Summary Report of the 372\textsuperscript{nd} Meeting

HELD WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2015  
CLANCY/GILROY ROOMS, LEVEL 5, POLDING CENTRE, SYDNEY

1. **CECNSW Governance Responsible Person Training**

At their 23 September 2015 meeting, Commissioners considered a paper on “BOSTES Governance Compliance Update and Next Steps”. The September paper included a detailed evaluation of the 2015 CECNSW training workshop which has been presented three times with a fourth session to be held on 23 November 2015. The evaluation outcomes were noted as being most positive.

BOSTES has confirmed that all School Principals must complete their initial four hours Governance training requirement by the end of term one 2016.

At the October Commission meeting, Commissioners were provided with a plan for the delivery of online Responsible Person training by CECNSW together with a range of cost options.

Commissioners discussed the cost of training options, training needs, compliance vs professional development, short term and long term training needs and planning; and the need for related legal advice.

This discussion was informed by the tabling as a late paper of the outcomes of a CECNSW survey of NSW Catholic School authority training needs and response options.

In this context the point was made that Responsible Person training needs to be designed and delivered in a mode which least distracts Principals from their key role as “Leaders of Learning”. Consequently, a preference for focused online learning was supported.

Commissioners also discussed the need to contextualise generic training to local governance models and circumstances. In this context it was agreed that CECNSW can and will support any additional complementary Responsible Persons training organised locally by Dioceses, Religious Orders or PJPS.

2. **Aboriginal Education Closing the Gap Developments: CECNSW responses**

Commissioners considered a range of Aboriginal Education initiatives currently being addressed across NSW Catholic Schools.

Commissioners discussed:

- School attendance strategies and targeted case study Catholic schools;
- CECNSW RAP purposes and planning;
- MATSITI outcomes to date; and
- Planning for the analysis of CECNSW “Closing the Gap” NAPLAN Data.

Attention was drawn to the significance of the developing NSW Bilateral Agreement on Aboriginal Education outcomes. It was noted that this Bilateral Agreement is likely to drive the implementation of an Accountability Framework linked to the National Funding Model funding loading for Aboriginal students. Discussion concluded with a request that an update on CECNSW Aboriginal Education activities be provided to the 16 March 2016 meeting.
3. NSW Government Election Commitment: Child Protection Program

The NSW Government has undertaken to further strengthen existing child protection education measures in NSW schools by providing $4 million over 4 years to deliver a specialised program to children and young people. Representatives from the Catholic Education Commission and the Association of Independent Schools have been invited to be part of an Advisory Group to oversee this project. The Advisory Group will be tasked with contracting an academic partner to undertake a review of national and international research findings on child protection education. It will also oversee a review of current provisions in NSW schools and emerging issues. The Advisory Group, to which Peter Grace, State Coordinator – Student Welfare has been nominated, will oversee a three phase process which will culminate in the implementation of a program for all NSW Schools in Semester Two 2016. The Advisory Group is yet to decide whether the program will initially target K-2 and then progress to Years 9-10 or follow an alternative model.

4. CECNSW HSC Participation in High-Level HSC Courses: Project Development

Dr John DeCourcy (private consultant, previously employed by CEO Parramatta) has monitored for some ten years participation in higher-level courses by the Catholic sector in the HSC and included this aspect in his annual reports to the Commission.

The CECNSW has engaged Professor Cooney of Australian Catholic University to undertake further research on the issue. In his research proposal, he notes that ‘The finding that high performing students are not always undertaking high level HSC courses is not confined to Catholic high schools: there are adequate data available to indicate that the finding is also applicable to students in government schools. Published data show that courses where enrolments are increasing tend to be the courses regarded as “easier” or “non-academic”. In Mathematics, enrolment data show a decline in the number of students undertaking 2 unit Mathematics in favour of General Mathematics, and there is anecdotal data to indicate that this trend is encouraged by schools’. There are, he advises, many possible reasons for the low participation rates in higher level courses by students enrolled in NSW Catholic Schools.

The research seeks an explanation for why students in Catholic secondary schools are under-represented in the highest performance bands and why high performing students in Catholic schools do not appear to be undertaking higher level HSC courses in which they are likely to perform well. The research addresses two questions:

1. Why are students in Catholic secondary schools under-represented in the highest performance bands?
2. Why are high performing students in Catholic schools not undertaking courses in which they are likely to do well?

