Summary Report of the 363rd Commission Meeting

HELD WEDNESDAY 19 November 2014
CLANCY/GILROY ROOMS, LEVEL 5, POLDING CENTRE, SYDNEY

1. CECNSW Strategic Directions and Operational Priorities 2015

Commissioners approved the CECNSW 2015 Strategic Directions and Operational Priorities, noting that both the CECNSW 2015 Strategic Directions and Secretariat Work Plan were endorsed by the 13 November meeting of the NSW/ACT Bishops. Commissioners also agreed that the CECNSW 2015 Strategic Directions be published on the CECNSW public website.

Priority CECNSW issues identified were:

- resourcing and structure of NSW Catholic schooling;
- education policy framework;
- Catholic Identity and Mission;
- support for Congregational schools; and
- expanding available data capacity in cooperation with CENet.

2. CECNSW Parliamentary Reception Outcomes

CECNSW held a cocktail reception for NSW Parliamentarians on the evening of 22 October 2014. The reception was hosted by Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP. Approximately 45 parliamentarians from both houses attended (out of the 61 who accepted), including the Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli and the Leader of the Opposition John Robertson. Approximately 30 Catholic education leaders and CECNSW staff also attended.

MPs engaged with Catholic education leaders about local issues and heard short speeches from Archbishop Chair Anthony Fisher OP, the NSW Education Minister and the NSW Opposition Leader.

The reception was regarded as successful by those present. It provided an opportunity for Commissioners/Directors and other Catholic education representatives to engage with MPs and Ministers and build working relationships and/or raise important issues.


Commissioners noted that Minister Ley has received but not yet released the Productivity Commission report. Commissioners also authorised the Executive Director to respond to this report with the advice of the Commission’s ECEC Working Party.

At its 21 August 2014 meeting, the Commission discussed the CECNSW submission in response to the Productivity Commission’s Childcare and Early Learning Draft Report (July 2014). The CECNSW advice was submitted to the Productivity Commission on 5 September 2014.

Commissioners agreed that the Productivity Report may need to be processed out of session. The ongoing role of the Commission’s ECEC Working Party was discussed. Advice from Education Policy will also be sought as required.
4. **Not-for-Profit Compliance: Update and next steps**

The relevant not-for-profit section of the *NSW Education Act* is now Section 83C. This section forms part of a new Division 3 of the Act “Financial Assistance to non-government schools”. The amended NSW Education Act inclusive of section 83C can be found at the following link: [http://www.austlii.edu.au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ea1990104/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/legis/nsw/consol_act/ea1990104/)

Commissioners focused on the repeal of the related entities exemption. Related entities' transactions is the issue requiring advice and guidance.

The concept of “reasonable market value” was discussed.

It was noted the test of compliance involves three interdependent assessments for each transaction:

- Payments meet market value;
- Payments are required for the running of the school; and
- Payments are reasonable.

The point was made that two advisory Fact Sheets have been circulated to Diocesan Directors and Principals of Congregational schools. An implementation forum will be held early 2015.

Commissioners agreed that Ian Baker Director Policy and Programs should be the CECNSW representative on the Statutory Not–for–Profit Ministerial Advisory Committee. Minister Piccoli is in the process of establishing this Committee.

5. **March 2015 State Election: Policy and Action Preparation**

Commissioners confirmed the developed 2015 NSW State Election strategy, focusing on increasing capital funding for NSW Catholic schools.

CECNSW has begun to raise two key issues being, capital funding and better planning for schools, with the Government, Opposition and other key Parliamentarians in the lead-up to the election. It has also worked with the Council of Catholic School Parents (CCSP) to update its pre-election "Tool Kit". The CEC’s Public Policy Committee will develop further strategic advice at its next meeting.

In its submission to Government and Opposition for the election, the CECNSW (and AIS) will also be requesting that the funding freeze on recurrent grants introduced in the 2012/13 NSW Budget now be lifted with grants returned to their normal growth patterns in the context of the new national schools funding model.

Commissioners noted that a number of meetings with both the NSW Government and Opposition as well as Departmental officers are imminent.

Commissioners also noted that the final detailed election strategy and related documentation will be provided for Commission authorisation at its 11 February 2015 meeting.

