
FUNDING CERTAINTY A GENUINE NEED FOR PARENTS AND SCHOOLS

The discussion on school funding in recent days has created greater uncertainty for parents and schools as to how the Commonwealth will fund schools from 2018, National Catholic Education Commission executive director Ross Fox says.

“The recent debate has not helped parents, schools or school systems understand how Commonwealth school funding will support a quality education for Australia’s 3.8 million students in 2018 and beyond,” Mr Fox said.

“The priority must be to move all systems and all schools closer to being funded according to their need rather than moving funding between schools in aid of other policy objectives.”

Mr Fox said the reality of how needs and funding vary across Australian schools, particularly between states and territories, could mean standardising funding may not make sense in 2018.

“Many barriers remain to achieving a simpler needs-based, sector-blind funding model. The school funding policies developed out of the Gonski review needed several years of discussion. The outstanding issues requiring attention in school funding will take more than a few days or weeks to address.

“Catholic education is concerned that transferring school funding between states will do nothing to address the various educational needs across Australian schools,” he explained.

Mr Fox said a key principle of the legislation that governs school funding relates to how schools are supported to change over time.

“It is a long-accepted principle that where schools receive more funding than intended when funding models change, there should be a transition to support the school to change. This is enshrined in the Australian Education Act,” he said.

“Springing funding cuts on schools or systems is far from fair and does nothing for funding certainty.

“There are many myths currently swirling around about the recent history of school funding. One fact that remains is that systems and schools are better able to plan for the needs of students with funding certainty into the future.”

Mr Fox said there are concerns in schools across Australia that with just 15 months until the current school funding model expires, time is running out when it comes to planning for the 2018 school year.

“Catholic education looks forward to detailed discussions on the evolution of needs-based funding for 2018 and beyond in a way that is simple, fair and transparent,” he said.

“It is important that discussions proceed quickly and soon, providing clarity for families, schools and systems for the years ahead.”

Those discussions should recognise recent enrolment trends, he explained.

“The number of Indigenous students and students with a disability in Catholic schools has doubled in the past decade. Funding should reflect the reality of these changing needs,” Mr Fox said.

Catholic schools currently receive about 83 per cent of the per-student government funding that government schools receive.