Summary Report of the 369th Meeting

HELD WEDNESDAY 22 JULY 2015
CLANCY/GILROY ROOMS, LEVEL 5, POLDING CENTRE, SYDNEY

1) Status of the CECNSW Capital Review

Commissioners agreed the detailed scope *in principle* for the first part of the Capital and Facilities management review across NSW Catholic schools. Two of the big four Chartered Firms have prequalified to undertake the review. Commissioners authorised the calling of tenders for the review of CBGA operations. This review and report is anticipated to be completed by early November 2015.

Comments and feedback will be sought from Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities and the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes NSW before finalisation of the Part A Scope. Discussions will also be held with the selected tenderers to ensure that they understand precisely what is required and to ensure that there are no ambiguities.

2) NSW State Government Capital Funding Outcomes

On 19 June 2015, NSW Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli announced the NSW Government would increase capital grants funding to both the CECNSW and AIS by $50 million over four years, from 2015-16.

Through much of 2014, CECNSW undertook detailed research to prepare a strategy for reversing the capital reduction decision of 2012 for the purpose of establishing a new growth-linked capital funding model ahead of the March 2015 state election.

The NSW Department of Education and Communities has advised CECNSW that the capital grants increase announced on 19 June 2015 will be advanced in equal instalments of $12.5 million per year for four years.

There are two key learnings for CECNSW from this exercise:

- both major parties support public funding for non-government schools, but are reluctant to announce funding increases for ‘private schools’ in a pre-election context; and
- Premiers, Ministers, and their advisers are unaware of the challenges facing non-government schools and need to be better informed by non-government school bodies.

Commissioners agreed that CECNSW should continue to pursue two further initiatives:

- continue to persuade the Government to reinstate the Interest Subsidy Scheme’s expiring loans to BGAS funding transfer; and
- persuade the Government to level the playing field with Government Schools in relation to infrastructure charges and other local planning issues.

Commissioners noted that the requirement for capital to meet increasing demand for places in NSW Catholic schools is a high priority.
3) Hattie, Two Recent Reports: What does and doesn’t work in Education

Commissioners discussed the key findings of Prof. John Hattie’s meta-analysis in the context of the purposes of NSW Catholic schools and associated ongoing school improvement imperatives. Commissioners endorsed a focus on “instructional leadership” and the promotion of “collaborative expertise”.

Commissioners have a long standing awareness of Professor Hattie’s work. The present focus on his research is driven by the new impetus to his work resulting from his recent appointment to the position of Chair of AITSL.

Commissioners specifically discussed:

• Parent issues;
• Role of school principals;
• School improvement over time; and
• The critical role of each teacher.

The key Hattie analysis concepts endorsed by Commissioners are:

• the critical and unique role of teachers;
• the strategic importance of “instructional leaders”; and
• the need to promote “collaborative expertise” including, both teacher collaboration and teacher / school / parent collaboration.

Commissioners agreed that the Education Policy Committee needs to explore “the lessons arising from Hattie’s work” with a view to developing response strategies for consideration by NSW Catholic school authorities. In this context, it was noted the CCSP is holding a forum on “collaboration” on 28 October 2015, see the Council of Catholic School Parents’ website for details. It was also agreed that the influence of Hattie’s work on AITSL requirements for teacher accreditation needs to be monitored by the Education Policy Committee.

4) Senate Inquiry to give Students with Disability, Parents and Teachers a Voice

Commissioners discussed earlier related inquiries including the 2002 Senate Inquiry and the 2010 NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into SWD issues, including funding levels and outcomes. Also cited was the recent June 2015 CECNSW submission to the review of the DDA Standards for Education.

Commissioners discussed the political purpose of the current Senate Inquiry. The relevance of NCCD implementation and current NDIS trials was also canvassed. Having considered the range of SWD issues outlined in the paper it was agreed to progress CECNSW priorities through the anticipated NCEC submission to the Inquiry.

CECNSW Inquiry priorities emphasised by Commissioners included:

• the need to align National Funding Model loading calculations with NCCD data rather than SWD census data;
• the need to address the resource gap resulting from the termination of the MSSD National Partnership; and
• the need to clarify legal obligations when a school’s duty of care to all students conflicts with the school’s duty of care to a particular student who exhibits extreme behaviour.

The CECNSW Secretariat was asked to progress these Inquiry matters through the Education Policy Committee for referral to NCEC.
5)  Aboriginal Education “Closing the Gap”: Further Catholic Sector Data Analysis and Related Activities

At their 18 March 2015 meeting, Commissioners identified the need for further policy inquiry into NSW Department of Education and Communities’ Connected Community schools as a way of investigating lessons that could be learnt to address Closing the Gap in Aboriginal Education targets. Also at that meeting, Commissioners agreed to a restated focus on Reconciliation through the development of Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs).

