THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY THIRD MEETING
11 December 2013

SUMMARY REPORT

The 353rd meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 11 December 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 Schools Funding for 2014 and 2015

Commissioners considered four papers regarding Commonwealth funding of NSW Catholic schools.

The Commission authorised the CEC Executive Director to:

- execute the Section 99 Implementation Plan which outlines 2014 accountabilities for schools funding; and
- sign the MOU recognising the CEC as the representative body for the NSW Catholic Schools System (across 11 NSW dioceses) and consequently for all NSW Catholic Systemic schools and those Congregational schools who nominate CEC as their representative body.

Commissioners noted that the Australian Department of Education has written to all NSW Congregational schools requesting that they nominate their representative body – either CEC or AIS – and make their election by mid – February 2014. This action by the DoE runs contrary to the long term decision by the NSW Bishops to establish CEC as the sole Catholic voice for all NSW Catholic schools.

Commissioners also discussed information to hand about 2014 Commonwealth funding. Commissioners noted that the DoE has not yet provided detail on how all the equity loadings were calculated. This makes resource planning difficult going forward.

The Commission has decided to manage 2014 as a transition year in this Quadrennium and consequently the funding distribution across the 11 Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities in 2014 will be proportional to the 2013 distribution. Congregational schools now receive all funding directly from the Commonwealth. The Commission has requested its Resources Policy Committee during 2014 to provide funds distribution options for 2015 onwards taking into consideration Commonwealth equity loadings and ‘capacity to contribute’.
2. Out of School Hours Care Services and Catholic Schools

At their 21 August 2013 meeting, Commissioners considered the CEC Working Party Early Childhood Education and Care Report and the Supplementary Report on Out of School Hours Care Report. Commissioners agreed that, while these two reports mapped out the territory well, a smaller Working Party should develop the vision and outline strategies for implementation, including the provision of risk analysis and development of planning strategies to assist success at the Diocesan level.

Commissioners reviewed CEC Early Childhood Working Party activity and priorities since the 21 August 2013 Commission meeting.

Key external drivers of advice were cited being:

- The Commonwealth Government’s Productivity Commission Review; and
- The importance of research on best practice including international research.

With respect to the current Productivity Commission Inquiry, it was agreed that CEC will engage through the anticipated issues paper from the Commonwealth which should be available by April/May 2014.

Commissioners discussed how the provision of implementation advice aligns with the Commission’s Charter. It was noted that all advice arising will be for optional adoption by each Diocese.

The Commission endorsed the 12 OSHC implementation questions and the methodology proposed for the Diocesan feedback process. Commissioners noted that feedback from Diocesan Directors on the twelve polling questions will inform the final advice to be provided to the 19 March 2014 Commission meeting.

3. CEC Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee 2014 WorkPlan

The Terms of Reference for the Core Committee: Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee calls for the annual preparation of a forward meeting plan with meeting dates to be agreed by the Committee. This paper presented the forward meeting plan for endorsement by the Commission.

Aboriginal Commissioner Sharon Cooke gave the Commission an overview of the 2014 Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee Work Plan. Commissioners noted the priorities outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan together with the updated NSW Aboriginal Education Strategic Planning Policy Framework.

Commissioners re-confirmed that achieving the COAG objectives for bridging the student performance gap in Indigenous Education is a high priority for NSW Catholic schools. It was also agreed that it is very important that there be one Catholic voice in furthering Indigenous education issues.

The Commission endorsed the 2014 Work Plan for the CEC Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee and noted the 2014 meeting dates of the Committee.
4. **NSW Languages Review: CEC Submission**

At the November 2013 meeting, the Commission noted that the Board of Studies is conducting the NSW Languages Review. The consultation end date of 13 December 2013 was noted. The Commission authorised the CEC Executive Director, with the advice of the CEC Education Policy Committee, to prepare a high level response to the Review’s six policy proposals.

Commissioners noted the limited time in which to finalise the CEC Submission.

The tabled high level response was endorsed subject to four key amendments:

- The critical importance of Government resourcing (funding) must be stated in the opening section. The viability and sustainability of reforms in languages education are heavily resource dependant.

- Any commitment by CEC to “all students of non-English speaking background” being given the opportunity to study their first language must be qualified by reason of the resource implications. A range of delivery options should be promoted including Community Schools and online delivery. Resource implication must be acknowledged.

- The priority advocated for the three strands of each BOS language syllabus needs to be reassessed. Actual language study is the goal and needs to be promoted in the wording of the CEC submission.

- Consistent with the language learning goal, syllabus strand implementation should address actual language learning from Kindergarten.

Commissioners were advised that CEC’s focus on language learning in Primary Schools will be supported by appropriate use of the 2012 CiBT UK report “Lessons from Abroad: International review of primary languages”.

5. **NSW Catholic Schools Counsellors Report: Advice for School Authorities**

At their 20 November 2013 meeting, Commissioners considered a paper ‘School Counsellors Working Party: Advice for Diocesan Directors and Principals of Congregational Schools’.

The issue of the meaning of the term ‘Administrative Accountability’ as it applies to School Counsellors has been further clarified through discussions with CEC’s legal advisers.

Since the 20 November 2013 Commission meeting, the Australian Counselling Association (ACA) has raised matters relevant to the Report and Recommendations.

Commissioners discussed and endorsed the amended statement on “Responsibilities of the School Authority”. It was noted and agreed that the statement provides an appropriate explanation of the scope of the report’s concept of “Administrative Accountability”. “Administrative Accountability” in turn defines the reporting responsibilities of School Counsellors to School Principals.

Discussion also focused on the issue of clinical supervision and the role of the Clinical Supervisor. The point was made that in respect of the discharge of a school’s duty of care, there needs to be a reporting line between the Clinical Supervisor and the School Authority.
A further issue was raised being the nature of the recommendations: Are they intended to be advisory or mandatory? The point was made that the report is advisory only and that each NSW Catholic Schools Authority will process the recommendations in a manner relevant to its own delivery model for School Counselling.

The Commission adopted the “administrative accountability” advice and requested that the accountability of Clinical Supervisors be clarified. It was agreed to consult with CCER regarding industrial implications of the Report. The Report will be provided to Diocesan Directors and Principals of Congregational schools for their consideration in early 2014.

6. Commission Decisions

The Commission:

1) endorsed the third Quarterly Report on Road Safety Education for NSW Catholic Schools 2013; and

2) endorsed the 2014 More Support for Students with Disabilities distribution totalling $5.8 million.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
19 December 2013