
EFFORTS TO REDUCE RED TAPE IN SCHOOLS WELCOMED

The National Catholic Education Commission congratulates the Government for gaining bipartisan support for the Australian Education Amendment Bill, the first step in reducing red tape for schools and providing additional funding to Indigenous boarding students and some special schools.

The Bill this morning passed the Senate, after passage in the House of Representatives last month.

"Principals and teachers are dedicated to the learning needs of their students. They regularly share their frustration over paperwork and red tape at the expense of quality teaching and learning," said NCEC executive director Ross Fox.

"The Coalition Government has made reducing red tape across all sectors a priority, and schools across the country will benefit from today's passage of the Australian Education Amendment Bill."

Mr Fox said opponents of the changes had made unsubstantiated claims about the legislation and how it might make school spending less transparent.

"Schools rightly have comprehensive accountability and reporting requirements to the Commonwealth, to state and territory agencies and education bodies. Schools are also accountable to parents and local communities. Schools are highly accountable without the need for additional mandated plans and reports," Mr Fox said.

"Catholic education supports continued transparency and accountability, but it's clear that additional reporting requirements were adding nothing to the quality of teaching and learning."

Mr Fox said today's passage of the Bill is a "step forward" in the Government's red-tape reduction plans, but more work is planned for next year.

"It is pleasing that the amendments were passed with the support of parties across the political spectrum," he explained.

"School systems and principals should be entrusted to make decisions about how schools operate to meet the needs of students," he explained.

"Existing command-and-control provisions do not support teachers, principals and system leaders in their efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Their removal, planned for 2015, will lift another burden from teachers and school leaders.

"Catholic education hopes that further efforts to reduce red tape on schools will attract bipartisan support."

Mr Fox also welcomed other aspects of the Bill, including the allocation of an additional \$6.8 million to support the education of students attending Indigenous boarding schools.

"Catholic schools that educate Indigenous boarding students will welcome this funding," he said.

Funding cuts that would have affected students with disability in some special schools from January 1, 2015 as a result of the transition arrangements have also been prevented.

Catholic schools have seen a 50 per cent increase in the number of students with disabilities in the past six years.

"We look forward to ongoing support from leaders in Canberra to help improve learning opportunities in every corner of Australia," Mr Fox concluded.