1) **State Election: Final Issues**

Commissioners considered actions that had occurred in January/February 2015 and those planned for March 2015. Weekly election newsletters had commenced. On 27 February 2015, the CECNSW launched a media campaign calling on the next NSW Government to increase capital funding to all school sectors. Approaches were made to all three major political parties inviting them to respond to three key policy questions. Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities were provided with advice for electorate based candidate forums.

Commissioners noted that no specific commitments had been issued regarding increased capital funding of Catholic and independent schools. Both major parties however had committed to continuing with Gonski school funding reforms for 2018 and 2019.

Commissioners agreed that in the final stages of the election campaign, the capital funding needs facts should be strongly pursued with local members and candidates.

2) **Capital and Facilities Review**

Commissioners considered Capital and Facilities Review issues at their 21 August 2014 meeting. The current consideration of this matter advances the work undertaken in 2014. Commissioners agreed that the review is necessary and now needs to be progressed without further delay, noting the Commissioners’ August 2014 decision to defer the Review to 2015.

Discussion focussed on ‘scope’ issues. Review burden concerns were also raised. That is the impact of Review workload requirements on both CECNSW staff and diocesan staff. In this context it was agreed that the role of the external consultancy firm is critical.

The need for the Review to capture the concerns of Congregational schools was also raised.

Commissioners requested that a further paper on Review scope, design and work impact issues be developed for consideration at the 22 April 2015 Commission meeting.

3) **Early Childhood Education and Out of School Hours Care: Final Productivity Commission Report Issues for Catholic Schools**

The Commission has been engaging with the Productivity Commission Inquiry into ECEC since April 2014.

Commissioners noted the analysis of the recommendations arising from the Productivity Commission Report in the context of agreed CECNSW ECEC policy positions.

The paper set out a policy framework for the continued engagement of CECNSW with the Australian Government’s policy development for Pre-school services, Long day care services and Out of School Hours Care.

As ECEC is an area of National policy, it was agreed the CECNSW needs to work with and through NCEC on the issues arising.
4) Commonwealth Teacher Education Review (Craven Review): Outcomes and AITSL Issues

The Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) report was released on 6 February 2015.

Commissioners noted the paper which summarised the Report, explored the relationship of TEMAG to the NSW Great Teachers Inspired Learning and identified key TEMAG Recommendations.

Commissioners focused their discussion on entry to teacher education and specialisation by Primary teachers. Other issues raised included policies to attract high quality candidates to teacher education and policies to attract high quality teachers to rural schools.

Commissioners expressed a range of opinions on the degree to which primary school teachers should specialise their practice by Key Learning Areas focus areas. The general view was that specialisation to support holistic primary education is supported. What would not be supported is a reshaping of primary school teaching by adopting a secondary school model.

The community and family orientated nature of primary schools was identified as an approach to early schooling which needs to be maintained. Holistic Catholic primary schooling would be put at risk by excessive approaches to teacher specialisation.

It was agreed that through the Education Policy Committee the Commission needs to monitor the development of policy relating to subject specialisation by Primary school teachers. The aim should be to build teacher capacity in specialist areas, rather than “converting” generalist teachers to subject teachers.

5) New BoSTES Governance requirements: Clarifying roles and responsibilities

Commissioners noted that the new Board of Studies, Teaching and Education Standards NSW (BoSTES) School Governance requirements have been in place since September 2014 and that the CECNSW Secretariat is developing compliance advice for NSW Catholic Schools Authorities.

Key compliance requirements relate to:

- Governing bodies;
- Responsible persons; and
- Required training.

Commissioners discussed:

- The outcomes of the 27 February 2015 forum for Congregational schools;
- “Good Faith” compliance steps;
- Role of Diocesan Trustees;
- Training for Responsible persons; and
- Related not-for-profit requirements.

Concern was expressed about the training burden for volunteers who give their time to School Boards. The point was made that steps have been taken to ensure that BoSTES can recognise training that volunteers already undertake as part of their induction to a school board. It was noted that a CECNSW memo has been set to Directors and Principals of Congregational schools clarifying training options.
6) Students First Support Fund: 2014 Accountability Report

At their 11 February 2015 meeting, Commissioners were reminded that the CECNSW receives $4.594 million per annum under the Students First Support Fund (SFSF) initiative to support its work as a Representative body in meeting the five major objectives of the Australian Education Act 2013, namely:

i. Improve quality teaching;
ii. Improve quality learning;
iii. Empower school leadership;
iv. Meet student need; and
v. Improve transparency and accountability.

At its 20 November 2013 meeting, the Commission agreed that the SFSF grant be allocated between the Commission Secretariat ($3.4 million) with the eleven dioceses sharing the remaining funds.

At its 18 June 2014 meeting, the Commission endorsed the CECNSW Students First Support Fund 2014 Activity Statement. The SFSF agreement requires submission of a report of 2014 activity to the AGDE by 31 March 2015.

Commissioners discussed the history and purpose of SFSF funding. The vulnerability of this funding to the Australian Government Department of Finance Review was noted.

It was agreed that the draft report is appropriate but that it could be strengthened by:

• Inclusion of relevant high level student performance data; and
• Further reference to Congregational schools, noting that then Minister Shorten had originally allocated these schools to the Association of Independent Schools.

7) Aboriginal Education: Closing the Gap Reporting Issues

Commissioners reviewed advice on:

• Closing the Gap;
• Development of a new National Strategy Framework for Indigenous Schooling;
• Refocusing the Commission’s Advisory Committee for Aboriginal Education; and
• Developing Reconciliation Action Plans.

Commissioners noted that while progress has been made by Catholic schools in the area of Indigenous education, there still exists a Catholic sector gap.

