1) CECNSW Capital Review

In 2015 the CECNSW approved a review of the operations of the New South Wales Catholic Block Grant Authority (CBGA) which the Commission Secretariat undertook using the professional services of Ernst and Young (EY). The Review report has been completed and needs to be considered by the Commission and the Bishops of NSW/ACT as the legal embodiment of the CBGA. It will be considered in detail by the Resources Policy Committee in the first instance.

2) NCCD 2015 Data Collection - Outcomes and Next Steps

Since 2015, all government and non-government schools in Australia are required to participate annually in the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) on School Students with Disability.

The 2015 collection was the final year of the staged approach and the first year that all schools were required to participate in the NCCD. In terms of reporting this means that the 2015 collection includes schools that were undertaking a collection for the first time, for others it was their second or third time. The difference in school participation from 2013 to 2015 means that caution needs to be used in drawing any comparisons between results for each year of the staged implementation.

3) Commonwealth Online Safety Program and School Funding - Implementation Planning

At the August 2015 meeting, Commissioners discussed the Commonwealth Online Safety Program. Following discussion of the initiative, the Commission:

• expressed its dissatisfaction with the creation of this type of program, i.e. small funding with disproportionate compliance burdens;
• requested the CECNSW Secretariat, in consultation with the Education Policy Committee, to develop an alternative implementation plan based on a consolidation of both funding and effort through a single annual diocesan program; and
• authorised the Executive Director to finalise a new implementation plan which focuses effort and minimises compliance burden.

In January 2016, CECNSW received preliminary advice that the Australian Government is preparing to undertake project agreements with states and territories to support Online Safety Programs in Schools in 2016 and 2017.

With regard to the eSafety Commissioner’s intention to require the collection of data related to school-level incidents of e-bullying, the Commission expressed concern that such a collection would impose a significant burden on schools for little practical value.
4) Review of the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards - CECNSW input

NSW Minister for Education Adrian Piccoli has commissioned a review of the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES), a NSW Government Statutory Authority responsible to the Minister.

The members of the Review Panel are:

- Bill Louden AM (Chair), Emeritus Professor of Education at the University of Western Australia, formerly Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Western Australia;
- Lisa Paul AO PSM, former Secretary of the Australian Department of Education and Training; and
- Dr Phil Lambert PSM, former General Manager, Curriculum ACARA and Regional Director, Sydney NSW Department of Education.


The review is required to report to the Minister by early July 2016.

Commissioners expressed support and appreciation for the Board and noted that a compelling case for change would be required to justify significant change to the current Board functions and operation.

In considering the question, ‘What model of governance balances representation with expert judgement?’, it was suggested that the current governance structure would be strengthened with a smaller Board supplemented by a number of sub-committees which include membership of the range of stakeholder groups.

5) BOSTES, Next Generation HSC: Issues and Processes

At the 30 November 2015 Commission meeting, it was noted that during Term 1 2016 BOSTES will progress consultations on “modernising the HSC by 2019”. These consultations are now in progress and will continue through April 2016.

Commissioners:

- agreed to the timely nature of the paper;
- requested that an inter-Diocesan forum be organised by the Commission Secretariat to review and advise upon the Position Paper once it is finalised by the Minister; and
- noted that matters requiring further input include:
  - a clear rationale for HSC reform relating to the changing nature of knowledge, teaching, learning and assessment; and
  - the necessity to carefully consider the place of VET in the HSC.

6) Commission Decisions

The Commission endorsed:

1) the CECNSW 2016 Literacy and Numeracy Implementation Plan;
2) the renewal of the Accreditation of CECNSW as the Approved Animal Research Establishment for all NSW Catholic schools for the period April 2016 to April 2018;
3) the CECNSW Students First Support Fund 2015 Accountability Report for submission to the Australian Government Department of Education and Training;
4) CECNSW engagement with the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the sexualisation of Children;
5) the Safe Schools Coalition Review advice as provided;
6) the CECNSW Refugee student funding submission to the NSW Budget; and
7) the CECNSW submission to the Senate Inquiry into School Funding.
7) Death of Former Commissioner, Sr Marilyn Kelleher

Former Commissioner Sr Marilyn Kelleher died on 12 March. She served on the Commission from 1993 until 2001 as a nominee of the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes. Prior to that Marilyn was principal at Stella Maris College, Manly and she served on a number of school boards. Marilyn taught the subjects of English, History and Religion but most of all, she taught the girls to be self-confident, well educated women who could take their place in the world. The quality of her teaching and her commitment was inspiring. Following her time as Principal, Marilyn completed her PhD in English Literature. Marilyn continued to serve her congregation researching its history so that the work of the sisters would not be forgotten. She remained a regular visitor to CEC and a keen commentator on Catholic education generally. Sr Marilyn is fondly remembered as a feisty, passionate teacher and a deeply committed religious sister.

8) Brother John Taylor Memorial Prize for the 2015 HSC

The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW, established this award in 1993 in memory of Brother John Taylor, a distinguished, long-term member of the Board of Studies and Executive Director, CECNSW. It is awarded to a student who has overcome significant disadvantage or disability to achieve academic excellence in the Higher School Certificate. The prize is a cash grant of $1000 and is awarded on the recommendation of a panel of trustees, including Geraldine Gray for CECNSW, following nominations from principals for students they believe worthy of the award.

