

## Media Response

Issued to the Australian Financial Review 14 May 2017

*ENQUIRY: The Australian Financial Review provided CECNSW with a list of Catholic schools in low and high SES areas, claiming there were "...many high SES schools which are significantly overfunded compared to the Gonski needs based estimate and many low SES schools which are underfunded. Why is the Commonwealth funding distributed to these schools in wealthy areas of Sydney so high, and funding to these low SES schools so low compared, compared to the Gonski funding estimate? In some cases high SES schools are receiving more Commonwealth funding than low SES schools."*

*CECNSW Acting Executive Director Ian Baker provided the following response...*

As with government schools, funding for Catholic schools is overwhelmingly used to pay teacher salaries. As with government schools, the funding amounts per student reflect a combination of factors in each school, including teacher experience and qualifications, class sizes and the needs of students.

It is why there are significant variations between government schools in the same suburb/SES area. For example, Liverpool Girls High attracts \$12,859 per student in total government funding, while Liverpool Boys High receives \$14,494. Canterbury Boys High receives \$16,917 per student while Canterbury Girls High receives \$12,967 (*all figures are 2015 MySchool data*).

No Catholic system school is ever underfunded or overfunded. All schools are funded according to need.

*(If you are asking about the Government's decision to phase out the System Weighted Average, you may use the following information...)*

The Catholic sector operates low-fee diocesan or 'system' primary schools that are accessible to all families in all areas, under the same principle that provides a free government school education to be accessible in all areas, regardless of SES.

This system is underpinned by a funding redistribution model that ensures all schools are funded according to need, while keeping fees affordable.

The Federal Government wants to change this system so that Catholic primary schools may need to charge fees comparable to elite private schools in the same SES areas. This assumes all families living in an area with a high average SES are equally wealthy. In all communities, there are families below the average and above the average.

Parents who enrol their children in low-fee Catholic schools tend to be below the SES average for that particular area and are therefore sensitive to fee rises. Already, we have seen one Catholic school in northern Sydney lose 10 per cent of its enrolments this year after a 17 per cent fee increase.