

29 April 2022

Director  
Not-For-Profit Unit, Not-for-profits and Tax Administration Branch  
The Treasury  
Langton Crescent  
PARKES ACT 2600

Via email [charitiesconsultation@treasury.gov.au](mailto:charitiesconsultation@treasury.gov.au)

Dear Director

## Deductible Gift Recipient Category for pastoral care services

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) is pleased to provide a response to the Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) category for pastoral care services Consultation Paper.

### Background

The NCEC is the peak body for Catholic education in Australia and is responsible for the national coordination and representation of Catholic schools and school authorities.

Working collaboratively with state and territory Catholic Education Commissions, the National Catholic Education Commission advocates through effective liaison with the federal, state and territory governments, and key national education bodies. Our role is to ensure the needs of Catholic schools are served through funding, legislation, and policy.

Our work is to foster a thriving Catholic Education sector that offers parents a choice of, and affordable access to, faith-based education for their children. Catholic Education continues to advocate for fair and inclusive funding that sustains both government and accessible faith-based school across Australia.

Catholic schools are universal in reach and open to all families who seek a Catholic Education. Australia's 1,755 Catholic schools educate one in five, or over 777,000 students and employs over 100,000 Australians. This makes Catholic schools the nation's largest provider of education outside government.

Our schools welcome students from a range of backgrounds including an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (up 168% since 2000). Students with disability represent around 19% of attending Catholic schools and 40% of students experience socio-educational disadvantage.

In making the choice of a Catholic education, families take on nearly 29% of the annual cost of their child's education and almost 90% of the funding required to support school buildings and capital works in Catholic schools. In 2019, Catholic school families contributed approximately \$3.9 billion towards their children's education, representing a substantial saving to Australian taxpayers. Catholic Education also acknowledges the ongoing support by the Australian government in the funding of Catholic schools.

Catholic schools make a significant contribution to the educational, moral, and social fabric of this nation. Our schools ensure that parents can choose an affordable education that is consistent with Catholic beliefs, values, and teachings. Catholic schools are committed to educational excellence and are underpinned by charisms of prayer, witness, catechesis, social justice, and pastoral care.

### Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care

As noted in the Consultation Paper, the provision of student wellbeing and pastoral care services in Australian schools are crucial to support young people facing challenges relating to stress, relationships,

managing emotions, social media, bullying, and health and lifestyle issues. Supporting young people and communities through pastoral care and wellbeing services are particularly important to Catholic schools as these services are central to the mission of Catholic Education.

As the Consultation Paper also identifies, there has been an increase of student mental health and wellbeing issues being addressed by Australia's schools. The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to present unprecedented challenges for schools and education systems. The pandemic has not only increased the number of students seeking support for mental health issues but also intensified the degree of the issues experienced by students.

Catholic Education welcomes the recent additional funding that the Australian Government has provided to fund new and existing programs to raise awareness and provide additional support for student mental health and wellbeing. Initiatives that the government have supported, such as the Raising Healthy Children App, the scaled-up community support services provided by organisations such as Beyond Blue, Lifeline and Kids Helpline, and the National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy will provide much needed care to students and families.

This additional assistance will compliment continuing government resources and programs which Catholic schools use to support student wellbeing and resilience, such as the National School Chaplaincy Program, the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, and the Student Wellbeing Hub.

#### **Proposed DGR Category for Pastoral Care Services**

Catholic Education strongly supports initiatives which enable and strengthen student wellbeing and pastoral care services in Australian schools. The NCEC welcomes the proposed new DGR category to enable funds to access this status where the fund supports pastoral care and student wellbeing services as a means of encouraging greater private philanthropic assistance to non-government and government schools.

While supporting the proposed new DGR category to encourage greater philanthropy to assist schools meet the growing demand for pastoral care services, accessing the status should not result in an undue increase in the already heavy regulatory burden of Catholic schools.

Particularly welcome is the assurance in the Consultation Paper that the proposed new category will complement the assistance provided by the Australian Government through programs such as the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP).

The NCEC would not be in favour of an outcome in which the establishment of the proposed new category is intended to replace current or future Australian Government pastoral care and wellbeing programs, such as the NSCP, or other funding to schools.

Should you have any further questions in relation to this submission, please contact me via phone 02 8229 0808 or via email [jacinta.collins@ncec.catholic.edu.au](mailto:jacinta.collins@ncec.catholic.edu.au).

Yours faithfully



Jacinta Collins  
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