A total of 25 nominations were received from the 2015 HSC cohort and considered by the representatives of the Trust with a noted increase in the number of nominations related to mental health and social issues with fewer serious disabilities. The Hon Adrian Piccoli, Minister for Education, presented two students, Ms Grace Chen, Pymble Ladies’ College and Ms Alexandra Elgue, Ascham School, with their awards at a special ceremony at Parliament House on 10 March. The ceremony was attended by Dr Brian Croke, Ian Baker and Geraldine Gray.

9) Aboriginal Education – House of Representatives Hearing

On 22 March 2016, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs brought its inquiry into Educational Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders students to Sydney for a day of public hearings. On the basis of its submission, the NCEC was invited to attend, and with a panel comprising NCEC, NSW, WA, Qld and NT, offered the Committee insights and information about Aboriginal education services and programs from a Catholic education perspective. The public hearing was an opportunity to highlight the successes of the sector, to present good practice case studies, and to inform the Committee of the support provided to students and their families of educational services delivered by Catholic education in often complex socio-economic circumstances. The Committee has no reporting date, however updates will be provided to the Commission via its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Committee.

10) NSW Premier’s Priorities for Literacy and Numeracy Achievement

Last year the Premier released NSW: Making it happen - his 30 priorities for improving NSW, which include 12 Premier’s Priorities and 18 State Priorities. See https://www.nsw.gov.au/making-it-happen. One of the 12 Premier’s Priorities is to raise the percentage of all students in the top two bands in the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) by 8% by 2019. One of the 18 State Priorities is to increase the proportion of Aboriginal students in the top two NAPLAN bands for reading and numeracy by 30% by 2019.

These substantial targets reflect the importance of literacy and numeracy skills as the foundations for success in schooling. Research and school experience shows that students with strong literacy and numeracy skills stay at school longer and complete their HSC, setting them up for a pathway to further study or work. NSW schools have always had a core focus on literacy and numeracy development. To ensure NSW Catholic schools maintain this focus and do all they can to achieve these NSW targets, it is expected that every NSW school will have in place strategies to improve student literacy and numeracy outcomes and report progress to their school communities. Directors and Principals have been advised accordingly. Specific forms of follow-up support are being developed.

Commissioners expressed concern about the possible negative impact of targets when they are set by governments without input from school authorities.
11) Moving NAPLAN Online

Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers have agreed that the annual NAPLAN tests will move from pen and paper to online testing from 2017, with full participation by all Australian schools by 2019. The three school sectors in NSW have agreed that all NSW schools will transition together and an opt-in date (after 2017) will be confirmed by the NSW Minister for Education in 2016. Trialling of the new online platform will commence shortly. Research and trialling by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) suggests that moving NAPLAN online will have a wide range of benefits for students and teachers, including:

- reduced time between testing and reporting - faster turnaround of results for parents and teachers and more accurate assessment of each child’s strengths and areas for development
- tailored test design - this approach will provide targeting of questions to student ability and will improve the precision of assessment for all students.

NSW Catholic Schools Authorities have been invited to send representatives to a NAPLAN Online forum being organised by CECNSW and to be held on 23 May 2016.

12) CEC K-6 Workshop

Forty primary educators representing all dioceses and several Congregational schools with primary years met in Sydney on 9-10 March. The priority curriculum areas for exploration and sharing were Geography and STEM. Peter Lee, the BOSTES Primary Inspector, presented on models of K-6 syllabus implementation and assessment, while Jenny Donovan, General Manager of the NSW Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, ‘unpacked’ the recent CESE publication, Re-assessing Assessment. The next K-6 workshop will be held 14-15 September. The main focus areas will be Numeracy and more detailed exploration of Assessment.

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
21 April 2016
BRIEFING BY THE CATHOLIC BLOCK GRANT AUTHORITY

FORECAST CAPITAL EXPENDITURE TO 2021 FOR NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS

The National Catholic Education Commission requested forecast capital expenditure on land and buildings for NSW Catholic schools as part of data collection exercise for strengthening the argument for additional capital grant funding from the Australian Government.

Diocesan schools offices provided information and this was collated by the CECNSW Secretariat and delivered to the NCEC, under three categories:

- New Schools
- Expansions, i.e. Additional Stages of New Schools and New Stages of Existing Schools
- Refurbishments of Existing Schools.

APPLICATION OF CAPITAL GRANT FUNDS TO PROJECTS

The CBGA and the CECNSW have been party to discussions relating to the conduct of forums in relation to the Trade Training/Skills Centres in Schools Program. During the course of the forums there will be five workshops based around leading Trade Training Centres into a Sustainable Future.

The five workshops are titled:

- Workshop 1 – Industry Engagement
- Workshop 2 – Sustainability
- Workshop 3 – Facility Management and Recruitment
- Workshop 4 – RTO Partnerships and Compliance
- Workshop 5 – Adaptability and Responding to the VET Landscape

These workshops will be based on Surveys that are currently in development and follow on from the outcomes/outputs from forums already held in other states.

CBGA Executive Officer

John Kitney
Commission Secretary
21 April 2016