




PRE-BUDGET
SUBMISSION
2019-2020

 NATIONAL
**CATHOLIC
EDUCATION**
COMMISSION

31 January 2019

About the NCEC

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) is commissioned by and responsible to the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference for developing, enunciating and implementing policy at the national level for the Church's work in Catholic schools. The NCEC represents the interests of more than 1,730 systemic and non-systemic schools across Australia, educating more than 766,000, or one in five, Australian students.

More information can be found at <https://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/>

National Catholic Education Commission

2019-2020 Pre- budget Submission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) is pleased to present our priorities to the Australian Government for the 2019-2020 Federal Budget.

The NCEC is the national representative body of Australia's Catholic schools. Working closely with the state and territory Catholic Education Commissions, the NCEC's primary objective is to develop, enunciate and implement policy at the national level.

The NCEC acknowledges the support of successive governments of Australia's Catholic schools which educate almost 20% of Australia's children.

In this 2019-2020 pre-budget submission, the NCEC seeks to highlight two key challenges facing Catholic schools:

- The capital demands of Australia's increasing school aged population on Australia's Catholic schools.
- The need for recurrent and capital investment to improve access to early learning opportunities in Australia's Catholic schools.

The NCEC calls for more support from the Australian Government to ensure that Catholic schools can continue to play their part in the education of Australia's children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To meet the future capital needs of Catholic schools due to increases in the school-aged population, the NCEC calls on the Australian Government to significantly increase the capital funding amount allocated under the *Australian Education Act 2013*.
2. Given population projections and increased enrolments in Australia's Catholic schools, the NCEC calls on the Australian Government to reconsider how capital works are supported in non-government schools by reviewing the capital funding provisions of the *Australian Education Act 2013*.
3. The NCEC calls on the Australian Government to allocate a pool of funds to support the capital costs associated with the construction and maintenance of teacher housing in rural and remote Catholic schools across Australia.
4. The NCEC calls on the Australian Government to implement the recommendations of *Lifting our game: Report of the review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools through early childhood interventions* particularly with respect to funding universal early childhood education for three-year-olds.
5. The NCEC calls on the Australian Government to allocate a pool of funds to support the capital costs associated with the establishment and maintenance of early childhood education facilities on existing Catholic school sites.

1. INTRODUCTION

Catholic schools – Partners in Australia’s future

Australia’s Catholic schools have a proud history. Today, Australia’s network of over 1,740 Catholic schools educate more than 766,000 students and employ over 94,600 teaching and non-teaching staff (75,000 (FTE)). Australia’s Catholic schools continue to educate students from disadvantaged backgrounds, growing proportions of Indigenous students and students with disabilities. More than 40 per cent of Catholic schools are located outside major metropolitan areas and in many remote Indigenous communities, a Catholic school is the only local school.¹

Together with families, the broader community and federal, state and territory governments, Australian Catholic schools see themselves as partners in the education system. Catholic schools provide a high-quality, affordable and accessible option for Australian families who deeply value and regularly exercise their educational choice. Providing an education that strives to educate the whole child – intellectually, spiritually, physically, morally and emotionally – is our priority.

Capital funding is a critical issue for Australia’s Catholic schools. Parents and families of students at Catholic schools have always contributed the vast bulk of capital expenditure on Australia’s Catholic schools. In 2016, parents and families at Catholic schools contributed almost 90% of the capital expenditure in Australia’s Catholic schools. This expenditure benefits individual schools, the communities they serve and, as acknowledged by government, alleviates pressure on federal, state and territory education budgets.² This means real savings for the whole community.

2. MEETING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF AUSTRALIA’S INCREASED POPULATION

Australia’s increasing school-aged population

In line with general population increases, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has estimated that the number of school-aged children will increase significantly over coming years.³

Primarily concentrated in the capital cities and major regional centres of NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the ACT, Australia’s increasing population will bring additional demand for services, including additional places in schools. States and territories are preparing for the additional education requirements which will flow from increases in their school aged population.

