



St Benedict's Primary School

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11th May 2017

Dear Parent/Carer

Re: School funding cuts for Catholic schools

As you may be aware the Australian government this week announced a new funding proposal that will cut funding to Catholic schools in the ACT over next ten years.

A cut of this magnitude will have a significant impact on the Catholic system and we will be faced with tough decisions to cover any shortfall including raising fees and reducing costs. Catholic education will do everything it can to hold fees as low as possible.

This week we received a letter from Education Minister Simon Birmingham that confirms our funding will be cut over the next ten years.

I have attached that letter for your information however I stress that the Catholic Education Office is currently reviewing the figures to confirm their accuracy. We have been advised that while we know funding will be cut we should treat the figures with caution until they can be confirmed.

The school funding debate is complicated and surrounded by misinformation. To support you the Catholic education office has produced some simple key points.

I encourage you to:

- Take this information and share it with your friends, including on social media.
- Contact your political leaders and ask why funding for your child is being cut while other students are receiving increases. Ask how your school is expected to cover the gap.
- Explain what will be put at risk in what you value in the school as a result of these cuts.

I appreciate this is an unusual request but it is necessary in the circumstances. In conjunction with the Director of Catholic education we will be doing everything possible to help the Australian Government understand the consequences of these changes.

Regards

Rachel Smith
Principal (Acting)



Birmingham's Catholic School funding cuts a hit to parent choice

The funding cuts announced last week for Catholic schools in the ACT have caused concern amongst principals that parents are choosing government schools instead of Catholic schools for their children next year on the basis of increasing fees and affordability issues under the new funding policy.

Catholic schools across the ACT are already reporting significant parent concern and lower enrolment enquiries in recent weeks encompassing ACT Catholic Schools Week and the traditional enrolment period.

I call on the Minister to urgently address the funding cuts to Catholic schools to ensure parents aren't forced out of non-government schools this year by increasing fees and reduced funding.

This week Minister Birmingham sent a letter to every Catholic school in the ACT confirming lower funding in 2027 than 2017. The letters contained no detail on the expected higher fees resulting from the government policy.

With family budgets under pressure from many quarters parents have said they are already struggling to pay schools fees. Parents will not welcome the fee rises necessary to cover the funding cuts.

These funding cuts ignore the fact that if the same parents enrol in a government school government funding will be significantly higher and fees lower.

The Minister's new funding model says the parents at St Thomas More's in Campbell have the same 'capacity to pay' school fees as the parents at schools like Sydney's elite independent school - SHORE.

The Minister's new funding model will cut funding to St Thomas More's in Campbell while delivering a 75% increase in commonwealth funding for an identical student in Campbell Primary School next door.

Catholic school parents are quite rightly asking why their child deserves less support and resources than the same student just across the road in a government school.

Today all Catholic schools in the ACT will receive a fact sheet and information to assist parents understand the changes. Everyone who supports Catholic education needs to understand the very real impact this will have on the education of students in Catholic schools.

I urge all parents in Catholic schools to consider the impact on their school and contact their political leaders and demand to know why their children deserve to have government support cut over the next ten years.

Ross Fox, Director of Catholic Education, Canberra and Goulburn

For media enquires please contact Tim Smith on 0407 825 185 or email tim.smith@cg.catholic.edu.au



CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn

Facts on ACT funding cuts.

- There are 29 Catholic systemic schools and 3 independent Catholic schools affected by the cuts.
- For Catholic systemic schools funding will be cut from \$109m in 2017 to \$107m in 2027 with no increase for salaries and other school costs which are expected to rise more than \$50 million over the period.
- Australian Government funding to ACT government schools to rise by 145% over the same period
- Schools will need to consider all possible options to cover funding shortfall by raising fees or reducing costs.

For media enquires please contact Tim Smith on 0407 825 185 or email tim.smith@cg.catholic.edu.au



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Key Facts

- The Minister has confirmed funding for Catholic schools will be cut from \$109 million today to \$107 million in 2027 with no increase for salaries and other schools costs which are expected to rise by more than \$50 million over the period.
- Teacher salaries alone are estimated to grow by nearly \$40 million.
- Schools and the system will need to consider all possible options to cover funding shortfall by raising fees or reducing costs.
- Education Minister Simon Birmingham has written to all Catholic schools in the ACT confirming their funding will be cut.
- Our students deserve the same resources as the students in a nearby government school, ACT government schools have been promised a funding rise of 145% over ten years.
- We are not asking for a special deal we are simply asking for fair funding that keeps pace with rising costs so we can keep our schools affordable for all families who want a Catholic education.
- The alternative is Catholic students join the government school system and that will cost governments far more than it will to fund us fairly.

