
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AND PARENTS NEED FUNDING CERTAINTY

When the leaders of Australia's governments gather this week, providing certainty on school funding beyond 2017 should be a priority, the National Catholic Education Commission has said.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull will meet with premiers and chief ministers on Friday, with Commonwealth funding for education and health expected to be on the agenda. Mr Turnbull has foreshadowed a key topic.

"The Prime Minister's proposal today for state and territory governments to share income tax provides a potential source of funding for future education and health costs, particularly government schools and hospitals," NCEC executive director Ross Fox said.

"The reality remains that the Australian Government is the dominant funder of non-government schools in Australia. The 1,730 Catholic schools with 765,000 students receive most of their government funding from the Australian Government."

The Coalition's assumed policy, as expressed in the 2015-16 Budget, would see per-student funding increase at the rate of the consumer price index from 2018.

"Over the past decade, school costs have risen at twice the rate of CPI," Mr Fox said.

"There is no clear reason why increases in school funding should depend on changes to petrol prices or fruit and vegetable prices, which make up CPI.

"Indexing school funding at CPI is likely, over time, to lead to thousands of dollars less in government funding to support each child's learning – with parents left to pay the difference in Catholic schools."

Federal Minister for Education and Training Senator Simon Birmingham has, on behalf of the Coalition, expressed his willingness to discuss post-2018 funding with the states and territories and with non-government school authorities.

"We know that the Australian community and the country's political leaders are committed to supporting the 10,000 schools across the country," he said.

"We want to work with the Coalition Government to ensure that support translates into funding that meets the needs of the students attending those schools."

Mr Fox said when a parent first chooses a school for their daughter or son, they have in mind the 13 years of schooling through to year 12. Funding certainty should support the choice of parents over that period.

While the Coalition Government will decide how the Federal Budget deals with school funding, Mr Fox said this week's COAG meeting should set the stage.

In January this year, the NCEC welcomed the announcement by the Australian Labor Party that, if elected this year, its policy would provide an additional \$4.5 billion in school funding in 2018 and 2019 above the current funding allocation, according to a needs-based funding arrangement.