SUMMARY REPORT

The 354th meeting of the Catholic Education Commission, New South Wales was held on 12 February 2014 in the Clancy/Gilroy Rooms of the Polding Centre. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Chair Peter Turner.

A Summary Report of the Commission meeting is provided below:

1. 2014 Recurrent Funding: Update

At the 20 November 2013 Commission Meeting, it was agreed to redistribute the total government recurrent funds received by CEC in 2014 to each Diocese by calculating:

(a) 2014 equivalent of 2013 recurrent grants;
(b) 2014 equivalent of 2013 targeted program grants; and
(c) continuing targeted programs in 2014.

At the 11 December 2013 meeting, Commissioners noted that CEC had not yet received definitive 2014 funding advice from the Commonwealth and State Governments.

During 2013 the Australian Government promised that no school would lose under the new School Resource Standard (SRS), and the SRS guarantees a minimum increase of three per cent per annum for each student from 2013 to 2014. In addition to the three per cent per annum minimum increase, the former Labor Government estimated the CEC would attract an additional $18 million in 2014. Based on these estimates, the CEC since July 2013 has consistently advised Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities to budget conservatively for about a 3.5 per cent per student increase in total government recurrent funding for each student between 2013 and 2014. The actual increase in government recurrent funding per student between 2013 and 2014 is now estimated to be four per cent per annum per student. Commissioners were also reminded that previous annual supplementation of grants processes will no longer apply.

2. 2015 Recurrent Funding: Action Plan

At their 22 August 2013 and 18 September 2013 meetings, Commissioners discussed the draft CEC Resourcing Principles for NSW Catholic Schools. These Principles were subsequently discussed at the Resources Policy Committee and they were finalised at the 12 February 2014 Commission meeting.

Commissioners intend to seek approval of the new 2015 funding model for the NSW Catholic Schools System at the June 2014 meeting of the NSW /ACT Bishops. Commissioners agreed that a 2015 model must be consistent with the six CEC resourcing principles while also reflecting the imperatives of “capacity to contribute”, attracting educationists to areas of need (especially regional and remote schools), and being based upon evidence.
3. **Commonwealth Students First School Improvement Fund Developments: (CEC as “Representative Body”) and MOU**

At their 20 November 2013 meeting, Commissioners determined an approach to allocating anticipated Representative Body funding.

Finalisation of the Representative Body MOU, now known as the “Students First School Improvement Fund”, is delayed to allow further discussions with the Commonwealth in respect of required accountabilities.


In May 2013, the CEC Mission and Identity Working Party was established to progress the *Crossroads* agenda and respond to Recommendations 13 and 14 of the 2010 Review of CEC. Since the May 2013 Commission meeting, the CEC Secretariat, working with the Education Policy Committee, has established the Mission and Identity Working Party (MIWP).

Bishop Anthony Fisher OP joined the 18 October 2013 meeting. David Hutton OAM, Coordinator for Faith Formation and Religious Education Programs, National Catholic Education Commission, attended the fourth meeting on 9 December 2013.

The next meeting of the MIWP takes place on Tuesday 18 February 2014. This meeting will consider how to progress the issues relating to:

- Crossroads Critical Indicators of progress: identifying and responding to response gaps, including the proposed Bishops Crossroads survey; and
- Development of a set of case studies outlining Diocesan initiatives undertaken in response to the release of Crossroads in 2007

The recently (19/12/13) published Vatican paper “Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love” was discussed noting that it is highly relevant to the Working Party’s tasks.

5. **Public Finances Update: Implications for Education**

The tabled paper provided an update on Commonwealth and NSW Public Finances, and allowed Commissioners to discuss both implications for Catholic school education and to assist the Commission in its role as an advocate for public funding of Catholic school education.

6. **The Linksview Bushfire – Lessons for Schools**

Since 2009, the Commission has been required to act as a conduit for State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC) emergency notifications for all NSW Catholic schools. The Hawkesbury Road Project was successfully trialled in March 2013 with St Columba’s College, Springwood and St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, Springwood, two schools vulnerable to bushfire threat. CEC was given access to the Rural Fire Service’s Incident Control Online (ICON) system. On 17 October 2013, a bushfire ignited in bush near Linksview Avenue, Springwood at approximately 1.30 pm. St Columba’s College was cut off and locked down. St Thomas Aquinas Primary School was evacuated. Valuable lessons were learnt from both the bushfire experience of these schools and the preceding trial exercise.

