



13 June 2017

Dear Principals, Parents and Carers,

Changes to the Commonwealth school funding arrangements

As Director of Catholic Education covering fifty-six schools across the ACT and parts of southern NSW I am deeply concerned about the impact of the Federal Government's funding plan on Catholic schools. The Turnbull Government has indicated it will put the funding proposal to the Senate in the coming weeks.

If the policy passes the parliament Catholic schools in Canberra will particularly suffer from a significant reduction to funding by the Turnbull Government – estimated to be a cut equal to a third of current funding. In NSW estimates of funding growth for Catholic schools published on a government website rely on funding cuts and fee increases in Catholic schools elsewhere in NSW.

In recent weeks the Government has suggested through the media that all schools will receive more funding and that additional funding has been provided to assist Catholic schools in the ACT. Unfortunately, under the plan according to the Government figures some Catholic schools in NSW will have funding reduced compared to current funding levels before future funding growth. The Government's plan will also reduce funding to Catholic schools in Canberra over time.

Overall the funding proposals are likely to put pressure on fees across Catholic education, particularly for schools in Canberra and metropolitan areas across Australia. I am concerned that the result will be that it will be harder for parents to access an affordable, holistic education in a Catholic school.

The funding reductions for Catholic schools arise for a number of reasons which Catholic education has questioned. Funding reductions are based on a Socio Economic Status (SES) measure determined from Australian Bureau of Statistics census data. This measure determines the allocation of government funding to children in Catholic schools. There are reasons to believe the measure is highly flawed.

The funding model proposed by Minister Birmingham will make it harder to provide an affordable, holistic education option in a Catholic school.

I do not think that the funding model is fair for parents in all schools. As an example students at Catholic schools in Canberra already receive the lowest level of government funding per student of any State/Territory Catholic System.

In 2015 a child attending an ACT public school received around \$14,000 per annum in government funding. This compared to government funding for a child at a Catholic school of around \$9,000.

Under the funding plan ACT Catholic schools will have funding decreased while commonwealth funding to ACT Government schools will increase. There are other flaws in the funding model that should be fixed before school funding is set for all schools for the next ten years.

Thank you to everyone who values Catholic schools who has already contacted local political leaders to express concern at the funding changes. I ask that if you are concerned about the future of Catholic schools that you contact your local member as soon as possible.

If you require any further information, please contact me at any time on ross.fox@cg.catholic.edu.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ross Fox". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial "R" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ross Fox

Director