THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY FIRST MEETING

23 October 2013

SUMMARY REPORT

The 351st meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 23 October 2013 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. National Funding Model for Schools – Memorandum of Understanding

At their 18 September 2013 meeting, Commissioners discussed how the CEC, as a school ‘representative body’ and ‘approved system authority’ will be signatory to two separate but related Memoranda of Understanding: one (MOU 1) to cover the Commonwealth and State grants and the other (MOU 2) to cover the activities and administration required by the NSW Catholic system to meet the requirements of the previous government’s Better Schools agenda.

Minister Pyne is expected to refocus the new Government’s requirements under the Australian Education Act. This may result in a significant reduction of the previous Government’s Better Schools/NPSI requirements or a new approach.

Dioceses have commenced (re)development of Diocesan plans which will address the Better Schools four signature reforms and five planning areas. The CEC will convene the next meeting of Diocesan representatives, possibly at short notice, when Minister Pyne confirms the new Government’s requirements.

Commissioners reviewed both:

- the outcomes of the 8th October inter-Diocesan MOU response planning forum; and
- Commonwealth advice provided at the 14 October 2013 NCEC briefing for all Australian Diocesan and State Directors.

It was agreed to progress MOU response contingency planning applying the advice arising from the 8 October 2013 CEC forum.

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

Commissioners reviewed the need to amend Section 21 of the NSW Education Act as a consequence of the adoption of the National Funding Model by NSW and the Commonwealth. A late paper letter of advice was tabled setting out suggested CEC changes to the Minister’s draft amendment. It was advised that AIS supports the CEC changes.
Commissioners asked how, with the repeal of the 25% Government school expenditure nexus provision, the new section will guarantee a sustained minimum grant for non-government schools? The point was made that the CEC changes to the Section 21 amendment are intended to address the “floor” grant issue.

In the context of the above discussion of grant maintenance the additional point was made that CEC is requesting that a Statutory review requirement be included in the new section. An initial review of the operation of the new Section 21 would be required in three years’ time and then every five years. This mechanism is intended to address unknown and / or unintended consequences of amending section 21.

3. **Great Teachers Inspired Learning (GTIL): Reforming Teacher Accreditation**

At their 18 September 2013 meeting, Commissioners considered paper 350/7.4/1 “Great Teaching Inspired Learning (GTIL): Developments”, noting that Teachers who were teaching prior to October 2004 are not currently captured under the NSW Institute of Teachers Act and as such are not required to be accredited with the NSWIT.

With the adoption of the GTIL reforms, it is the intention of Minister Piccoli to bring all teachers under the requirements of amended NSW Institute of Teachers legislation. This will require all teachers to be accredited, including those previously not subject to the Act. In the Catholic sector this group is around 66% of classroom teachers. The percentage may be higher in the metropolitan Dioceses and Congregational schools.

Commissioners endorsed the seven GTIL Action 10.1 response criteria set out in the paper.

Discussion focused on the tension between the Commission’s aims of:
- avoiding simplistic “Deeming”; and
- avoiding excessive compliance burden for Diocesan and independent school TAAs.

The scale of the Catholic sector task was discussed: 66% of existing teachers. Also the issue of transition to retirement teachers” was noted.

Commissioners were advised that the necessary legislation for the new Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Studies (BoSTES) will be introduced to State Parliament in the November 2013 session. BoSTES will take responsibility for activities under GTIL.

The need for continuing close liaison with CCER was agreed.

Discussion took place on the “Professional Learning Plan” for individual teachers implementation strategy. This was thought to be consistent with existing Catholic sector best practice.

4. **VET Regulations: ASQA Issues**

The new national VET regulator, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), commenced operations on 1 July 2011. RTOs wishing to renew their registration must be able to demonstrate to ASQA that they are delivering quality industry training and assessment outcomes. In addition, all RTOs must continuously improve their training and assessment outcomes in order to meet the needs of industry and learners.
Commissioners expressed concern about ASQA developments including:

- excessive and unrealistic ASQA requirements;
- the real threat to continued VET provision by NSW Catholic schools;
- the disconnect between educational aims and industry aims for VET; and
- the need for Minister Piccoli to engage and assist with the VET “crisis”.

