Summary Report of the 357th Commission Meeting

HELD 21 MAY 2014
AT THE POLDING CENTRE, 5TH FLOOR, 133 LIVERPOOL STREET, SYDNEY

1. CEC Grants Distribution Model for 2015

At their December 2013 meeting, Commissioners agreed to develop a new model for distributing across the eleven NSW Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities from 2015 the Commonwealth and NSW Government grants for the NSW Catholic Schools System. It was further agreed that the new model would be presented to the NSW/ACT Bishops for approval at their meeting on 12 June 2014. Commissioners also agreed that 2014 would be a transition year and the Australian Government Department of Education approved this approach.

Commissioners received presentations on resourcing principles and high level assumptions at their 12 February, 19 March and 23 April 2014 meetings.

Commissioners noted that the new Catholic Grants Distribution Model is more evidence based than assumptions based as currently. It also represents an attempt to be more outputs focused than inputs focused.

Commissioners requested that the Executive Director put a paper to the Bishops outlining the issues and recommending that the new Grants Distribution Model be approved for 2015, noting that Commonwealth ministerial approval is also required under the Australian Education Act 2013 and the Australian Education Act Regulation 2013.

2. Students First Support Fund Accountabilities

At their 23 April 2014 meeting, Commissioners considered Students First Support Fund accountability issues. The Commonwealth accepted the CEC’s 2014 activity statement but requested additional information on the success indicators the Commission intends to use to monitor the impact of the identified activities and a notional estimate of how funding will be allocated across each objective.

Following discussions with the Commonwealth, the CEC drafted a statement which included success indicators and a notional budget allocation.

Commissioners noted progress with meeting CEC Students First Support Fund accountabilities.
3. **Review of the Australian Education Legislation Act 2013: NCEC Submission**

On 2 April 2014, Minister Pyne invited the NCEC to submit proposals for ‘removal of the command and control features of the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act) and *Australian Education Regulation 2013* (the Regulation)’. In addition, NSW Minister Piccoli sought input of the Catholic Education Commission NSW to the NSW Government submission to Minister Pyne.

The NCEC proposed specific amendments to the legislation with the objective of:

- reducing the complexity of the funding arrangements for Catholic schools and systems;
- reducing intrusion by the Commonwealth into the operation of schools and the role of Catholic system authorities in decisions on the allocation of funds and management of schools;
- streamlining reporting and data collection; and
- limiting the potential for the exercise of arbitrary Ministerial power.

Commissioners concurred with the views of the NCEC.


At their 23 April 2014 meeting, Commissioners agreed to four Mission and Identity Working Party tasks. The paper provides an update on those tasks:

- The Congregation for Catholic Education paper ‘Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools’ study guide has been drafted;
- The Bishops’ survey of priests and parishioners/parents across a sample 70 parish-school communities is underway and closes on 22 May 2014;
- Dioceses have submitted case studies outlining their implementation of initiatives to address *Crossroads* priorities. The case studies are in the process of editing and formatting; and
- Nominations have been received from nine Diocesan or school-based officers for the Catholic Principles Support Document Project Group.

Commissioners noted that the first stage of the *Crossroads* survey of priests and parishioners/parents has been conducted in a sample 70 parish-school communities. The CEC will prepare a report for the Bishops on the information collected through the survey.
5. **Commonwealth Budget 2014/15**

Commissioners noted that the 2014/15 Commonwealth Budget essentially contained no surprises regarding school funding. The Government had already flagged its intention to abandon any commitment to the significant funding increases for the final two years of the Gonski proposal agreed by the previous Government. This was confirmed in the Budget, as was a decision to index funding only by the Consumer Price Index.

Commissioners noted that the NCEC issued a statement expressing strong concerns with the Government’s decision to use the Consumer Price Index as the basis for school funding indexation after 2017.

The NCEC welcomed the funding certainty for Catholic schools to the end of the 2017 school year but warned that school funding assumptions contained in the Federal Budget for 2018 and beyond will not meet the needs of schools and students.

Commissioners noted that in the last decade, the CPI has averaged less than 3% per annum. This contrasts with school funding increases reflecting real costs in schools of almost 5.5% per annum.