For example, in NSW, the Department of Education estimates that the equivalent of 7,200 extra classrooms will be needed to meet demand for school places by 2031. An extra 269,000 students will need places in NSW schools. The NSW Department of Education is anticipating that Catholic and independent schools will need to accommodate an extra 105,000 students in NSW by 2031.⁴

In Victoria, the school-aged population is expected to increase by around 450,000 students with 50 new schools needed by 2021.⁵ By 2036 in Queensland, the numbers of primary school-aged children is projected to increase up to 680,000 and the numbers of secondary school-aged children is projected to increase up to 576,000.⁶ By 2026 in Western Australia, conservative projections estimate the number of primary school-aged children (5 to 11 years old) will increase by 50,510 students and the number of secondary school-aged children (12 to 17 years old) will increase by

43,760.⁷

Enrolment projections for the Catholic schools are factoring in increased population growth and the expectation is that there will be increased demand for enrolment places in our schools. While growth is expected to be concentrated in the growth corridors of capital cities and large regional centres and planning for new schools and repurposing of existing facilities in these schools is underway, all our schools will continue to require capital investment.

Early learning opportunities

The Catholic education sector welcomes the commitment by the Australian Government of \$870 million under the Universal Access National Partnership arrangements to continue support for early childhood education (ECE).⁸ The NCEC acknowledges the importance of universal access to ECE and supports this as a priority for governments.

The Catholic education sector currently operates pre-schools and kindergartens around Australia. Given our existing school network and school infrastructure, it makes economic sense for Australia's Catholic schools to continue to provide access to early learning opportunities. School based ECE facilities deliver economic efficiencies (shared infrastructure and facilities reduce operating costs), offer children and their families the opportunity to participate in the life of a Catholic school community, enable smoother transition to primary school and facilitate increased knowledge exchange between educators.

Ensuring that opportunities for ECE in Catholic schools can be expanded and introduced in other states and territories will require additional funding from government.

3. THE CHALLENGE FOR AUSTRALIA'S CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Capital needs

Australia's education sector is based on a mix of public, independent and low fee Catholic schools. This public/private mix:

- ensures maximum accessibility and quality;
- enables parent choice; and
- alleviates pressure on government education budgets.

The expectation of the community and governments is that this will continue.

To keep pace with population growth, all schools will be required to accommodate increasing enrolments. Currently Australia's Catholic schools are faced with three competing capital funding demands:

1. Maintaining existing school infrastructure to support evolving curriculum needs.
2. Ensuring that capital infrastructure is up-to-date with the needs of a 21st century education system.
3. Meeting school provision demands in growth corridors in capital cities and growing rural and regional areas.

Parents and families of students at Catholic schools have always contributed the vast bulk of capital expenditure on Australia’s Catholic schools. In 2016, the Catholic education sector spent \$1.125 billion on capital expenditure in existing schools with almost 90% of this paid by parents and families of Catholic school students. The significant contribution made by the Catholic education sector to their schools is illustrated by figure 1.