The Commission approved a list of project schools for participation in the study. Members also discussed participation in Maths courses issues.

The influence of the ATAR on course selection was discussed. It was noted that “ATAR gaming” seems to be a major factor distorting course selection by stage 6 students, especially by the suggestion of teachers.

5. Ministerial Appointment to the NSW Professional Teaching Council

Ms Kathryn Fox, Head of Teaching and Learning Services, Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, has been appointed by Mr Adrian Piccoli, Minister for Education to the Quality Teaching Council, under the auspices of the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES). Her appointment had been recommended to Minister Piccoli by the Catholic Education Commission NSW. Kathryn replaces Elizabeth O’Callaghan, Regional Director in the Archdiocese of Sydney. Kathryn’s nomination acknowledges the valuable contribution she has made to Catholic Education both as a teacher, school executive and as an educational administrator. Kathryn was until recently a long standing and highly valued member of the CECNSW Education Policy Committee where she influenced the work of the Commission in a range of areas impacting on student learning and teacher quality.
6. Teacher Workforce Data: Developments and Emerging Requirements

Information about the teaching workforce has been the subject of a number of data collection efforts in the past. These efforts have been hampered by the limited and aggregated nature the data collected and the lack of clear data definitions for the key information being sought.

Accurate teaching workforce data is necessary to provide the following benefits:

- Improved student education outcomes;
- Improved teacher workforce planning; and
- Satisfying the information requirements of stakeholders.

The Australian Government recognises that the existing teaching workforce data sets are inadequate. To address this problem, the Australian Government has tasked the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) with developing a National Teaching Workforce Data (NTWD) collection.

CECNSW Secretariat has also contacted BOSTES with the aim of seeking access to Teacher Accreditation data in order to lessen the amount of information to be collected from schools in relation to their teaching workforce.

In this context, it is proposed that CECNSW consider enhancing its annual schools’ census data collection to address the teaching workforce data collection requirements of AITSL. This initiative would allow CECNSW to meet any obligations for teacher information likely to be imposed by governments at minimal cost.

Commissioners noted that the Ministerial Education Council will decide at their meeting on 16 December 2015 to proceed with the collection of new student data for Australian schools from 2016. This will be the culmination of a process undertaken over the past couple of years involving the Australian Government Department of Education (AGDET), the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the Education Council’s Data Strategy Group (DSG) and the Directors General/Secretaries of Education, meeting as the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC). In addition, recommendations for improved data availability emerged in 2015 from the Ministerial Inquiry into Teacher Education, the ‘Craven’ Review.

Commissioners noted that the CECNSW has been monitoring these issues through the NCEC and the NSW Department of Education in particular. The NCEC is connected to the process through its membership of the Ministerial Data Strategy Group and relevant developments are being monitored through the NCEC’s Data Strategy Working Group on which CECNSW is represented.

Commissioners expressed concerns about ensuring that there is clarity about what is required before embarking on a system design. Data should be a snapshot as at an agreed common standard date. Issues relating to casual teaching staff need to be addressed.

7. Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner

On 1 July 2015 the Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner was set up: https://www.esafety.gov.au/.

eSafety Commissioner is Alastair McGibbon. With the aim to help guide children and young people toward safe, enjoyable experiences online, the Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner hopes to encourage behavioural change – where Australian children and young people act responsibly online – just as they would offline. The goal is to create an environment in which cyberbullying is truly unacceptable.

The Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner is now inviting applications from prospective online safety program providers. Information about the scheme, along with the application form and accompanying Voluntary Certification Guidelines can be viewed and downloaded from our website at: www.esafety.gov.au/certification.
8. **2016 CECNSW Strategic Directions and Workplan**

Under its Charter, the Commission is required to present a Workplan to the NSW/ACT Bishops for approval in November each year. The Charter’s obligations outline the routine work of the Commission and the Secretariat in advocacy, consultation, distribution of funding and compliance was well as the management of the Secretariat itself.