6. **Commission Decisions**

The Commission:

1) approved the 2013 CECNSW Special Purpose Financial Report;

2) endorsed the Vocational Education and Training (VETiS) in Schools Program Funding Agreement 2014. The Agreement provides $852,716 (excluding GST) in funding for the period 1st Jan – 30th June 2014;

3) endorsed the External Provision of HSC VET Funding. The funding provides $1,348,305 (excluding GST) for the period 1st Jan – 30th June 2014. These funds include $56,250 specifically to purchase externally delivered Stage 5 courses;

4) noted that the Executive Director has finalised and executed the Students First Support Fund Activity Statement; and

5) noted the issue of additional accountability requirements being negotiated with the Commonwealth Department of Education.

7. **Agriculture Related Careers Advice and Food and Agriculture Week**

Two recommendations of the recent NSW Government *Agricultural Education Review* ([https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/statistics-and-research/public-reviews-and-enquiries/agricultural-education/full-report.pdf](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/statistics-and-research/public-reviews-and-enquiries/agricultural-education/full-report.pdf)) were that there should be a review into careers advice in NSW schools to ensure students are provided with well-informed advice on possible careers (Recommendation 1) and that there should be an “Food and Agriculture Week” (Recommendation 2). Gerard Delany, State Coordinator Vocational Education has been nominated to represent the Commission on a working party charged with providing a progress report to the Minister in August on the feasibility of having an annual ‘Food and Agriculture Week’.
8. Managing Bushfires and other Emergency situations for Schools

a. Bushfire Preparation Forum

As part of the ongoing development of improved procedures and systems for dealing with schools threatened by bushfires, on 9 May 2014, representatives from the dioceses met at Polding House to consider lessons learnt from the experience of Catholic schools in the bushfires at Winmalee in 2013. It became clear that the fortunate combination of good emergency preparation and leadership, rehearsals and drills, engagement with local agencies and good site preparation, strongly supported by CEO Parramatta, all contributed to the safety of students and staff and the protection of school buildings. However, it would be unwise to believe that these conditions are typical of NSW Catholic schools. While these lessons came from bushfires, the workshop stressed an “all hazards” approach to preparation for emergencies. Participants emphasised the importance of Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities’ support for emergency preparation as a matter for compliance while acknowledging the need for the training and formation of school leadership teams.

b. Meeting with NSW Police, RFS and Sectors regarding Emergency Planning

On 16 May 2014, a meeting was held with NSW Police, the Rural Fire Service and the three school sectors to consider lessons from the 2013 bushfires in Lower Blue Mountains. It was agreed that there needs to be greater cooperation between the different school sectors and that there needs to be a more systematic, integrated approach to preparing school leaders for their emergency management responsibilities. The biannual meetings between Police Local Area Commanders and school principals provide a potential opportunity to address emergency planning issues. A further meeting at CEC is scheduled to include the other emergency combat agencies and senior police.

9. ‘Local Schools: The Heart of the Community’ Discussion Paper

On 11 May 2014 the NSW Shadow Minister for Education and Training released a Discussion Paper which promotes the use of school facilities by the community. The paper notes the school buildings and grounds which could be used by the community and from which schools could earn funds. The paper accepts that there are organisational impediments to the use of schools in this fashion but seeks to encourage community discussion. While the paper does not exclude non-government schools, references to “the department” suggest that the initiative is confined to NSW government schools.
10. **BRIEFING BY THE CATHOLIC BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY**

**Capital Grants Program**

**2014 Application Round – State Priority Committee Meeting 1**

The first meeting of the State Priority Committee Meeting was held from 14 May 2014 to 16 May 2014.

The Committee considered the 39 applications submitted, one application had been withdrawn from the information provided in the last CBGA briefing.

Schools site visits by members of the Committee will be conducted during the period 2 to 27 June, 2014.

**Trade Skills Centre Program**

The Australian Government has sent out the templates for utilisation reporting on “active” Trade Training Centres and these will be sent to Project Managers for completion and return to the NSW Catholic Block Grant Authority 12 June 2014.

Instructions for the completion of the templates will also be forwarded.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
5 June 2014