

CCHQ 2022

STRONG ECONOMY. STRONGER FUTURE.

4 May 2022

Ms Jacinta Collins
Executive Director
National Catholic Education Commission
Via email: jacinta.collins@ncec.catholic.edu.au

Dear Ms Collins

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Coalition on important issues facing the Commission. A response to your questions is attached.

The last two years have been tough for our country.

Despite the setbacks, Australia's economic recovery is leading the world.

Unemployment is at 4%, the equal lowest in 48 years. And the recent Budget included the biggest turnaround in our finances in over 70 years.

There's much more to be done. To build a stronger future, our plan will:

1. Deliver more jobs and working towards unemployment below 4%.
2. Deliver tax relief for workers and small businesses.
3. Invest in roads, rail, water infrastructure and renewable energy technology.
4. Make record investments in health and other essential services.
5. Invest in stronger defence, security and borders.

This election provides a clear choice, with real consequences for Australia.

The alternative at this election is Anthony Albanese and Labor. Labor would weaken our economy and put Australia's recovery at risk. Now is not the time to change course.

Thank you for communicating our response to your members.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Hirst
Federal Director

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NATIONALS
for Regional Australia

MORRISON GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION

Supporting school choice

As the Australian Government is the predominant funder of Catholic schools, how will you/your party ensure Catholic schools remain affordable for Australian families through funding certainty and indexation?

The Morrison Government is delivering record funding to Australian schools across all sectors, with \$25.3 billion in funding in 2022, and \$318.9 billion over the period 2018 to 2029. This includes non-government school annual average growth of 3.8 per cent per student. Under the Coalition Government, funding to the Catholic sector has increased by 69.8 per cent and will increase a further 25.1 per cent by 2029.

The Morrison Government remains committed to providing Australian families with choice and equity in education. The Morrison Government will continue to support parent choice in education through the Choice and Affordability Fund (CAF) which was introduced in 2020 and provides an estimated \$725.9 million to the Catholic school sector over 10 years to 2029.

The Morrison Government has ensured the school resourcing standard (SRS) grows annually to provide a minimum base and certainty for schools and parents while ensuring that funding reflects real changes in wages and inflation costs. A re-elected Morrison Government will review indexation arrangements in partnership with the non-government sector in 2023 to ensure they are fit-for-purpose and support schools, parents and students with real funding growth.

Will you/your party commit to bring forward the review of non-government school parent contributions from 2027 to 2024 to ensure fairness?

The Morrison Government is committed to fair and targeted per student funding and will review the current Direct Measure of Income methodology to ensure it is fit for purpose and remains an accurate reflection of parent contributions to non-government schools.

A re-elected Morrison Government will bring this review forward to 2024, following the introduction of the next National School Reform Agreement. Doing so will ensure funding to the Catholic and independent school sectors is fair and representative of individual school communities.

What support will you/your party provide to improve capital funding to help Catholic schools adequately resource learning environments, keep pace with enrolment growth and address rising costs?

The Morrison Government remains committed to ensuring the Capital Grants Program provides funding for non-government schools to meet the needs of their students by supporting new equipment, construction of buildings, maintaining land and buildings, and improving schools.

Under the Morrison Government, funding to schools through the Capital Grants Program has grown. Between 2014 to 2021, the Coalition Government has provided approximately \$1.2 billion of capital grants to non-government schools, of which Catholic schools received almost two-thirds (\$758 million).

In 2022, the Morrison Government will provide an estimated \$188.7 million of capital funding to non-government schools (an increase of approximately \$9.9 million from 2021) of which approximately \$111 million will be directed to Catholic Schools. We have also ensured that priority

Capital Funding can be made available to any schools impacted by the recent flooding in New South Wales and Queensland, particularly where insurance costs are not able to fully cover the damage.

The Morrison Government remains committed to annual indexation of the Capital Grants Program, so that funding increases in real terms and is in line with changes in building prices and wage costs.

Enabling faith-based education

How will you/your party support appropriate legislation and educational policy to enable Catholic schools to operate and teach within a religious ethos?

No Australian should be discriminated against on the basis of their religious belief, or lack thereof.

The Government remains committed to protecting religious belief and activity from discrimination in a similar way to other attributes protected by legislation, including race, age, disability and sex.

The Morrison Government sought legislation to protect those of faith which is fair and balanced and undertook extensive consultation before introducing the legislation.

The legislation that was introduced to Parliament sought to protect what we value as Australians: diversity, fairness, choice, charity, and if we are not hurting others, the right to live our lives as we see fit.

The right to believe and to practice faith must be respected and protected, not just in our homes and workplaces, but in our schools and in our communities.

A re-elected Morrison Government will pursue passage of the Religious Discrimination Bill as stand-alone legislation in the next parliament and will not accept any attempts to make changes to other laws that undermine protections for religious institutions.

Our Government is committed to respecting the freedom of Australians to live free from discrimination on the basis of their faith, and to revisiting this matter again in the next Parliament.

Delivering national priorities

Will you/your party commit to extending the Non-Government Reform Support Fund beyond 2022 to support the delivery of the National Education Reform Agreement and emerging priorities such as quality teaching?

The Non-Government Reform Support Fund is an important Coalition Government measure that supports true needs-based funding reforms to the non-government school sector. In the 2022-23 Budget, the Morrison Government committed to provide an additional \$40.3 million to extend the fund for 12 months to December 2023. Of this, \$23 million will go to the Catholic Sector.