*The Strategic Directions and Workplan, 2016 identifies the areas for strategic focus. These are operationalised in Implementation Activities 2016. Additionally, the continuing work of CECNSW in policy and funding areas is listed. Separately, the ongoing work within the Secretariat to improve the quality of its work is included as Efficiency and Capability Initiatives.*

At the request of the Chairman Bishop Peter Comensoli, Commissioners addressed the matter of identifying those priority strategic issues, which should form the focus of Commission activity in 2016.

In this context Executive Director Dr Brian Croke tabled a late paper listing the “Top 10 Strategic Issues for CEC 2016” to facilitate discussion. In discussion, Commissioners noted that:

(i) Religious Freedom in School Education needs to be identified as the overarching priority for 2016. It was noted that the core purpose of Catholic schools is under challenge by an overtly secular popular culture and related politics.

(ii) the following matters were also included for 2016:

(a) The changing nature of the Teacher Workforce and the role of relevant Commission advisory groups for TAA Compliance and Teacher Development;

(b) Pre-Stage one and Stage 6 challenges in the context of changing community agenda expectations of schooling. That is the pre-school agenda, out of school hours services and Stage 6 pathways including the VET agenda; and

(c) Student and staff wellbeing and resilience; including stocktake, data analysis and collaboration with Diocesan Catholiccares.

Commission discussion of the identified priorities emphasised the importance of the Wellbeing challenge facing schools both with respect to students and staff including principals. The rising rate of identified mental health issues amongst students was noted as a matter of concern. In this context the mental health issues in primary schools was cited as a particular challenge requiring a coordinated analysis and response.

9. **Meetings with CEnet concerning NAPLAN online**

Both CECNSW and CEnet are represented on National and NSW Online Assessment Working Groups for NAPLAN delivery. Current NAPLAN Online issues include (i) the impact of BYO/unmanaged devices, and (ii) implementation costs for the Catholic sector. With regard to the former, Commissioners will be aware that the diversity of devices in use across Catholic schools creates a complex environment for online testing. CECNSW officers participated recently in videoconferences involving CEnet e-learning and COGS groups where these and related issues were discussed. ACARA is the national body responsible for making final decisions about the conduct of the online NAPLAN. NAPLAN online for NSW Schools will commence from 2018.
10. Myfuture Online Careers Service: Future Funding

In July 2002, myfuture was officially launched by Brendan Nelson (Minister for Education, Science and Training) as a ‘one-stop-shop’ for career and employment information to benefit students and career changers across the country. In December 2013, myfuture was reviewed and redesigned to improve the ease of use and functionality, with additional enhancements to consider its usability and the technological abilities of different age groups. myfuture has been developed based upon current career theory and practice to guarantee its relevance and applicability in an ever-changing world of work.

At the end of 2014, the Australian Government withdrew its funding support ($1M) for the myfuture Career Education website (http://myfuture.edu.au/). Until this time the site and its services were a joint funding venture between the Commonwealth and the States. Education Services Australia (ESA) houses the site and provides the additional services that the site enables.

CECNSW has represented non-government schools on the National Career Development Working Group since the Australian Government’s removal of funding in December 2014. CECNSW’s Vocational Education Advisory Group (VEAG) has been kept aware of developments over the past year. Over this time VEAG has supported the value of this site for career education and guidance and as such the CECNSW has been considering support options and talking with ESA as regards the maintenance of services at the lowest possible cost.

Commissioners were advised that since the paper was written NSW Department of Education has agreed to fund access to the My Future website by public schools. This decision has increased the CECNSW bulk discount to 50% thereby reducing the estimated costs for Catholic schools to 88 cents per secondary pupil.

The point was made that it is not clear whether Catholic schools will access the site in numbers sufficient to justify the cost. In this context it was noted that the CECNSW Vocational Education Advisory Group (VEAG) has strongly recommended that access to the site be funded by CECNSW.

After discussing various response options, Commissioners agreed that access be funded for 2016 and then reviewed before any ongoing financial commitment beyond 2016 is made. This access cost is estimated at 88 cents per enrolled secondary school student per year.

Commissioners requested that Catholic sector use of the My Future website be monitored and evaluated. A report of this evaluation of 2016 usage is to be provided to the 21 October 2016 Commission meeting.

