
CATHOLIC EDUCATION WELCOMES SCHOOL FUNDING COMMITMENT

The National Catholic Education Commission has welcomed the Coalition Government's announcement of \$1.2 billion in additional funding to support all Australian schools, saying it has placed school education at the centre of this year's federal election campaign.

"Schools are important institutions in the community and well-directed investment in schools will determine the future of Australia as a society and an economy," NCEC executive director Ross Fox said.

"Catholic education is pleased that the Government has today committed to future funding that reflects real costs for schools."

In its announcement, the Coalition said per-student school funding from 2018 will increase at 3.56 per cent each year, which it says is in line with recent increases in school costs. Over the past two years, the NCEC has led calls for needs-based funding for all schools, with funding that keeps pace with school costs.

"This funding commitment should deliver certainty to schools and parents beyond 2017 to ensure school fees do not need to grow to pay an increasing share of school costs," Mr Fox said.

"Both major parties have now outlined their policies to support all Australian schools in their combined task of educating Australia's young people. How the needs of all schools are addressed with these policies will be further scrutinised in the coming weeks."

Mr Fox said it is important that the Commonwealth continues to sensibly share the responsibility for school funding with state and territory governments to support all students in all schools.

He added that Catholic education welcomes the Coalition Government's focus on raising student achievement and providing new initiatives to support teachers and principals.

"Catholic education agrees that funding should be directed to needs and support the best outcomes possible for all students, through a partnership between families and school leaders, teachers and staff," Mr Fox said.

"It is important that parents understand how important investments like school education will be funded. We look forward to these details in the upcoming Budget."

Mr Fox said Catholic education will also await more details on how the Turnbull Government's proposals for new conditions on school funding beyond 2017 will affect schools.

"Many of these initiatives are already in place in different ways in some systems and jurisdictions," he said. "In principle, Catholic school authorities will want to avoid imposing additional costs. They will want to ensure schools and teachers are not distracted from providing quality teaching and learning to every student."

While funding certainty is welcome, there remains a significant need for capital funding across all schools to meet significant growth in the school-aged population projected for the coming years, Mr Fox said.

"In Catholic education alone, 73 new Catholic schools are expected to start construction in the next five years – at the cost of almost \$1 billion – to accommodate increasing demand. Government funding is necessary to help meet that demand and respond to Australian families' desire for a Catholic education," he concluded.