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## CATHOLIC SECTOR WELCOMES OPPOSITION'S COMMITMENT TO LOW FEE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) welcomes the Australian Labor Party's declaration of support for open, accessible, faith-based education as a fundamental part of its policy platform in the lead up to the next federal election.

Acting Executive Director of the NCEC, Mr Ray Collins particularly welcomed Labor's commitment to ensuring that the right of parents to choose the type of education their children receive is supported by governments.

"Public support for non-government schools has been a fundamental bipartisan policy stance in Australian politics now for half a century, and we welcome Labor's firm recommitment to this principle," Mr Collins said.

"For well over a hundred years Australia has operated a dual education system, with a strong government system and a variety of non-government schools providing real choice for parents."

The NCEC believes that the provision of low-fee, non-government schools is an essential element in this provision of choice.

Low-cost Catholic school systems have been a vital element of our diverse education sector and the NCEC strongly supports Labor's acknowledgement of the importance of the continuation of low-fee non-government school systems, including the Catholic sector, across the nation.

Mr Collins particularly welcomed the declaration by Opposition Leader Bill Shorten, that Labor is "concerned about the impact of the existing SES score methodology on Catholic parish primary schools" and supports "the Catholic education sector in advocating for alternative arrangements to better support these schools".

He stated that the NCEC is equally grateful to hear Labor's commitment that in government, they will "implement changes to the role of 'capacity to contribute' in school funding, including the SES scoring methodology" and pledge to work with the Catholic sector "to respond to the findings of the SES review currently underway".

"We thank Mr Shorten, and the Shadow Minister for Education, Tanya Plibersek, for their ongoing commitment to providing quality education for the children of Australia and their support for Catholic education's role in this task," he said.

"We look forward to continuing our discussions with the Opposition and the Government on developing a funding mechanism that ensures the provision of real choice in education."