6. **CECNSW 2014 Workplan Yearly Progress Review**

Commissioners noted the progress report on the 2014 CECNSW’s Strategic Directions and Operational Priorities for the 2014 school year.
7. **Core Committee Appointments**

The Commission:

1) considered and reconfirmed its policies for the appointment or reappointment of members of CECNSW Core Committees;

2) resolved the following in respect of Core Committee vacancies:
   a) Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee:
      i. Margaret Harris is appointed as the Parramatta CEO representative;
      ii. Merindah Wilson is appointed as the Wilcannia – Forbes CSO representative; and
      iii. authorised the appointment of the Sydney CEO representative expected to be advised in December 2014;
   b) Education Policy Committee:
      i. appointed Anne – Maree Creenaune;
      ii. appointed Lee Herden; and
      iii. appointed Paul Thornton;
   c) Resources Policy Committee:
      i. appointed Helen Bentham;
      ii. appointed Andrew McIntosh;
      iii. appointed John Sheridan; and
      iv. appointed Dr Doug Ashleigh;

3) noted that the Commission Secretary is tasked with identifying a second external financial expert for the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

8. **Other Decisions**

The Commission:

1) endorsed the Third Quarterly Report on Road Safety Education for NSW Catholic Schools 2014; and

2) endorsed the Targeted Program allocations for 2015.

9. **Meeting of the National Catholic Education Commission**

The most recent meeting of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) was held in Sydney on 13 November 2014. The priority issues discussed were the review of the Low SES Loading for Australian schools, the Australian government’s current position on funding and the unintended outcomes of recent proposed changes to Copyright Statutory provisions. NCEC also discussed, NCEC’s governance including working parties and networks as well as possible implications arising from recent changes to the regulation of non-government schools in NSW in relation to governance and not-for-profit status. Additionally, NCEC received a presentation from Francis Sullivan, CEO of the *Truth, Justice and Healing Council*. 
10. **Roman Synod on the Family**

The first part of the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (on the Family) took place in October 2014. The family is truly the “school of humanity”; which is uniquely important to the Church as the essential agent in the work of evangelisation. In this context, Catholic schools, as Church, offer hope to people, accept them, and support and encourage them in their search for God. Catholic schools need to engage with different kinds of marriage and family as part of the “new aspect of family ministry” requiring attention in the Church today. The Synod is scheduled to continue in October 2015. In the meantime, Pope Francis invites local Churches to address the questions raised and points of view indicated in the reflections found in the synod report, the official translation of which can be found at http://www.catholic herald.co.uk/news/2014/10/30/full-text-official-translation-of-final-synod-report/#.VFMZjWTWpMI.email

11. **Update on Emergency Management**

With the beginning of the Bushfire Season in NSW and two serious fires in the Blue Mountains in the past month, schools have been reminded of the importance of having emergency communication systems in place. Families, including the families of staff, need to know how the school will communicate in an emergency. Further, families are strongly recommended to take the advice of the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) to develop a Bushfire Survival Plan (http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/resources/bush-fire-survival-plan). These plans should include alternative arrangements for children and parents if they become cut off or subject to evacuation in an emergency. It needs to be stressed that school staff need these plans too.

The RFS has developed new, more detailed Weather Advisory documents. These are dispatched generally twice weekly. Principals of schools vulnerable to natural hazards, particularly but not confined to bushfires are strongly recommended to heed the advice they contain. The RFS has a number of applications which run on a variety of platforms. Fires Near Me (https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/fires-near-me-nsw/id370891827?mt=8) is a useful application which provides up to date information fire activity. The link refers to the iPhone version but the application is also available for Android phones. The information is also available directly from the RFS: http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fires-near-me

12. **Meeting with the Shadow Minister**

On 12 November a meeting was held at Parliament House between representatives of CECNSW and AIS NSW and Ryan Park, Shadow Minister for Education and Training and Luke Foley, Shadow Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. The meeting focused on better approaches to planning for schools. The aim was to ensure that the Shadow Ministers understood that under present planning methods and blueprints there is a lack of strategic planning on the provision of schooling for all children. In particular, the lack of consistency in the manner in which councils in the different Local Government Areas dealt with non-government school authorities. Both AIS NSW and CECNSW advocated a more coherent and cohesive approach to strategic planning for schools in the same way that planning addresses transport and utility needs.

13. **Briefing for the Association of Catholic School Principals**

A briefing was provided to the Association of Catholic School Principals (ACSP) at the Polding House on 3 November 2014. The main issues discussed were Teacher Accreditation of pre-2004 teachers, the new governance and not-for-profit requirement legislated recently, emergency management, the Australian Curriculum Review, NAPLAN online, the Chaplains Program for 2015 and arrangements being developed to support the sharing of student information between schools.
14. **Briefing for the Association of Independent Schools**

On 7 November 2014, the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) hosted a Breakfast Workshop at the Westin Hotel in Martin Place. Chris Richardson from Deloitte Access Economics delivered an address entitled 2050: A Schools Odyssey. In its Building the Lucky Country: Positioning for Prosperity report, Deloitte highlighted private schooling as one of the future waves of economic growth in Australia.