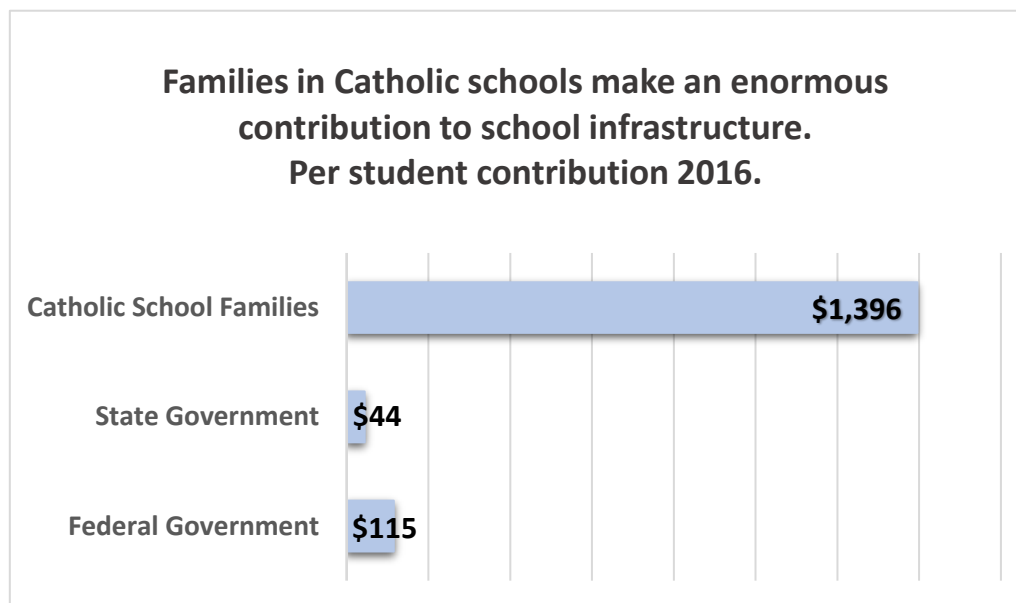


Figure 1

Source: My School: <https://myschool.edu.au/>

The federal government provides funding to non-government schools for capital works under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (“the Act”) through the responsible block grant authority (the BGA). In circumstances where the demand for enrolments in Catholic schools will continue to grow, there is a need to reconsider how the federal government supports capital works in Catholic schools. The Commonwealth Capital Grants Program is the only ongoing federal program that supports Catholic schools. It is declining in value against the cost of maintaining and building new school infrastructure and is insufficient to meet the demands on school enrolments from Australia’s increased population.

For example, in Victoria, over the five years to 2022, the Catholic school system will be required to spend over \$2.2 billion to meet capital needs across the state. This includes the cost of new schools (land and buildings) and upgrading and refurbishing existing schools.

In Western Australia by 2026, in excess of 16,000 additional students are expected to seek enrolment at Catholic schools. Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) is currently planning to expand existing schools and build new schools in growth areas. To date, CEWA capital applications for new and existing schools are oversubscribed by \$20 million for 2019 and \$15 million for 2020.

Given the increased need for school places, parents and families at Catholic schools will be placed under significant pressure to increase their contributions to the increasing cost of capital works and/or

self-fund new school infrastructure. This pressure will be particularly felt in low socio-economic (SES) areas.

Students at Catholic schools and their parents and families are entitled to support. The NCEC proposes that in this federal budget, the Australian Government not only increase the pool of funds available under the Act for capital but also review the capital funding program.

Recommendations:

- 1. To meet the future capital needs of Catholic schools due to increases in the school-aged population, the NCEC calls on the Australian Government to significantly increase the capital funding amount allocated under the *Australian Education Act 2013*.**
- 2. Given population projections and increased enrolments in Australia's Catholic schools, the NCEC calls on the Australian Government to reconsider how capital works are supported in non-government schools by reviewing the capital funding provisions of the *Australian Education Act 2013*.**

Extra capital support for rural and remote schools

Australian Catholic schools are proud of their tradition of providing schools in rural and remote Australian communities. More than 40 per cent of Australia's Catholic schools are located outside major metropolitan areas and in many remote Indigenous communities, a Catholic school is the only local school. The ability of small low SES rural and remote schools to raise capital funds from the parents and families at these schools is limited.

Ensuring that sufficient funds are available to staff, maintain and upgrade Catholic schools in rural and remote locations is a constant challenge. Attracting teachers to such schools also presents difficulties. As identified in the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education*,⁹ the ability to offer teachers access to affordable, secure housing encourages teachers and their families to take on roles in these communities ensuring that all children, no matter their address, have the opportunity to receive a quality education. The availability of additional funds to build and maintain quality teacher housing would ensure that Catholic schools can continue to offer teachers in rural and remote communities access to suitable accommodation.

Recommendation:

- 3. The NCEC calls on the Australian Government to allocate a pool of funds to support the capital costs associated with the construction and maintenance of teacher housing in rural and remote Catholic schools across Australia.**

Early learning centres

Catholic schools operate pre-schools and kindergartens (early learning facilities) in all states and territories. Typically, these facilities are located on Catholic school sites to offer children the opportunity to participate in the life of the Catholic school community. As noted previously there are considerable advantages in locating new early learning facilities on existing school sites.

