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### MISLEADING FIGURES USED TO CREATE FALSE CONFLICT BETWEEN SCHOOLS

Opponents of non-government schools have once again selectively used facts and figures in an attempt to undermine the place of non-government schools as key contributors to Australia's educational landscape, the National Catholic Education Commission says.

NCEC executive director Ross Fox says the document released by Save Our Schools this morning is the latest in a steady stream of reports that appear to be designed to create conflict between schools.

"These reports, including today's from Trevor Cobbold, constantly draw upon selective or misleading data to paint an inaccurate picture of non-government schools with the intention of pitting sector against sector," Mr Fox said.

"Analysis of Australian schools should focus on how to improve the learning and teaching for all students in every classroom rather than pitting school against school and sector against sector as this type of report does.

"The data is clear. Students in Catholic schools receive 80 per cent of the government funding of students in government schools. This varies from state to state, but what is common across Australia is that parents and families make significant contributions to support their children's education in a Catholic school and to see overall funding levels approach those of government schools.

"ACARA data shows that, on average, Catholic schools operate on a lower net recurrent income per student than government schools. Despite some limitations, this is the valid measure to see the relative resources between school sectors."

Mr Fox said the total amount of spending on all schools across Australia, including government schools, has been increasing – contrary to Mr Cobbold's claims. Total government funding for government schools in 2012 was \$27.3 billion and increased by 3.2 per cent to almost \$28.2 billion in 2013.

Funding increases that have occurred reflect the needs of schools, including Catholic schools.

"For example, the number of students with disability and the number of Indigenous students in Catholic schools have significantly increased over the past five years, as part of Catholic education's commitment to inclusion. That has a clear impact on the level of government funding that those students and their schools will attract," he explained.

"Mr Cobbold has selectively used figures – gross recurrent income per student – for his analysis. This is not a comparable measure between school sectors. The fact that only non-government schools must meet capital costs from gross income is not reflected in that measure.

"This is a flawed report that has a number of errors and manipulates data, without justifiable assumptions, to create a conflict between schools. It adds nothing to the understanding of school education in Australia."

Mr Fox said the Commonwealth Government, which is the major provider of government support for Catholic schools, has outlined its ongoing funding plans for all schools in the current financial year.

“The Commonwealth Budget papers explain how schools will benefit from federal funding in the years ahead. In 2015-16, funding for non-government schools will increase at 5.6 per cent. Funding for government schools, meanwhile, will increase by 9.55 per cent,” he explained.

Mr Fox said reports questioning the legitimacy of government support for students in all school sectors need to reflect the reality of school funding.

“I am more than happy to have a robust discussion about how government funding is allocated to all Australian students, but this report appears to be based on emotion and ideology, not the reality of school funding and the needs of schools and students,” he said.

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:** Gavin Abraham • 0408 825 788