
Additional funding will provide a boost to support underfunded Catholic schools in Central Australia

National Catholic education executive director Jacinta Collins said additional Commonwealth funding to Central Australian schools next year will assist underfunded Catholic schools in one of the most disadvantaged parts of Australia.

The On Country Learning measure announced in the 2023-24 Federal Budget committed \$40 million over 2023-24 and 2024-25 to support improved attendance and engagement at the 46 schools in the Central Australia region including Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College, St Joseph's Catholic Flexible Learning Centre and Ltyentye Apurte Catholic School in Alice Springs that are currently operating below the 100 per cent Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).

"This additional funding will provide a boost to our schools in Central Australia which have significant challenges around disadvantage, attendance, wellbeing and other factors that impact greatly on student learning outcomes, particularly for our First Nations students," Ms Collins said.

"The funding will support these schools operating below the Schooling Resource Standard and we look forward to the future bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory to bring our schools up to 100 per cent of the SRS over the long term."

A core component of the On Country Learning measure is local community engagement to determine how each school will spend the additional funding, with around 15 per cent reserved to centrally support schools with health and learning needs.

"Our Catholic schools welcome the opportunity to engage with the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments, and our local communities, to determine the most effective way to support our students, and how they will access centrally funded programs and services for allied health, intensive literacy and numeracy, and quality flexible learning."

Federal Education Minister Jason Clare visited Central Australian schools this week and hosted a roundtable which included Catholic school principals and education office leaders as part of the engagement. The Minister also visited Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Catholic College in Alice Springs where he engaged with students and staff and discussed programs supporting student learning and wellbeing.

"We thank the Minister for making the time to engage with our leaders and to visit one of our schools in the area," Ms Collins said.

"Schools in remote regions face such different challenges to their counterparts in the cities, and it is vital that our governments and those creating policy have the opportunity to engage directly with our school communities to deepen their understanding of their needs and the impact of programs and funding."

There are 1,759 Catholic schools educating nearly 794,000 or one in five Australian students and employing over 104,500 staff.