CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, NEW SOUTH WALES

THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH MEETING
18 September 2013

SUMMARY REPORT

The 350th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 18 September 2013 in the Clancy/Gilroy Rooms of the Polding Centre. The meeting was chaired by Commissioner Deputy Chair, Peter Turner.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. National Funding Model for Schools – Memorandum of Understanding

There is a bilateral agreement between the Australian and New South Wales Governments for the implementation of the Better Schools Program 2014 – 2019. The CEC is required to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Australian Government in respect of funding for NSW Systemic Schools by 31 December 2013. This MOU inter alia outlines principles for the distribution of Commonwealth funding across NSW Systemic Schools which will need to be agreed by the new Commonwealth Minister for Education Christopher Pyne.

Commissioners agreed that there are common funding Principles that apply across all NSW Catholic schools, namely:

- the provision of high quality education in the context of the Catholic faith and the Church’s education mission;
- nurture the God–given human dignity of all their students;
- support the right of Parents to choose the education they want for each child; and
- access for all students subject to availability of places and a priority for Catholic students.

These Principles are to be applied in the context of a partnership between Governments, Parents and Catholic Schools Authorities to ensure the delivery of quality Catholic education in a safe and secure environment for students.

Government funding is delivered in a structured way to remedy identified access impediments that need to be addressed in order to achieve fairness for all students and equal access to a high quality basic education. Commissioners agreed that the equity loading factors in the new national funding model need to be taken into account in any final CEC funding model.

Commissioners agreed that the purpose of Catholic education is to promote the common good and to assist the marginalised in society. This includes meeting reasonable demands for education services in new areas and urban renewal. It also means being flexible in setting fees for identified groups. Fees need to be set at a level that does not unreasonably impede access to Catholic schools nor interfere with their financial viability.
Commissioners agreed that language in the Principles is important. Terminology needs to be tight and avoid ambiguity. Catholic schools are committed to delivering high quality education according to the mission of the Catholic Church. They do so in partnership with Governments and Parents and they use their best endeavours to provide access to all families who are desirous of a Catholic education.

Commissioners will consider 2nd Draft Principles and 2014 funding criteria at their 23 October 2013 meeting.

2. CEC School Counsellors Working Party

Commissioners considered draft advice from the CEC School Counsellors Working Party. Commissioners considered the three most contestable issues of the Report, namely:

- The provision of counselling in the context of the school’s duty of care and the particular capacity of any particular school to resource an effective counselling service;
- Principal access to Counsellor records; and
- The capacity of students (children) to self-refer to a counsellor.

A question was asked as to why two lines of accountability are mapped out:

- one to the clinical supervisor; and
- one to the School Principal.

Commissioners were advised that this is based on both DEC procedures and various Codes of Practice considerations for those professional bodies to which Counsellors belong.

The ultimate legal responsibility of each school proprietor for duty of care issues was discussed. In this context, it was requested that the Guidelines be amended to include a clear statement on the legal responsibilities of the school proprietor with respect to a school’s duty of care and the resulting need for School Principals to be kept advised of student welfare needs.

Overall Commissioners expressed support for the document and recommendations arising. The Commission will consider a 2nd Draft at the 23 October 2013 Commission meeting.

3. NSW Education Act: Section 21 Amendment and State Funding for Catholic Schools

On the 4 August 2013, the then Commonwealth Minister for Education Bill Shorten finalised the NSW NERA Bilateral Agreement for the implementation of NERA with NSW Premier Hon Barry O’Farrell. Commissioners noted that the NSW National Funding Model State grants consistency review process will commence shortly and will apply for 2015 onwards. NSW Minister Piccoli has advised that the current State funding processes and outcomes will remain in place for 2014.

The new funding arrangements require the Amendment of Section 21, the non-government schools funding section of the State Education Act, in the October/November 2013 session of the NSW Parliament. CEC is currently exploring amendment wording with NSW Education Minister Piccoli.
4. **Great Teachers Inspired Learning: Reforming Teacher Accreditation**

On 13 August 2013, the NSW Education Minister Piccoli launched the implementation of GTIL reform priorities for NSW schools.

Two key reforms with which the Catholic sector will need to engage are:

- **Moving to standards–based career structure**
  
  proposals to align salary progression to the attainment of the Australian Standards for Teachers

- **Keeping Teachers at their Professional Best**
  
  In addition a third priority GTIL action has emerged and this is the finalisation of Institute of Teachers procedures for the revocation of the accreditation of teachers who are not meeting the required professional standards. A paper on this issue will be provided to the October meeting.

Commissioners noted:

- that CEC has advocated for the inclusion of all teachers under the remit of the NSW Institute of Teachers;
- NPSI requires the application of AITSL Standards to all teachers;
- the need to progress this reform with sensitivity to the work load implications for teachers and Principals; and
- the scale of the project, even given the timeframe across 2014 to 2018.

The following response timeline was discussed:

- CEC feedback to Institute of Teachers required by 1 November 2013;
- the Education Policy Committee will consider on 2 October 2013;
- CEC GTIL Working Party will meet on 11 October 2013; and
- the Commission will consider a draft feedback paper at its 23 October 2013 meeting.

5. **Brother John Taylor CFC Fellowship**

This year the Commission approved the establishment of the Brother John Taylor CFC Fellowship. The first Fellowship of up to $25,000 will be awarded in 2014. The Fellowship replaces the Annual Award for excellence in Catholic school education. The Fellowship is a natural progression of the Award.

The Fellowship is offered to Catholic educationists in their mid-career to further develop their expertise and be able to share their research activities with colleagues through the publication of their Fellowship Report.

6. **Commission Decisions**

The Commission endorsed the 2012 certificate of compliance with Australian Government educational accountability requirements.
7. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010 – 2014 review and extension

CEC has been advised through NCEC that the expiring National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan is to be revised and extended for years 2015 – 2019 inclusive. Action Plan accountabilities are likely to be embedded in NPSI requirements for all schools. Also Action Plan initiatives could be linked to National Funding Model Loading funds for Aboriginal students.

CEC through NCEC will engage in Action Plan review processes. Both the CEC Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and the CEC Education Policy Committee will engage with the Action Plan review process. An advisory paper on Action Plan review matters will be provided to the 20 November 2013 Commission meeting.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
17 October 2013
Catholic Block Grant Authority NSW (CBGA) Briefing to the Commission

The Commission noted the briefing from the CBGA:

**GENERAL CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAM**

Commissioners endorsed the State Priority Committee’s recommendations for fourteen projects for 2013. $16.2 million is recommended for six projects for new places, and further $17.7 million to eight further projects for existing places. Approval by the Commonwealth Minister for Education is due by 31 December 2013.

John Kitney  
Commission Secretary  
17 October 2013