GOOD NEWS & BAD FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN NSW BUDGET

Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) has welcomed the NSW Government’s commitment to lift recurrent funding to all schools in the State Budget, honouring the national agreement signed in 2013.

But it said it is disappointed the NSW Government has left in place its 2012 freeze on capital funding to all non-government schools, which educate more than a third of the state’s school students.

The 2014-15 NSW Budget confirms state funding will increase each year under the National Education Reform Agreement (the so-called ‘Gonski’ funding reforms).

“We welcome confirmation that the NSW Government will honour its recurrent funding obligations, despite the Federal Government’s decision to abandon the agreement in its final two years when the most substantial investments were due to be made in all schools,” CECNSW executive director Brian Croke said.

“The NSW Government was the first to sign up to the Commonwealth’s school funding reforms, which direct more funding to teaching students with the greatest need.”

Dr Croke said students with a disability and indigenous students have been the fastest growing segments of enrolments in NSW Catholic schools over the past three decades.

“By the end of 2013, there were 12,708 students with a disability enrolled in NSW Catholic schools -- up from 377 in 1985 -- while indigenous enrolments have grown sixfold since 1985 to almost 6,400.”

“Today’s confirmation of additional recurrent funding means all NSW schools can plan for school years up to and including 2019, knowing the state component will be delivered.”

But Dr Croke said the decision to continue the freeze on capital funding to non-government schools meant it would be harder to meet the forecast growth in demand for additional school places.

“We are disappointed that the Government has left capital funding for the state’s 934 non-government schools at $54.6 million.

“With building costs rising, this is effectively a cut in capital funding -- the first time NSW Government capital allocations to non-government schools have declined in real terms since 1968.

“Every school in NSW – Government and non-government – is an integral part of the state’s economic and social infrastructure.

“They need to be expanded and updated to keep pace with the leading schools in our region; this is not the time to be leaving any school behind,” Dr Croke said.

In 2013, NSW’s 583 Catholic schools educated 251,158 students and employed more than 27,000 teaching and support staff.

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