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## CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WILL KEEP FIGHTING FOR BETTER DEAL FOR STUDENTS

National Catholic Education Commission acting executive director Danielle Cronin says the Turnbull Government should continue to respond to Catholic education's serious concerns about how its new school funding policy will affect Catholic schools, teachers and families.

In legislation introduced into the Parliament today, the Government has adopted the NCEC's recommendation that there be a minimum indexation rate from 2021 for all schools, reversing its previous position and ensuring that indexation won't fall below 3 per cent in the final seven years of the 10-year funding policy.

"Minister Birmingham and his Government have shown that consultation and negotiation with Catholic education leaders can bring about better policy outcomes for Australian students," Ms Cronin said.

"It is time for the Minister to re-engage in meaningful discussions with Catholic school leaders rather than engaging in name-calling and accusing parents, principals and educational leaders of 'scare tactics'."

Ms Cronin said if Minister Birmingham had attended Monday night's public meeting in Canberra, he would have seen clearly the concern, anger and dogged determination from principals and parents as they prepare for actual funding cuts in the ACT.

"With Catholic school systems in most states and territories set to see slower funding growth rates than the independent and government school sectors, the Minister has some important issues to address," she explained.

"Minister Birmingham should visit a Catholic school staff room and tell the teachers and staff there why he thinks their wages shouldn't go up as quickly as the wages of their peers in government and independent schools across the road.

"Then he could explain to a Catholic school P&F meeting why their fees will increase significantly so that their teachers and staff can receive the pay increases that they deserve for undertaking the important task of educating their children.

"And he could explain why he wants to dismantle the way system funding is allocated. The Review of Funding for Schooling recommended that government and non-government systems have their need assessed at a system level. For non-government schools, that is done using the Student-Weighted System Average SES. That was because David Gonski and his panel recognised that Catholic systemic schools are more similar to government system schools than standalone independent schools."

Ms Cronin said the Government has thus far been unable to share its funding modelling with Catholic education systems, so there remains a high degree of uncertainty about the full impact on funding for Catholic systems over the next 10 years.

"The NCEC is calling on the Minister to expedite the release of the Department of Education and Training's modelling and to listen carefully to the additional concerns of Catholic education," she said.

"The introduction of legislation in the Parliament today will do nothing to slow down Catholic education's efforts on behalf of students, parents and schools to bring about the best possible outcome for Australian education."

Ms Cronin said that will include discussions with members of the Government, many of whom are aware of the negative impact this funding policy could have for Catholic schools, members of the Opposition and the Senate crossbench, in whose hands the passage or defeat of this legislation rests.

"Having had an initial look at what the Government plans to enshrine into legislation over the next 10 years, many of the deep concerns of Catholic education have been confirmed," she said. "This legislation confirms that there will be an increased fee expectation for parents in Catholic primary schools across the country. It will also jeopardise the ability of parents to choose the school they think best meets the needs of their children.

"Indeed, all schools and systems should be concerned about aspects of the legislation, including an apparent abandonment of the Coalition Government's commitment to free schools of burdensome 'command and control' provisions."