In early 2018 the NCEC welcomed the publication of *Lifting our game: Report of the review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools through early childhood interventions (the report)*.¹⁰ The report was commissioned to complement the Commonwealth Government's Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools. It recommended a number of key reforms, including providing adequate funding for universal access in the year before school and the progressive implementation of universal access to a quality early education program, for example pre-school, for all three-year-old children.

To support this approach and improve access to early childhood education in the years before school, Australia's Catholic schools seek to incorporate more early learning facilities on school sites. Schools around Australia have identified sites that could accommodate such facilities. For example, in Queensland up to 80 sites have been identified.

Recommendations:

4. **The NCEC calls on the Australian Government to implement the recommendations of the *Lifting our game: Report of the review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools through early childhood interventions* particularly with respect to funding universal early childhood education for three-year-olds.**
5. **The NCEC calls on the Australian Government to allocate a pool of funds to support the capital costs associated with the establishment and maintenance of early childhood education facilities on existing Catholic school sites.**

31 January 2019

ENDNOTES

- ¹ National Catholic Education Commission: 2017 Annual Report. Available at <https://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/resources/publications/490-2017-annual-report/file>. For more information about the NCEC and Australian catholic schools see <https://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/>
- ² See for example: Premier Daniel Andrews: “We simply couldn’t educate all of our kids across Victoria without our partnership with Catholic schools and other independent schools”. Press conference Monday 8 October 2018. Also FN 2: Department of Education: *The School Infrastructure Challenge*.
- ³ Australian Bureau of Statistics. 22 November 2018 Population Projections, Australia, 2017 (base) – 2066 (cat number 3222.0). Available at: [http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3222.0Main%20Features52017%20\(base\)%20-%202066?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3222.0&issue=2017%20\(base\)%20-%202066&num=&view=](http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3222.0Main%20Features52017%20(base)%20-%202066?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3222.0&issue=2017%20(base)%20-%202066&num=&view=). Viewed 17 December 2018.
- ⁴ Department of Education: *The School Infrastructure Challenge*. Available at: <https://www.schoolinfrastructure.nsw.gov.au/about-us/The-school-infrastructure-challenge.html>. Viewed: 8 November 2018.
- ⁵ Infrastructure Victoria December 2016 *Victoria’s 30-year infrastructure strategy*. Available at http://infrastructurevictoria.com.au/sites/default/files/images/IV_30_Year_Strategy_WEB_V2.pdf. Viewed: 8 November 2018.
- ⁶ Queensland Government Statistician’s Office: *Queensland Government population projections, 2015 edition*. Available at <http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/products/reports/qld-govt-pop-proj/qld-govt-pop-proj-2015-edn.pdf>. Viewed: 8 November 2018.
- ⁷ Government of Western Australia 2015, *WA Tomorrow*. Available at: <https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/publications/6194.aspx>. Viewed: 26 November 2018.
- ⁸ Department of Education and Training: Universal Access to Early Childhood Education. Available at: <https://www.education.gov.au/universal-access-early-childhood-education> Viewed: 9 November 2018. At the state level, recent decisions and announcements suggest that funding for ECE in the two years before school may be introduced around Australia. In June 2018, NSW became the first State to fund ECEs for three-year-olds (see: *NSW Budget 2018-19- Good news for the early childhood sector* Available at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/whats-happening-in-the-early-childhood-education-sector/news-and-events/ec-extra/june-2018/nsw-budget-2018-19> Viewed: 9 November 2018). The ACT has also announced plans to fund three-year-old ECE. See: ACT government media release 31 July 2018 *Working towards early childhood education for every three-year-old child*. Available at: https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/open_government/inform/act_government_media_releases/yvette-berry-mla-media-releases/2018/working-towards-early-childhood-education-for-every-three-year-old-child. Viewed: 9 November 2018).
- ⁹ Commonwealth of Australia 2018: *Independent Review into the Regional Rural and Remote Education – Final Report* Emeritus Professor Dr John Halsey. Available at: https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/01218_independent_review_accessible.pdf. Viewed 31 January 2019.
- ¹⁰ Dated 5 February 2018. Available at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/whats-happening-in-the-early-childhood-education-sector/lifting-our-game-report> Viewed 22 January 2019.