11. Countering Violent Extremism: Update

CECNSW has continued to work with the other school sectors to respond to the challenges raised particularly by recent events at Parramatta. The key messages are that schools are effective in promoting a civil society. Prior to the recent incident at Parramatta, CECNSW, the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AIS) and DEC met to develop a protocol to have all concerns regarding students, about whom concerns are held because of extremist views/behaviours, addressed though a common, cross-sectoral process. A further meeting will be held on Friday 23 October to discuss possible implementation tasks and address issues which continue to arise in this area. It was noted that Catholic school authorities with enrolments of students with Islamic backgrounds need to be aware of tensions within the Islamic community. Similarly schools with students from Middle Eastern Christian backgrounds need to monitor signs of community tensions and respond appropriately.
12. Working with Children Check Implementation 2016 - 2017

Commissioners discussed Working with Children Check issues at the September meeting. On Friday 16th October DOE, AIS, BOSTES, CCER and CECNSW held a second meeting for the purpose of identifying WWCC implementation matters of mutual concern. This second meeting focused on:

i. Timeline issues, agreeing that all teachers must complete the WWCC process by 31 December 2017 so as to align the requirements of both BOSTES and the Children’s Guardian.

ii. Communications to schools and teachers should be sent no later than mid-term one 2016, messaging to be plain English and concise.

iii. The key industrial issue is the management of any teacher who is the subject of an “interim bar”. DoE, under the Teaching Services Act, can suspend teachers without pay while non-Government schools pursuant to industrial agreements are likely to be obliged to suspend with pay.

iv. Non-teaching school staff roles need to be assessed in order to determine the proper WWCC obligation for each category of employee.

v. Data linking and sharing between the office of the Children’s Guardian and BOSTES is to be enhanced wherever possible.

vi. The management of the WWCC process for casual teachers is seen to require special planning.

vii. Teachers on approved leave, e.g. maternity leave, will need to be advised and supported so that each can address their WWCC obligation.

Having considered these matters, the three school sectors agreed to: (a) share draft communication material for teachers, and (b) meet in mid November to further review WWCC implementation issues.

13. Commission Decisions

The Commission:

1) endorsed the NCEC response to Royal Commission Issues Paper 9 as provided to TJHC;

2) noted CECNSW engagement with the Royal Commission on planning for the publication in early 2016 of an Issues paper dealing with Record Keeping by schools and other institutions which provide services to children;

3) agreed to the continuation of CECNSW HSC Analysis Project for 2016;

4) endorsed the HSC Analysis Project Service Agreement inclusive of costs; and

5) approved the 2014 CECNSW Annual Report for publication.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
5 November 2015
BRIEFING BY THE CATHOLIC BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY WITH CBGA DELEGATE

CAPITAL GRANTS

2015 Application Round

The NSW Catholic Block Grant Authority (CBGA) submitted the schedules of recommended projects tabled at the previous meeting to the Australian and New South Wales Departments of Education. Supplementary information supporting the projects was also provided to assist in the assessment and approval of scheduled projects.

Once the schedules have been approved by the respective Minister, applicants will be advised by Initial Offer. The Australian and New South Wales governments reserve the right to announce the allocation of funds for school projects.

New South Wales Building Grants Assistance Scheme (BGAS)

The CBGA has been involved in the review of agreement with the NSW Government underpinning the BGAS. The amended agreement removes some of the inconsistencies in relation to the funding of schools (basis of enrolment numbers and affiliations with Block Grant Authorities). Other issues require further negotiation.

State Priority Committee Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the State Priority Committee (SPC) will be held on Thursday 5 November 2015 on level 5 Polding Centre. The meeting will concentrate of issues raised during the 2015 Application Round and recommend and accept changes to the CBGA Application Guidelines. Proposals to be considered at the AGM will be sent to SPC members one week prior to the meeting.

2016 Application Round

In preparation for the 2016 Application Round the on-line application system is being configured to accept applications for 2016. A formal notification will be given advising when the application is ready for use, the closing dates for applications, the proposed dates for SPC meetings and SPC School visits.

Applicants can use the system in its current configuration but will need to copy the application to a 2016 version when the system is formally opened for 2016 round applications.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
5 November 2015