The new Commonwealth Ministerial arrangements for VET were discussed. The split between Educational Portfolio responsibilities for VET in Schools and Industry Portfolio responsibility for ASQA was identified as highlighting the focus in policy environment at the National level on ASQA as an industry training regulator disconnected from educational imperatives.

Commissioners agreed that a VET response is required at both CEC and Diocesan (RTO) levels.

5. Commission Decisions

The Commission:

1) approved the 2014 CEC Budget and Strategic WorkPlan and forwarded it the NSW Bishops for endorsement;

2) approved the filling of certain vacancies on the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee, Audit and Risk Management Committee and Resources Policy Committee;

3) endorsed and adopted the 2014 funds allocations to Dioceses for the NSW Road Safety Education Program and noted that allocated funding to Dioceses must support Road Safety Education across all schools both Systemic and Congregational;

4) endorsed the revised Anaphylaxis Guidelines and noted that they will be made available on the CEC website;

5) endorsed the 2012 CEC Annual Report and authorised it being loaded on to the CEC website; and

6) endorsed the proof of concept of the revamped format of the NSW Catholic Schools Statistics 2012 Summary Report and noted that the NSW 2013 Catholic Schools Statistics Report will be tabled at the 24 July 2014 Commission meeting.

6. Revised Privacy Compliance Manual For Schools

CECNSW coordinates and hosts advice on Commonwealth Privacy law compliance issues for Catholic schools. At the 14 February 2013 meeting Commissioners were advised of the need to amend Privacy Compliance advice for all Australian non-government schools as a consequence of the Commonwealth 2012 Privacy Amendment Act. At that time it was further advised that the 2012 amendments come into force from March 2014. Commissioners are now advised that the joint NCEC/ISCA Privacy Manual has been revised. An implementation workshop for Diocesan compliance officers was advised for Wednesday 30 October 2013. A follow-up day for Congregational schools will be organised for mid-November. The revised Privacy Manual for Catholic schools will be shortly uploaded to the CEC website under Programs / Compliance.
7. **Diocesan Directors National Meeting with NCEC**

On 14 and 15 October 2013 a meeting of all State and Diocesan directors of Catholic Education was sponsored by the NCEC. The first day focused on the current status of the implementation of the new funding model for schools and the new Commonwealth government’s agenda for schools. Commonwealth Department of Education Associate Secretary Tony Cook attended the meeting and provided helpful information. The following day focused on the NCEC Statutes, Terms of Reference from the Australian Catholic Bishops’ Commission (ACBC) and recommendations of the Bishops’ Commission for Catholic Education (BCCE).

8. **Catholic School Parents Association: Establishing a National Voice**

On 14 October 2013, *Catholic School Parents Australia* (CSPA) was officially launched in Sydney. For the first time, all state and territory Catholic parent bodies have a common national parent body. Brian Croke, Executive Director, CECNSW and Grainne Norton, former CEC Commissioner, Chair of Council of Catholic School Parents and member of the NCEC Parent Committee addressed the representatives of the constituent bodies. On 15 October 2013 CSPA conducted its inaugural Annual General Meeting, chaired by Tony McArthur from CEC. The meeting endorsed Tony O’Byrne as Chair following out of session voting. Following the AGM, CSPA conducted its first meeting under its new Chair.

9. **Emergency Management for Schools**

During October there were a number of uncontrolled bushfires threatening life and property in NSW, resulting in many school closures. The CEC and Diocesan emergency communication systems developed in 2011 and 2012 have been put to their first test. The school communities of St Columba’s College and St Thomas Aquinas’ Primary Springwood have lost homes. Fortunately no lives were lost. CEC is a conduit for information from the State Emergency Operations Centre.

10. **On Line NAPLAN**

It is currently planned by Education Ministers that in May 2016, NAPLAN will be undertaken in an on-line mode for the first time. Among other things, this will enable more customised and individualised tests. Planning for NAPLAN on-line is currently being undertaken by ACARA and Education Services Australia (ESA). A crucial part of planning is assessing the capacity of all schools to provide the required infrastructure. A consultation between Diocesan personnel and ESA was held at CEC on 20 September 2013. Dioceses are now evaluating and reporting on their readiness for on-line NAPLAN.

John Kitney  
Commission Secretary  
7 November 2013