The Morrison Government is committed to ensuring ongoing reforms in the non-government school sector beyond December 2023 are supported and resourced appropriately. A re-elected Morrison Government will continue to work with the Catholic and Independent school sectors to ensure an appropriate funding mechanism is provided, whether that be an extension of the Non-Government Reform Support Fund or a new fit-for-purpose fund.

How will you/your party support Early Childhood Education in the two years prior to school, capital funding to grow the number of services, and improved alignment for school delivery?

Since 2013, the Coalition Government has invested more than \$3.2 billion through National Partnerships with states and territories to deliver 15 hours a week (600 hours a year) of high-quality preschool in the year before full-time school.

Ongoing funding for preschool, provided for the first time under the Morrison Government, guarantees certainty of funding each year for around 300,000 children in around 12,000 services.

The new Preschool Reform Agreement, 2022-2025 is a \$2 billion Performance Agreement with funding linked to improved participation, measured by attendance, and the implementation of an outcomes measure. The Agreement also includes a commitment that funding follows the child from 2023, with states responsible for the implementation. Together these reforms will drive greater access to quality preschool delivery by an Early Childhood Teacher.

The Morrison Government recognises many Catholic schools run high-quality, integrated Early Childhood Education and Care environments for three and four-year olds, and many of these are approved child care providers. This allows families to access the Child Care Subsidy to reduce their out-of-pocket costs, while also enabling those schools to offer more flexible hours and days to families. Around 65.6 per cent of Australian three-year-old children are in approved child care, and their families receive on average around \$4,700 a year in Child Care Subsidy to support their participation.

How will you/your party enable better access to Mental Health and Wellbeing programs to address the increasing challenge of student mental health and wellbeing, particularly for educationally disadvantaged students?

The Morrison Government has made mental health and suicide prevention a national priority and is delivering landmark reform to ensure all Australians, including children and young people, have access to the support they need, when and where they need it.

Our Government fought to ensure the Australian Curriculum specifically strengthens mental health, with additional updates to the Curriculum expected in 2022 after expert consultation. In line with these important updates, a re-elected Morrison Government will work with the non-government school sector in the next National School Reform Agreement to review in-school access to mental health and wellbeing programs for students and greater support for teachers and school leaders.

The Morrison Government's *National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Plan*, announced in the 2021-22 Budget, represents the single largest Commonwealth investment in mental health and suicide prevention in Australia's history – a record \$2.3 billion in the 2021-22 Budget and a further \$650 million in the 2022-23 Budget. This *Plan* includes a strong focus on ensuring children and young people get the mental health care they need, by: establishing a network of multidisciplinary mental health centres for young people and children through the child Head to Health and youth headspace programs; funding digital mental health services such as Kids Helpline, and continuing the roll-out of a new world-class digital platform under Head to Health that provides online professional counselling, peer support, clinical support and referrals; and helping young people get jobs or stay in education.

The Morrison Government launched the world's first Child Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for children aged 0-12 and backed this up with a \$317 million investment to start implementing the Strategy. Our Government also provides funding for several school-based wellbeing programs, including \$61.4 million annually for the National School Chaplaincy Program, which assists more than 3,000 schools each year to engage the services of a school chaplain.

How will you/your party enable better access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Catholic schools to Closing the Gap initiatives that support the complex needs of students?

The Morrison Government has delivered for the first time real, needs-based funding for Australian students under the 2018 Quality Schools Package. This record funding increases year-on-year and provides school sectors with funding per student based on need.

Our Government is also delivering a range of programs and initiatives to better support the needs and educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in school and early childhood education settings including \$75 million to build three new remote boarding schools in Western Australia and the Northern Territory under the innovative Studio Schools model.

The Morrison Government is investing \$26 million to create partnerships between high-performing city schools and regional and remote schools which will improve leadership, teacher practice, and student outcomes

The Morrison Government has allocated \$17.3 million to extend the \$15.7 million grants program to assist Indigenous boarding providers to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students and improve their educational outcomes, and has established a new \$10.9 million Commonwealth Regional Scholarship Program will assist up to 200 families from low-SES communities with the cost of boarding school fees. Eligible families will receive \$15,000 per student each year for three years.

To support improved classroom outcomes, the Morrison Government has provided \$10 million to implement targeted teaching practices and increase attendance in remote Western Australia schools and \$8 million to grow the MultiLit (Making Up Lost Time in Literacy) program, which delivers proven, phonics-based reading instruction in primary schools.

The Morrison Government is also providing \$5 million to expand the pilot run by Good to Great Schools Australia, bringing total funding to \$10.8 million, which is improving teacher practice and reading outcomes through explicit instruction.

Our Government is committed to supporting early childhood education programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The Morrison Government has allocated \$81.8 million to expand the Connected Beginnings program in 27 new sites, which will help ensure an additional 8,550 children are safe, healthy, and ready to start school by the age of five.

Under the Morrison Government, the Community Child Care Fund Restricted Program will be expanded by \$29.8 million to fund up to 20 additional mostly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-run child care services in remote communities, benefitting around 3,500 children. Our Government has also provided \$9 million to expand the Early Years Education Program to create four new replication sites in Queensland and Victoria, to connect highly disadvantaged children with child care services and targeted health, nutrition, mental health services.

The Morrison Government will also dedicate \$19.4 million of the CCCF to support more child care places in regional, rural and remote Australia which will help families access services and \$1.9 million to trial a new early learning teaching model to strengthen literacy and numeracy through explicit instruction, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in two early learning centres.