Commissioners agreed that the paper was a very valuable guide for the management of future emergency situations. Commissioners also agreed to hold an Inter-Diocesan Forum on emergency response lessons learnt to be held in mid-2014.
7. **Australian Curriculum Review: CEC Input**

Following up on a 2013 pre-election policy, the Commonwealth Minister for Education the Hon Christopher Pyne MP announced on 10 January 2014 a review of the Australian Curriculum to be conducted by Dr Kevin Donnelly and Professor Ken Wiltshire. Members of the public were invited to make a submission by 28 February 2014. A draft report will be prepared by end-March for further public comment with a view to finalisation in June 2014.

For NSW, the context of any national review of curriculum is that it must necessarily be considered in the context of how NSW constructs, evaluates and approves curriculum through the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards.

In addition to contributing to NCEC and NSW submissions, it is proposed that CEC make its own direct submission to the Review.

8. **Deputy Chair of the Commission for 2014**

Each February, the Commission appoints one of its members to act as Deputy Chair of the Commission for the calendar year. This appointment is critical to the functioning of the Commission where the Chairman is unavailable for Commission meetings and for consultative meetings with Commonwealth and NSW Ministers for Education and Shadow Ministers and other key education and political agencies. Peter Turner was elected Deputy Chair in April 2012. He was reappointed in February 2013 and again in February 2014.

9. **Commission Decisions**

The Commission:

1. adopted the CEC NSW Languages Review policy advice as provided to BoSTES;
2. endorsed the final Drug Education funding advice as provided to Dioceses;
3. decided upon the allocations of 2014 Drug Education funding;
4. considered and made appointments to the CEC Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee for up to three years;
5. approved 2014 targeted program allocations.

10. **Schools and Alcohol Fuelled Violence**

The NSW government has been developing policy responses to the growing community concern about alcohol-fuelled violence, particularly in the Sydney CBD. The Cabinet has been examining a number of possible policy responses and has enacted new laws. NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli, at the request of the Premier, asked the NSW Schools Advisory Council (SAC) to provide advice on the potential for NSW schools to play a role in combatting alcohol fuelled violence. The advice gathered from the education sectors, including from CEC, and developed by the Schools Advisory Council (SAC) for the Minister noted that use and abuse of alcohol is already addressed by NSW education sectors in numerous ways both sectorally and cross-sectorally. Additionally, it is covered in the current NSW PDHPE curriculum for both Years 7 to 10 (mandatory) and Years 11 and 12 (elective).
11. **ACARA Advisory Group Appointment**

Mary Senj, State Coordinator – Aboriginal Education, at CEC has been appointed to the ACARA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group. This group plays an important role in ACARA’s curriculum development process by ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives are appropriately and accurately included in the National Curriculum.

12. **Privacy Law Compliance: New Requirements from March**

Commissioners were reminded that an amended Commonwealth Privacy Act comes into force from March 2014. An updated Privacy Compliance Manual is now available on the CEC website.

John Kitney

**Commission Secretary**

27 February 2014
BRIEFING BY THE CATHOLIC BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY

2014 Capital Grants Application Round

The on-line application system has been configured so applications for capital grant funding can be made for the 2014 application round.

The updated 2014 CBGA guidelines have not been released as yet due to the review of the document to bring it into line with changes from the Schools Assistance Act (2008 to 2013) to the Australian Education Act 2013. Other changes introduced by the Regulations to the Act, the resultant re-write of the Administrative Guidelines (now referred to the “Guide), and the impact on the Administrative Arrangements requires a more thorough review of the CBGA guidelines.

Changes to Australian Government Legislation and NSW Funding Agreement

Additional to the changes in the funding requirements of the Australian Government’s Capital Grants Program, the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities has revised the funding agreement for the NSW Building Grants Assistance Scheme (BGAS). The changes bring their funding agreement more in line to those terms and conditions in the Australian Government’s terms and conditions of funding.

2013 Capital Grants Application Round Projects

For each of the projects approved by the Australian Government, letters of Initial Offer have been issued. The approval of the three 2013 Application Round projects submitted to the NSW Government have being delayed due to the need to have the terms and conditions of the existing agreement varied to include changed conditions.

Trades Skills Centre Program

The Australian Government announced in December, 2013 that the Trade Skills Centre Program (formerly the Trade Training Centre) will not to be funded past Round Five; however, it would honour Round Five Phase One projects approved.

A review of the operation of the program by the incoming government has led to some changes to the proposed operation of the facilities to be constructed. This review has resulted in some changes to the terms and conditions of School Project Agreements.

John Kitney  
Commission Secretary  
27 February 2014