Commissioners reviewed the student attendance data analysis. Discussion focused on:

- Linkages with Hattie analysis outcomes as cited as above;
- Training and developing Aboriginal teachers for Catholic schools and the MATSITI objectives; and
- Processes for RAP development.

In the context of this paper, Commissioners also discussed the current community debate on the proposal for the Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal people. It was agreed that the Constitutional reform proposal might be incorporated into discussion for a CECNSW RAP. It was also noted that the position of Australian Catholic Bishops Conference on the Constitutional debate around Aboriginal recognition should be ascertained.

With respect to NAPLAN “Closing the Gap” analysis Commissioners were reminded that a paper on NAPLAN outcomes will be prepared for the 21 October 2015 Commission meeting.

6)  STEM Sydney Roundtable 30 June 2015

The Ministers for Industry and Science, and Education and Training recently released a consultation paper to stimulate discussion and receive feedback that will assist with the development of a national strategy to foster STEM skills and knowledge. The paper responds to the key issues raised by the Chief Scientist, Professor Ian Chubb in his report Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics: Australia’s Future released in September 2014.

A Roundtable chaired by the Parliamentary Secretary was held in Sydney recently at which CECNSW was represented. Representatives for school education were a minority among the industry, educators, science and academic representation. Concerns voiced included the artificial grouping together of four disciplines as a field of study STEM (cf experience of establishing TAS teaching) and ‘ensuring every primary school has at least one teacher with specialist STEM skills’. The list of education and training recommendations overlook the efforts schools have been making to promote the four disciplines; raise unrealistic expectations for schools and teachers especially in primary; and pre-service and in-service teacher training delivery issues including professional development costs.

Nonetheless, the STEM movement has considerable momentum and needs to be taken seriously by school educators. CECNSW will monitor developments and engage in any associated BOSTES consultations.
7) ACNC Update: Financial Reporting

The Australian Non-profit and Charities Commission (“ACNC”) requires reporting of financial statements for charitable or not-for profit activities by Australian Business Number (“ABN”).

The issues that now need to be addressed are how NSW Catholic schools, which are almost invariably classified as large charities for the purposes of ACNC, will meet their compliance obligations for the 2015 year should the current transitional arrangements be allowed to expire at the end of 2015.

It has been suggested that data from the Financial Questionnaire (FQ) information provided to the Australian Government Department of Education and Training (AGDET) could be used by ACNC for their Australian Information Statement (AIS).

NCEC organised a meeting of the finance directors of Catholic Education Commissions from all the States to meet with representatives of AGDET and ACNC to discuss the feasibility of this approach. AGDET has engaged PwC as advisors and ACNC has engaged Deloitte as their advisors.

Key findings from the discussions on the feasibility of this approach were:

- Charitable entities (designated by ABNs) do not necessarily match education entities. This appears to be particularly so in NSW; and
- The mapping of information fields from the FQ to the information required by ACNC is problematic and it is likely that PwC will report that it is probably not feasible as currently configured.

Commissioners considered that CECNSW Secretariat staff should discuss options with CEnet before embarking on a financial data project to satisfy ACNC requirements. CEnet is developing a major financial records database on behalf of NSW Diocesan Catholic Schools Authorities.

8) NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into VET in NSW: Commission Input

Commissioners highlighted the following matters for attention in the CECNSW submission to the Legislative Council’s Inquiry into VET:

- The need for ASQA functions to be delegated to BOSTES, that is the dysfunctional nature of current compliance requirements for schools;
- VET costs relative to school funding;
- Teacher workload issues; and
- VET credentialed through the HSC and the need to consider student credentialing aims and options.

With respect to VET credentialing through the HSC, the point was made that at this time CECNSW is not proposing a specific change to current HSC practice but rather CECNSW is proposing that the VET credentialing issue be identified for review through BOSTES processes. Commissioners were reminded that CECNSW has had a long standing concern that the separate credentialing of VET might inadvertently result in the “streaming” of students by schools. If this were to happen, damage to the status of school based VET would occur. Nevertheless, Commissioners agreed that VET credentialing does need to be identified for discussion.
9) Project Agreement for online safety programmes in schools

The Commonwealth Government has launched an initiative to promote online safety in schools. It aims to deliver online safety programmes in schools procured from providers that have been certified, approved or recognised by the Children's e-Safety Commissioner. Online safety programmes include online safety education programmes, online safety frameworks and online safety professional development. Participating Education Authorities will be responsible for achieving minimum performance targets, formulating criteria to identify less resourced schools and/or schools with identified online safety issues in their respective jurisdictions. Thirty nine (39) NSW Catholic Schools will be selected to participate in this project in accordance with agreed minimum performance targets. The NSW Catholic sector has been allocated $155,967.21 for each of 2015, 2016 and 2017 financial years to address safety programmes in 39 schools. A paper on how this programme will be managed will be brought to the August Commission meeting.

