
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WELCOME ACNC'S COMMONSENSE CONCESSION

The National Catholic Education Commission has welcomed this afternoon's commitment from the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission to streamline financial reporting for non-government schools in 2014-15 and has committed to working with the ACNC and Australian Government to make the exemptions permanent.

NCEC executive director Ross Fox said Catholic schools, which are already highly transparent and accountable, were concerned about the impact the ACNC was having on teaching and learning as principals, teachers and other school leaders were burdened by excessive reporting requirements.

"We are glad that Commissioner Susan Pascoe and her colleagues have recognised that for a highly regulated sector like non-government schools, the 'public trust and confidence' and transparency that the ACNC has sought in the charitable sector were already in place," Mr Fox said.

"Annual reports, transparent funding arrangements, financial accountabilities and the MySchool website all combine to deliver public trust and confidence. The completion of another series of forms to meet ACNC obligations was adding work with no benefit for schools.

"The ACNC had stated the principle of 'report once, use often' was one of its goals, and this temporary arrangement, which will see the regulator use information that schools have already supplied to the Department of Education and Training via its Financial Questionnaire, means that will be the case with regard to that financial information.

"However, the proposed ACNC reporting for Catholic schools will require a change to accrual accounting in financial reports. This is unnecessary given information has been prepared and submitted to Commonwealth, state and territory authorities and meets all current regulatory requirements.

"What Catholic schools want is a permanent solution, which will stop the duplication of paperwork and allow teaching and learning to remain the focus of their schools. Ms Pascoe's comments that the intention is to make information-sharing arrangements permanent is a welcome commitment. We make our own commitment to working collaboratively towards that goal."

Mr Fox said while conversations with the ACNC will continue, it will also be important to engage political leaders to exempt non-government schools from any additional reporting impost from the ACNC.