocesan Catholic School Authorities will assume responsibility for services which are under threat of not meeting the new standards due to cost pressures.
- the report should more clearly articulate that “supporting families” is a key reason for providing Catholic early childhood services, in addition to educating children.
NCEC and Diocesan studies support the report’s finding that the absence of government funding inhibits the implementation of a Catholic sector working model for early childhood service provision.

The report should identify, if possible, a mainstream early childhood service model which could be implemented state-wide.

With regard to finalising the Supplementary Report on Out of School Hours Care, Commissioners noted the potential risks for Catholic school authorities related to the variety of existing models involving legal and third party providers. The report from a recent study conducted in Sydney Archdiocese will contribute to this section of the CEC report.

4. **Great Teaching Inspired Learning (GTIL)**

Commissioners discussed the link between the State GTIL reforms and National Plan for School Improvement requirements. Discussion focused on:

- Entry to teacher education;
- Accreditation of pre-2004 teachers; and
- DEC alignment of salary scales for Teaching Standards from 2015.

Commissioners were advised that Minister Piccoli is scheduled to make a set of GTIL policy announcements during Education Week.

The key task for CEC and Catholic Church Employment Relations over the coming month or two will be engaging with the NSW Institute of Teachers’ Discussion Paper on “A five year transition process to bring all teachers under the scope of the Institute of Teachers Act”.

It was noted that CCER is being kept fully advised on this policy priority. Commissioners reflected on possible IR issues arising.

5. **Commission Decisions**

The Commission:

- endorsed the 2013 VETASSESS Agreement;
- approved the CECNSW More Support for Students with Disability (MSSD) Implementation Plan for 2014;
- endorsed the 2014-2016 *Funding Agreement in respect of the Delivery of Road Safety Education in Schools Program* with Transport for NSW; and
- endorsed the *First and Second Quarterly Reports on Road Safety Education for NSW Catholic Schools for 2013*.

6. **2013 RSL Art Awards**

On Monday 1 July, the RSL Anzac Art Awards competition for 2013 was launched by Monsignor Brian Rayner RANR at Polding House. The launch coordinated by Tony McArthur, featured students from Catholic, Independent and NSW Government schools who were successful in the inaugural competition in 2012. The launch was attended by the RSL State President Don Rowe AM, colleagues from AIS and DEC and parents of the students. Students’ art work was prominently displayed. The theme of the 2013 competition is “Face of Anzac”:


John Kitney  
Commission Secretary  
9 August 2013