

## Economic Reform Roundtable

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Australian Government's Economic Reform Roundtable consultation.

**NCEC believes that a high-quality, affordable education that meets the needs of students and their families is the foundation for improving productivity, building economic resilience, and strengthening Australia's budget sustainability.**

**Catholic schools are Australia's largest non-government education provider, delivering choice, affordability, and value for all. Catholic education benefits all Australians.**

### About NCEC

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. Our role is to ensure the needs of Catholic schools are served through funding, legislation, and policy.

NCEC advocates at the national level on behalf of the Catholic sector and the hundreds of thousands of Australian families who entrust the education of their children to our schools.

Catholic schools are universal in reach and open to all families who seek a Catholic education. Australia's **1,755 mostly low-fee Catholic schools educate** one in five, or **820,000, students** and **employ more than 112,000 staff**. This makes Catholic schools the nation's largest provider of education outside of government.

NCEC works to foster a thriving Catholic education sector that offers parents a choice of, and affordable access to, faith-based education for their children that is consistent with Catholic beliefs, values, and teachings. Catholic education is unique in its provision and scope in the world offering a parallel, alternative system of faith-based schools alongside government.

### Catholic Education in Australia

Catholic schools make a significant contribution to the educational, moral, and social fabric of this nation. Over 200 years, Catholic schools have educated millions of Australian children. Catholic school alumni have gone on to make substantial contributions in civic life, in business, in the Church, in community leadership, in social outreach, and among other arenas of public and private life.

The mission of Catholic education, since its inception, has been to **serve students from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly the disadvantaged and marginalised**. Our schools welcome students from a range of backgrounds including an increase in **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (up over 60 per cent over ten years)**. **Students with disability represent almost 21 per cent of Catholic school enrolment, and over 42 per cent of students experience socio-educational disadvantage**. Almost **40 per cent of Catholic schools are in regional and remote areas**.

Catholic school families, many of whom have a long and multi-generational involvement in our communities, continue to choose a Catholic education because it aligns with their beliefs and values. The sustained growth of our school communities shows the great importance, and the sacrifice Catholic school families continue to make to choose a school that meets the educational needs of their children and one that reflects their faith and values.

Our **schools are committed to educational excellence** and pastoral care to support the **continual improvement** of outcomes for all students. Providing **innovative, evidence-informed learning opportunities for all students plays an essential role** in the education provided by Catholic schools.<sup>1</sup>

#### Catholic Education Productivity Benefits

Each year **Catholic schools save taxpayers billions** of dollars and **ease pressure** on government-run schools. Around 75 per cent of total recurrent government funding is allocated to government schools. Government spending per student is more than \$10,000 higher in government schools than non-government schools and this spending has been increasing at a faster rate.<sup>2</sup>

ACARA data<sup>3</sup> shows that Catholic schools contribute more than **\$17 billion** annually to Australia's economy. Families provide over **\$6 billion annually** in fees and capital levies that reduce the burden on Commonwealth and state and territory budgets. Catholic school communities typically contribute over **90 per cent of capital expenditure** and have built **educational infrastructure worth an estimated \$100 billion** for the nation.

A new analysis conservatively estimates that **taxpayer savings in recurrent funding** to Catholic schools amounts to **between \$2.21 billion and \$3.19 billion annually**. With the addition of an estimated **taxpayer savings in capital funding of \$2.44 billion annually**, the historical and ongoing contribution of Catholic education saves taxpayer's money and relieves Commonwealth and state and territory budgets for the provision of government schools and other essential expenditure.<sup>4</sup>

Recent research using the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey data indicates that, after controlling for a comprehensive set of alternative explanatory factors, **attendance at a Catholic school was found to have a positive effect upon many outcomes**.<sup>5</sup>

The research suggests those who attend Catholic schools are more likely, on average, to see **lifelong benefits in better employment outcomes, higher wages, better health, and greater life satisfaction**. Additionally, Catholic school attendees are **more likely to work in an industry or sector that directly benefits the public** and are **more likely to donate to charity**.

**The productivity gains generated by Catholic education are a significant contribution to the common good of the nation and benefit all Australians.**

**Catholic education is committed to embracing and leading ongoing evidence-informed reforms to improve student outcomes.**

We look forward to further consultation as part of the Economic Reform Roundtable. Please contact me should you require further information.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the [Mastery in Mathematics](#) project as part of our national strategic priority.

<sup>2</sup> Productivity Commission (2025) [Report on Government Services 2025: 4 School Education](#).

<sup>3</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) [National Report on Schooling in Australia 2023](#) (non-systemic Catholic schools included in Catholic sector).

<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Burrow Research Institute (2025) [Money Invested, Money Saved](#).

<sup>5</sup> Wade, Andrew, Gallo Cordoba, Beatriz, and Prokofieva, Maria (2024) [Lifelong benefits of attending a Catholic School](#) Mitchell Institute, Victoria University, Melbourne.