10) Commission Decisions

The Commission:

- agreed to both the Chaplains Program funding allocations and the process for 2016 – 2018;
- approved the renewal of the CECNSW CAL licence for NSW Catholic schools for years 2016 and 2017 with the continuing FTE remuneration rate of $16.93;
- endorsed the CECNSW Governance Training for Responsible Persons for the 12 August forum details.
- approved the new Screenrights Agreement for NSW Catholic schools for years 2015 to 2020;
- noted the new remuneration base rate of $6.55 per FTE;
- noted the requirement to engage in further “consultation” on the use by schools of services such as “Clickview”.

11) Domestic violence and PDHPE

CECNSW supported recent changes by BOSTES to specifically include domestic violence in the 7 to 10 PDHPE syllabus. Students in Catholic schools are already taught how to recognise and respond to abuse, neglect and family violence. This change makes explicit what was previously implicit: that domestic violence is a serious issue that affects all family members. Adoption of these updates to the PDHPE syllabus are fully consistent with the focus Catholic schools have on the pastoral care of all students and their families.

12) Brother John Taylor Fellowship

The Brother John Taylor Fellowship for 2015 was launched by Bishop Peter Comensoli at a simple ceremony in the Broken Bay Schools Office on 25 June 2015. Commissioners would be aware that the Fellowship provides up to $25,000 in travel and accommodation to an applicant involved in Catholic school education who can make a valuable contribution to education in the Catholic schools context. The Fellowship honours John Taylor, a Christian Brother and his lifelong dedication to education and the ideals of equity and access.

Last year’s inaugural Fellow was Mark Gronow, a mathematics specialist, who used the Fellowship to address the decline in the number of students studying maths, particularly at higher levels. Mark addressed the gathering expressing his gratitude for the outstanding opportunity given to him. Applications for 2016 close on 30 September 2015.
13) Sector Funding – Recent Media Coverage

Two recent publications have reignited media debate about the funding of government and non-government schools: The publication of a report in late June by ACER in its Australian Education Review series, *Imperatives in Schools Funding: Equity, sustainability and achievement* (L. Connors and J. McMorrow) and in early July a Save Our Schools Education Research Brief, *Increasing Inequity in School Funding 2009-2013: Government Funding Policies Favour Privilege Over Disadvantage* (T. Cobbold). While the latter emerges from a clear Lobby Group for public education, it is disappointing that the former has been given higher status because it is associated with ACER (though not a report of ACER research). The NCEC Executive Director has written to Dr Masters voicing this concern and challenging some of the assertions and data contained in the Review. The Commission is engaging with these reports through the NCEC which issued a response. In the lead up to the Federal election next year, the Commission will assist NCEC with developing analyses and position papers.

14) NSW Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) Fund

At their 17 June 2015 meeting, the Commission discussed the new NSW Government $20 million fund to establish up to 1,000 new OSHC sites in NSW. This is a once-off funding pool to provide grants of up to $20,000 per site to assist with establishment costs in order to meet growing community demand. Minister Williams has responsibility for this initiative. A cross sectoral committee is working on developing eligibility criteria along with application, risk management and financial reporting processes. Rosalie Nott represents CECNSW on this committee. The online application site will be open from early August until mid-October 2015. While the Government priority is to establish new sites, if funds remain from the first phase (for new services), it is likely the committee will recommend to the Minister that remaining funds should be made available for the expansion of existing services. The application process commences in August 2015.

15) New NSW Geography K-10 Syllabus

Recently, the NSW Minister approved the new Australian Geography K-10 syllabus for NSW. BOSTES requested a meeting with CECNSW to hand over the syllabus and brief representatives on related issues including the implementation schedule and programming for History and Geography K-6. The handover to CECNSW took place on Thursday 16 July with representation from almost all dioceses.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
11 August 2015
BRIEFING BY THE CATHOLIC BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY

CAPITAL GRANTS 2015 APPLICATION ROUND

A major development since the last report has been the announcement by the NSW Minister of Education to increase capital grant funding for non-government schools in the amount of $50M over 4 years.

Based on the current allocation of NSW Capital grant funds the additional amount that the Catholic sector will receive is estimated at $8.5M per annum. This will increase the total funding received from the NSW Government under the NSW Building Grants Assistance Scheme from $7.5M to $16.0M. As the first year of funding will be the 2015/16 financial year, the total amount of capital grant funding available for the 2015 Application Round, the current round, will increase to $44M.

While an improvement on past funding the value of projects for this application round is estimated to be $125M.

Once the 2015 recommendation of the State Priority Committee has been accepted by the CBGA Executive Officer, letters of an Indicative Offer will be made to applicants. These letters are expected to be sent to the Proprietors of the recommended applicant schools in early August.

A report to the Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) setting out the applicants schools to be recommended to the Commonwealth and State Ministers of Education will prepared and submitted to the September meeting of the CECNSW for adoption and then final submission to the Commonwealth and State Governments by 30 September 2015.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
11 August 2015