The point was made that more targeted analysis of the gap data is needed. That is the Aboriginal student NAPLAN data needs to be disaggregated by factors such as geo location, SES and gender.

Other areas of policy inquiry identified included:

• How successful are the DEC “Connected Communities” Schools?
• How can best practice be identified and shared? What is working in Catholic schools?
• How to move from a focus on school attendance to school engagement by students?

It was agreed the Aboriginal Education Advisory Committee should provide further advice on these and related issues in consultation with the Education Policy Committee.
8) **Commission Decisions**

The Commission:

1) endorsed and adopted the 2015 NAPLAN and SMART Services Agreement at a cost of $42.90 per student;

2) endorsed and adopted the 2015 – 2016 CECNSW Literacy and Numeracy K – 2 Implementation Plan;

3) endorsed the draft CECNSW School Governance Manual and for the Secretariat to monitor its use and develop amendments as required;

4) adopted the MOU with FACS for the educational management of students in Out-of-Home Care, requested that Diocesan Directors and Principals of Congregational schools be made aware of this MOU and requested that CESWCC monitor its implementation.

9) **2014 RSL ANZAC ART AWARDS**

On 11 February 2015, the awards for the 2014 RSL Anzac Art Awards were presented by the Governor of NSW, His Excellency General David Hurley. The competition is open to students from all schools and tertiary sectors. Students from NSW Catholic schools received all the awards in the primary section and Hannah Felton, a Year 12 student from La Salle Academy, Lithgow the winner of the ANZAC Day Poster from all competition entries. The poster will be seen by the population of the state during April as the ANZAC Day Appeal is launched nationally. The competition theme for 2015 will be announced shortly and detailed in a memo to dioceses and congregational schools.

10) **‘REFORM OF THE FEDERATION’ WHITE PAPER PROCESS**

Commissioners considered Reform of the Federation White paper issues at the February meeting, refer minute 364.7.5. A joint NSW Premiers Department and Prime Minister and Cabinet forum was held Thursday 26 February 2015. CEC and AIS made the case for the continued joint involvement of both the Australian and State Governments in the sphere of schools policy and funding.

The reform of Federation taskforce is currently developing a Consultation Green paper. This Green paper is due to be released mid-year. The Green Paper will outline reform options. Public submissions will be called for in response to the Green paper. CECNSW together with NCEC will engage with the Green paper once it is published.

11) **NSW EDUCATION ACT SECTION 83(C) NOT-FOR-PROFIT IMPLEMENTATION**

Following its initial meeting, held on 18 February 2015, the Non-government Schools’ Not-for-Profit Advisory Committee has organised an implementation workshop to inform Guideline writing. The workshop will be held on Thursday, 26 March 2015. Workshop participants will include Advisory Committee members plus sector nominees. Members of the CECNSW Resources Policy Committee have been offered the opportunity to participate in this workshop. Commissioners can email any issues or questions for consideration at the workshop to Ian Baker (ian.baker@cecnsw.catholic.edu.au).

12) **CECNSW NOMINATION TO THE BoSTES LANGUAGES BCC**

Following a nomination from the Catholic Schools Office, Broken Bay, Ms Rosalie Liberty has agreed to accept the nomination as the CECNSW representative in the BoSTES Languages Board Curriculum Committee (BCC). Rosalie teaches at St Paul’s Catholic College, Manly. She will be identifying mechanisms for liaison with other languages teachers.
13) **BoSTES BROTHER JOHN TAYLOR PRIZE FOR 2014 HSC STUDENTS**

On 11 March the 2014 BOSTES Brother John Taylor Memorial Prize was presented to two students who have overcome significant hardship to attain outstanding results in last year’s Higher School Certificate. This Prize is part of the legacy of Brother John Taylor cfc, a lifelong advocate of education and equity. The winners of the BOSTES 2014 Brother John Taylor Memorial Prize are:

- Evan Jones who completed his HSC at Bradfield College in Crows Nest. Evan has lived with a range of personal and health issues throughout his childhood and into adolescence. He has been accepted into the University of Sydney for a Bachelor of Arts.

- Joseph Popov who completed his HSC at Lambton High School. Joseph was born with spastic quadriplegia that has a profound impact on his mobility and speech. He has been accepted in the University of Newcastle for a double degree in Law and Social Science.

14) **OTHER BUSINESS**

Commissioners resolved to thank Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP for his great leadership of the Commission since 2005 and asked the CECNSW Executive Director to convey their thanks and best wishes to the Archbishop. He will be sadly missed.

Commissioners also welcomed the appointment of Bishop Peter Comensoli DD as the new Chair of the Commission to commence on 1 April 2015.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
10 April 2015
15) BRIEFING BY THE CATHOLIC BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY

CAPITAL GRANTS 2015 APPLICATION ROUND

The 2015 application round was opened to applications from member schools from 9 December 2014.

The CBGA is currently working on the annual allocation of funds from both the Australian and New South Wales governments to a total amount of $34M. The hope is that the NSW government will increase the funding as the result of representations made to it by the CECNSW.

TRADE SKILLS CENTRE – UTILISATION REPORTING

The Australian Government has issued the guidelines for the completion of the 2014 utilisation reports and takes into account comments and suggestions made by the CBGA/CECNSW and other education authorities.

The templates for each of the “operating” Trade Training/Skills Centres will become available in mid-April and will be forwarded by the CBGA/CECNSW to officers responsible for completion for each Trade Training/Skills Centre.

Utilisation reports are to be returned to the CBGA/CECNSW by Friday 12 June for quality assurance checking prior to submission to the Australian Government by Friday 26 June, 2015. Separate, and more detailed advice will be released closer to date the reports will become available.

As in previous years, reports are to be submitted on behalf of schools by the CBGA/CECNSW through the Australian Government’s School Entry Point system.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
10 April 2015