What can you do to help?

- School funding is complicated but the facts are clear. Cuts to Catholic schools will hurt our students and put families and teachers under pressure.
- We need you to share these facts with friends, to influence conversations and correct misinformation.
- Share the facts via social media.
- Call your political leaders and ask why your tax payer dollars are going to increased funding for government and independent schools while funding is being cut at your child's school. Seek a meeting. Invite them to your school and show them why funding is so important.
- Write to your paper and call on political leaders to reverse these funding cuts and provide fair funding for your child that covers rising costs.

- Your MP contact details are:

- Senator the Honourable Simon Birmingham
Minister for Education
Ph: (02) 6277 7350
Email: minister@education.gov.au
- Senator the Honourable Zed Seselja
Assistant Minister for Social Services and Multicultural Affairs
Senator for the ACT
Ph: (02) 6277 3187
Email: senator.seselja@aph.gov.au
- Ms Yvette Berry
ACT Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development
Ph: (02) 6205 0233
Email: berry@act.gov.au

Should you require any further information please contact Tim Smith at Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn via email tim.smith@cg.catholic.edu.au or phone 0407 825185

Written by Ross Fox, Catholic Education, Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn. 52-54 Franklin St Manuka.



Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham

Minister for Education and Training
Senator for South Australia

Principal
St Benedict's Primary School
PO Box 59
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Rachel.smith@cg.catholic.edu.au

Dear Principal

I am writing to you about the Turnbull Government's commitment to deliver on Mr David Gonski AC's recommendations for fairer, needs-based schools funding from 2018 and what it means for your school.

I'd like to acknowledge the important work you and your staff do each and every day to provide our children with the best possible start in life.

To help ensure you have the necessary funding to meet the needs of the children in your school, the Turnbull Government has announced an extra \$18.6 billion in funding on top of already record and growing funding for Australian schools over the next 10 years.

Commonwealth school funding will grow each year by more than \$1 billion. This will be real growth for students, well above inflation or wages growth.

This will bring our total 10 year investment to a record \$242.3 billion.

We are committed to ensuring that this additional funding is allocated fairly between states, sectors and schools, and is based on the needs of students.

As envisaged by the 2011 *Review of Funding for Schooling*, led by Mr Gonski, we will ensure payments are calculated with a base amount per student and additional loadings for Indigenous students and students with a disability, as well as those from language backgrounds other than English, from disadvantaged backgrounds, and those attending small and remote schools.

We will end the special deals made by the former Government that have resulted in students with the same need within the same sector being treated differently just because of the state in which they live. Under our new model, the same student with the same need in the same school sector will be treated the same by the Australian Government across states, ensuring Commonwealth funding is allocated to where it is needed the most.

As a result of these reforms, a small number of schools may see a small reduction in Commonwealth per student funding as we move to the new arrangements. Current estimates indicate that your school may be one of these schools.

Based on current modelling and your latest enrolment figures as reported to the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, St Benedict's Primary School is estimated to see an increase of \$1,200 funding from 2017 to 2018. We estimate an average annual per student decrease of 0.8 per cent over the ten years that will result in a total decrease from 2017 to 2027 of \$330,800.

It is important to note that as part of a system, Commonwealth funding attracted by your school is paid to the system. They may choose to reallocate funding between schools in their system, and have the autonomy to finally determine the amount your school receives.

An additional \$39.8 million adjustment fund will be established to provide financial assistance to vulnerable schools that face a reduction in funding per student and your school may be able to access this funding. My department will be consulting with the National Catholic Education Commission in the development of guidelines for eligibility for financial assistance and operation of the fund.

Funding entitlements will be set in legislation to ensure certainty for schools and we will therefore be seeking the support of the Australian Parliament to secure these new arrangements.

To underpin our increased investment, Mr Gonski has agreed to lead the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*. It will provide advice on how the extra Commonwealth funding should be invested to improve Australian schools' performance, and grow student achievement.

The Review will be finalised by the end of 2017 to align with the Australian Government's new approach to schools funding from 2018, and the findings will inform a new national schools agreement and bilateral reform plans with states and territories.

Information about the new arrangements and how they will work is available at www.education.gov.au/qualityschools. There you will find fact sheets and a 'school funding estimator' that will indicate what the new arrangements mean for your school. I encourage you to share a copy of this letter and information with your school community.

Further advice on the adjustment fund will be provided to you once funding guidelines have been finalised; however, if you have any questions in the meantime, please email my department at SchoolsTransition@education.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Birmingham', written in a cursive style.

Simon Birmingham

8 May 2017