
NEW REPORT CONFIRMS STRENGTH OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

More parents than ever are choosing to send their children to Catholic and independent schools, a new report from the Productivity Commission has found.

The *Report on Government Services 2015* for child care, education and training released today reveals that almost 35 per cent of the country's 3.6 million students were in non-government schools, including more than 40 per cent of students in secondary schools.

"Parents choose to send their children to a Catholic school for a whole number of reasons, but more parents are making that choice than ever before," said National Catholic Education Commission executive director Ross Fox.

"In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of Indigenous students in Catholic schools, as well as the number of students with disability, which demonstrates the welcoming and inclusive nature of Catholic education," Mr Fox said.

"Catholic schools were established to educate those in most need and that commitment remains strong to this day."

Catholic schools are also adapting to the changing face of Australia, with large numbers of refugee and asylum seeker children being educated in Catholic schools.

"We are also proud of the work of Catholic education systems in Western Australia and Queensland that have been engaged to run and support schools on Christmas Island and on Nauru in recent times," Mr Fox said.

The Productivity Commission report also again underlines the efficiency of non-government schools and their important contribution to Australia's school system.

"Students in non-government schools receive about 60 per cent of the government funding of students in public schools, with parents paying fees to support their children's education," Mr Fox said.

The cost of school education to governments in Australia is \$8.75 billion less per year than it would be without any non-government schools.

"Catholic schools are educating one in five students across Australia and the total cost to government and to parents remains lower, on average, than what the government spends on each student in a public school," Mr Fox said.

"Parents are choosing to subsidise the cost of their child's education because they see value in what a Catholic education can provide," Mr Fox said.

"Catholic schools seek to educate the whole child – intellectually, spiritually, physically, morally and emotionally – and empower them to enter the next stage of their life ready to contribute positively to society.

"Catholic schools have contributed to Australian society for almost 200 years. This report confirms they will continue to play an important role in educating Australian children for many years to come alongside strong and effective government and independent schools.

"Governments must continue to support Catholic schools, allowing parents to choose the education that best meets the needs of their child," Mr Fox concluded.