AIS commissioned Deloitte to provide demographic projections for regions within NSW, including scenario modelling based on changes in macro-economic measures. The resulting report provides guidance on future market share for independent schools and a forecasting tool has also been developed to assist schools in their future planning.

15. **CEC Consultation with Premier’s Department**

The joint CECNSW/AIS NSW proposal to the NSW Government for increasing substantially (by $70m per annum) the Government outlay for capital funding of non-government schools was tabled with the Premier’s Department on 18 November. Attention was drawn to the unquestioned data around growing and newly developed schools from 2015, as well as the proposal for transparently costing the request. The proposal has been prepared by various officers of both representative bodies and co-ordinated by Jim Hanna (CECNSW). A copy will be provided to all Commissioners and will form the basis of the key policy to be advocated for the State election on 28 March 2015.

16. **9th Archbishop of Sydney**

Commissioners congratulated Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP on his appointment by the Holy Father as the 9th Archbishop of Sydney.

17. **Retiring Commissioners**

Commissioners thanked retiring commissioners Tricia Maidens and John Mula for their contributions to the work of the Commission. Deputy Chair Peter Turner thanked them on behalf of Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP and wished them well for their next stage of their careers in Catholic education.
18. BRIEFING BY THE CATHOLIC BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY

BIENNIAL CONFERENCE FOR AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC SCHOOL CAPITAL AND FACILITY MANAGERS

This Conference was jointly hosted by the CBGA and the Maitland/Newcastle Diocese in Newcastle. Keynote speakers engaged the attendees in matters related to the delivery of catholic education including funding, catholicity, and demography.

Workshop sessions were also held over two days raising issues central to the construction, refurbishment and maintenance of education facilities.

CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAM

State Priority Committee Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the NSW Catholic Block Grant Authority (CBGA) was held on 6 November 2014.

The annual general meeting is convened to discuss issues raised during the State Priority Committee (SPC) meetings, and to make recommendations to the CBGA Executive Officer in relation to changes to the CBGA guidelines where they are considered to be “operational” rather than “policy” matters.

The meeting acknowledged the contribution to the State Priority Committee by Ms Brenda King, Principal of St Francis De Sales College, Leeton who had been the nominee on the SPC for the Wagga Wagga Diocese for several years. Ms King is to be replaced by Mr Mark Maclean, Principal of Holy Spirit Primary School, Lavington.

The meeting also considered and agreed to dates under which applications for capital funding are lodged, assessed and priority given to applications for the 2015 Round.

The dates for the 2015 Application Round are as follows:

- Preparation of applications for the 2015 round: 9 December 2014
- Closing date for applications: 13 April 2015
- State Priority Committee Meeting 1: 13, 14 and 15 May, 2015*
- School Visits: 1 June to 26 June, 2015
- State Priority Committee Meeting 2: 22, 23 and 24 July, 2015
- Annual General Meeting: 5 November, 2015

*to be confirmed

National Block Grant Authority Meeting

The NSW CBGA was host this year for the annual meeting of Catholic Block Grant Authorities around Australia. The meeting was held on the 30 October, 2014 with all states in attendance, except for Tasmania. The meeting discussed the decreasing value of the Australian Government Capital Grants Program and the increased pressures that states felt with the increased population demand.

The Executive Director of the National Catholic Education Commission, Mr Ross Fox addressed the meeting, indicating that the CBGA’s had proven during the BER to be an efficient and effective provider of service to the Australian Government in the distribution of capital funding and that increased funding and relativity needed to be maintained in the program.

Mr Fox indicated that he was working with State Catholic Education Commissions in delivering this message to the Australian Government and thanked those in attendance for their continued support.
The eight projects approved by the Australian Government Department of Education (AGDoE) under Round 5, Phase 1 of the Trades Skills Centres Program are due for completion in nearly 2015.

Of the eight projects, seven will meet their projected dates of delivery of the qualifications as covered by the terms and conditions of the School Project Agreement. One of the projects, St Paul’s College, West Kempsey has been delayed due to other capital works being undertaken at the school and by additional development conditions imposed by the local council.

The CBGA has been in contact with the school regarding the delay and will re-negotiate with the AGDoE an extension of the project milestone dates when the tenders showing the construction schedule is agreed.

The CBGA and the CECNSW have also assisted the Maitland/Newcastle Catholic Schools Office in a matter related to ongoing delivery of a qualification that forms part of the cross-sectoral cluster arrangement with the Singleton Community Trade Training Centre, lead and managed by the Principal at Singleton Catholic College.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
17 December 2014