
SIMPLE FUNDING MODEL APPEALING, BUT INADEQUATE

A new school funding model must focus on meeting the actual needs of all students in all schools, rather than seek to deliver simplicity for simplicity's sake, the National Catholic Education Commission has urged.

Catholic education has begun discussions with the Commonwealth Government over how Australian schools will be funded beyond 2017. NCEC acting executive director Danielle Cronin said it is important that those discussions proceed quickly and offer clarity about future school funding.

"We are now just 13 months away from an uncertain school funding model," Ms Cronin said.

"Schools and families need certainty about how Australian children's education will be funded in 2018 and beyond. Each week that passes without delivering that certainty means greater levels of concern for school leaders and parents.

"Many people, including school leaders and families, are looking to the Commonwealth Government for leadership and collaboration on a new needs-based, sector-blind school funding model. Catholic education stands ready to play its part."

Ms Cronin said a Grattan Institute report released today falls into the trap of trying to find a simple solution to a complex problem.

"The needs of Australian students and schools are as diverse as the 3.8 million students and 9,400 schools across the country," Ms Cronin said.

"There can be a temptation to devise a one-size-fits-all school funding model, but such a model risks not adequately supporting the education of all young Australians.

"A complex model that meets the needs of students is clearly preferable to a simple model that does not."

Ms Cronin questioned the report's reliance on teachers' salaries as the basis of school funding indexation in the coming years.

"It is true that most states and territories are seeing lower levels of wage growth than in the recent past, but schools incur a number of other costs that are necessary to provide the best possible education for each student," she said.

"The provision of contemporary learning environments and the use of the best available technology to support students is important, but it's also costly.

"When governments announce their education reform priorities, like a move to online testing for NAPLAN, there are costs associated with those measures. Indexation that delivers funding increases to only cover teacher salaries will leave schools short-changed. That ultimately has an impact on student learning.

"The indexation of school funding must ensure funding growth keeps pace with the true cost of delivering a quality education. The Grattan Institute model would fail that test for many schools and school systems."

Ms Cronin said schools and school systems, as well as policy groups like the Grattan Institute, are spending a lot of time considering how school funding should be delivered in the coming years.

"Catholic education is committed to working constructively with the Commonwealth, with state and territory education leaders and the independent school sector to find a way forward," she concluded.