Summary Report of the 355th Commission Meeting

HELD 19 MARCH 2014

The meeting was held in the Polding Centre Sydney and was chaired by Commissioner Jenny Allen.

1) 2013 CEC HSC Outcomes Analysis and Future Options

For each HSC since 2000, the CEC has sponsored the analysis and reporting of HSC data for the purpose of improved teaching and learning and to better inform schools’ and systems’ planning. The analysis has been conducted by Dr John DeCourcy of Parramatta CEO.

Commissioners considered the 2013 HSC Data Analysis report provided by Dr DeCourcy and noted:

- A “dip” in mean percentage difference between students in Catholic schools and the whole-of-state on the TES scale compared to 2012;
- A student undertaking English (Standard) is less than half likely to gain a Band 5 or 6 than in his/her other subjects;
- Continuing trend of below-average participation in some higher-level courses; and
- Discrepancy between results of boys and girls with gender having a bigger effect than SES on student performance.

Commissioners consider that the availability of HSC Analysis is critical to drive school improvement. The existing contract is to be extended for one year to cover the 2014 HSC. Commissioners agreed to explore the possibilities of delivering a more interactive report to School Executives to better assist their understanding of student outcomes, together with a simpler presentation for school communities and parents.

2) Economic Wellbeing: Implications for Schools

Commissioners discussed several initiatives by economists to measure the economic wellbeing of society, organisations, and individuals. While the issues relating to the wellbeing of students are not covered by economic wellbeing initiatives, Commissioners considered it useful to explore how the economic understanding of wellbeing can be applied to schools and students.

Commissioners consider the school to be a core social centre for children and young people. Wellbeing may be a secular term but measurement of wellbeing is a lens to gauge how effective policies are for the health of communities. Commissioners noted that there are a number of methodologies for assessing Wellbeing in schools across many jurisdictions. For Catholic schools the assessment is important and is broader than economic indicators and is located within pastoral care strategies.

Commissioners considered that Wellbeing assessments triangulate data to gauge school performance with the prime emphasis being the student.
Commissioners noted the Wellbeing framework in place at Xavier College Llandilo, which addresses every student for the purposes of:

- realizing his/her potential;
- coping with normal stresses of life;
- working productively and fruitfully; and
- contributing to his/her community.

The need to relate “Wellbeing” to “Pastoral Care” was stressed in the context of the Catholic school.

3) New COAG Attendance Reporting Requirements

As part of a broader range of measures for the purpose of improving Indigenous school attendance, on 13 December 2013, the Council of Australian Governments agreed to ‘improve school attendance data reporting, including:

- Publication of attendance data twice yearly by schools, and
- Publication of the proportion of students attending school less than 90 per cent of the time and data by remoteness area (split by Indigeneity).’

Commissioners reviewed the initiative by COAG to introduce more focused reporting in respect of Indigenous students’ attendance at schools. Commissioners are committed to achieving the COAG objective of halving the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous education outcomes by 2018. This initiative is a step forward in developing strategies to meet this objective. Commissioners noted that Indigenous students are most vulnerable to non-attendance in their early teenage years, and this is particularly true for boys.

Commissioners requested the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee to provide advice to the Education Policy Committee on how to implement and monitor required attendance reporting and how to develop concomitant strategies to improve Indigenous school attendance and educational outcomes.

4) Out of School Hours Care Advice for Diocesan Directors and Congregational Schools

Commissioners discussed four issues:

- Provision of centralised advice to Dioceses on Out of School Hours Care matters (and early childhood services generally);
- Development of a model contract for the engagement of third party providers by Catholic schools authorities;
- Development of compliance checklists for Diocesan administrators and School Principals; and
- Finalisation of Catholic sector Policy Principles to guide CEC engagement with the current Productivity Commission Inquiry into Childcare and early Childhood learning.

The need to clarify Award coverage issues as they impact provider costs was discussed. CCER is providing advice on four relevant Awards: Children’s Services Award 2010, Miscellaneous Workers’ – Kindergartens and Child Care Centres (State) Award, the Clerks Private Sector Award 2010 and the Education Services (Schools) General Staff Award 2010. It was agreed that IR impediments to OSHC and ECE Service delivery need to be addressed.

Finally Commissioners noted that a briefing paper on Productivity Commission Inquiry issues impacting possible Catholic sector ECE service delivery options will be tabled at the 23 April 2014 meeting.
5) **Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Initial Analysis and Crossroads**

Commissioners reviewed:

- *Crossroads* implementation;
- Mission and Identity Working Party advice; and
- The Congregation for Catholic Education paper.

Commissioners noted that the three endeavours are highly related and congruent. In this way the “Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools” paper is a most timely paper for NSW Catholic Schools.

The point was made that the greatest intercultural challenge is the “clash” between Christian culture and secular culture in the Australian context.

Commissioners focused their comments on:

- The Australian Curriculum in NSW Catholic principles and values support documents project; and
- Catholic school enrolment policies and the tension between an expressed priority for Catholic families and the paper’s endorsement of a “Catholic school open to all”.

