
MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT EXPOSES HIS MASSIVE CUTS TO CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

National Catholic Education Commission executive director Christian Zahra says the truth about Education Minister Simon Birmingham's massive cuts to Catholic schools across Australia has been revealed by the Department of Education at the eleventh hour.

"With the vote on this legislation due in a few days, the wheels have well and truly fallen off the Minister's wagon, with figures from his own Department showing that his policy will rip billions of dollars out of low-fee Catholic schools," Mr Zahra said.

"For nearly two months, Minister Birmingham has been going around the country saying that his school funding model not only delivers needs-based funding, but also delivers funding increases to all but a small number of schools."

Mr Zahra said that Parliamentary Budget Office figures released yesterday showing that Catholic schools would lose \$3.1 billion over the next 10 years exposed the Minister's misleading rhetoric.

"And then today, we've seen Department of Education figures that show the Minister's cuts to Catholic schools will be even more significant, at \$4.6 billion over the decade," Mr Zahra said.

"This is despite Catholic school principals and families having been told by the Minister that they were set to enjoy significant boosts to their Commonwealth funding in coming years.

"We knew that this wasn't the case, but this new departmental analysis reveals the true magnitude of the cuts the Minister has in store for Catholic school families."

Mr Zahra said as well as misleading principals and families about changes to school funding under his model, Minister Birmingham is also seeking cross-bench support based on highly dubious figures.

"Given this new analysis that shows the true impact on Catholic school families, I can't imagine that his Coalition colleagues, or the cross-bench Senators, are feeling very comfortable about supporting his legislation," he said.

Mr Zahra said given the Minister's unprecedented attempt to impose his policy on Catholic, government and independent schools without any meaningful consultation, it was destined to run into trouble.

"Maybe now Minister Birmingham understands that school funding policy should not be imposed without engaging with the people who run school systems in this country," he said.

"We call on the Minister to stop trying to rush this policy through the Parliament and let the current funding arrangements roll over into 2018.

"This would give him time to enter into a genuinely collaborative process that would deliver true needs-based funding for students in all schools across all sectors," Mr Zahra concluded.