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## **Catholic Education sector welcomes extension of funding to preschools for 2021**

The National Catholic Education Commission has welcomed the Australian Government's extension of funding to early childhood education for 2021.

The federal government will extend their national partnership funding to provide \$453.2 million for next year to support early education for nearly 350,000 children.

National Catholic Education Executive Director Jacinta Collins said the extension of funding provides greater certainty for Catholic preschools and early learning providers, as well as families.

"The Catholic education sector operates about 250 preschools and early learning centres educating nearly 5,000 children across Australia," Ms Collins said.

"We welcome the extension of funding for the 2021 school year, and look forward to working with the federal government on a longer term agreement to allow early childhood education services to plan for the future, and encourage more families to access affordable early learning for their children."

"Catholic preschools and early learning centres, as well as our before and after school care, and vacation care services, will remain open for essential service workers, wherever possible, during the COVID-19 pandemic," she said.

"The federal government's rescue package announced yesterday will support these services to keep their doors open for families who require early learning and care for their children during this difficult time."

The Catholic Education sector operates about 250 preschool and early learning centres educating nearly 5,000 children, as well as a large number of before and after school and vacation care services. Most services are located onsite with Catholic primary schools.

Nationally, Catholic schools educate more than 764,000 students – or one in five Australian students - in 1,746 schools, the vast majority of which are low-fee schools.