The point was made that the Congregation for Catholic Education paper needs to read in both the context of:

- Pre-existing Congregation statements on Catholic schooling; and

The intention / need of the Congregation for Catholic Education to address the Universal Church and Catholic schools across the world.

6) **Commission Planning Day 23 July 2014: Steering Group**

Commissioners confirmed the 23 July 2014 Commission Planning Day and approved the establishment of a Commission Planning Day Steering Group comprising:

- Commissioner Greg Whitby;
- Commissioner Danielle Cronin;
- John Kitney; and
- Dr Tony McArthur;

The Steering Group was requested to evaluate the 2013 Planning Day, review critical Commission strategies that can be explored at the 2014 Planning Day and to present to the 21 May 2014 Commission meeting a plan for the 2014 Planning Day.

7) **Australian Curriculum Review: CEC and NCEC Input and Submission**

Both the NCEC and CEC submissions to the Review of the Australian Curriculum were tabled as late papers following circulation by email on 17 March 2014.

Commissioners reviewed both submissions and discussed the implications of the recommendations for both the future of the Australian Curriculum and the future of ACARA.
Commissioners focused their attention on the CEC NSW Submission. The CEC NSW submission recommends:

- combining ACARA and AITSC;
- reviewing and updating the Melbourne Declaration; and
- harmonising State and Territory Education Acts.

While supporting the submission the point was made that the recommendation to combine ACARA and AITSL needs to be monitored to ensure that it is not misrepresented as a case for the abolition of ACARA. The historic and strategic work of ACARA needs to be acknowledged and supported in follow-up contact with both the Review and Minister Pyne.

In this context Commissioners were advised that since ACARA is established by a Commonwealth Act of Parliament changes to its form and functions can only follow a legislative process. By contrast AITSL is a Commonwealth company which can be abolished or reformed by the Commonwealth Minister alone.

Commissioners discussed the BoSTES model of combining both curriculum and teacher standards policy and accountability structures in one statutory entity. The point was made that at both the State and Commonwealth levels this “fusion” should be pursued for policy reasons and not just for cost cutting reasons.

Commissioners agreed that any amalgamation of ACARA and AITSL must be carefully monitored to ensure integrity of purpose and outcomes.

8) Commission Approvals and Endorsements

- Students First School Improvement Plan Funding MOU 2014 – 2017;
- Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee Annual Report 2013;
- DEC-CEC Licence Agreement to provide digital access for the purpose of enhanced tracking and reporting of student data to those Catholic schools which are using the DEC Best Start;
- Agreement with the NSW Department of Education and Communities for digital access to the Literacy Continuum K-10 and the Numeracy Continuum K-10 to enhance tracking and reporting.
- CEC’s 2014 State Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Plan for submission to Minister Piccoli;
- Final distribution of National Partnership Administration funding; and
- 2014 NAPLAN and SMART Service Level Agreement at a total cost per student of $41.90;

9) NSW Catholic Schools Enrolments February 2014

The table attached sets out the latest enrolments for NSW Catholic schools (February 2014). As in recent years, the data shows a steady increase in Catholic school enrolments in both primary and secondary schools in 2014.

However, there has been a decline in primary enrolments in the Dioceses of Parramatta, Wagga and Wilcannia-Forbes, and a decline in secondary enrolments in the Archdiocese of Canberra-Goulburn.
10) NSW Rural and Remote Blueprint


Actions of the strategy are:

- Strengthen early childhood education;
- Broaden range of curriculum opportunities;
- New incentives to attract and retain quality teachers and leaders;
- Establish 15 specialist centres offering inter-agency services.

The NSW Department of Education and Communities has established a Rural and Remote Education Advisory Group, to be chaired by Greg Prior, Deputy Director-General, Schools. Ms Jenny Allen, Executive Director of Bathurst CEO, will represent the CEC on the Advisory Group which first meets on 25 March 2014.
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<td><strong>Total Systemic</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>128,698</strong></td>
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BRIEFING BY THE CATHOLIC BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY

Capital Grants Program

2014 Application Round

The on-line application system has been configured so applications for capital grant funding can be made for the 2014 application round. Assistance can be provided to members of the NSW Catholic Block Grant Authority (CBGA). The updated 2014 CBGA guidelines have now been released following a complete review of the document. This has brought it into line with changes from the *Schools Assistance Act* (2008 to 2013) to the *Australian Education Act 2013*; and other changes introduced by the Regulations to the Act.

Trade Skills Centre Program

The School Project Agreements for the eight *Trades Skills Centres* (formerly the *Trade Training Centres*) have been returned to the Australian Government for execution. One of those agreements has been returned with funds soon to be disbursed in accordance with the Project timeline.

The Australian Government has made a change to the payment process. While it has very little impact on the school it does mean the funds projected to be spent in the fiscal year will no longer be held by the CBGA. This has an impact on the level of undisbursed funds and therefore the ability of the CBGA to accrue interest that can be applied to assist projects.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
11 April 2014