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## PRINCIPALS PITTING SECTOR AGAINST SECTOR DEEPLY DISAPPOINTING

The National Catholic Education Commission has expressed its disappointment at a new report that uses selective, misleading and inaccurate information to cast government and non-government schools as competitors, rather than partners in Australia's educational landscape.

In a report released today, the Australian Government Primary Principals Association has unfortunately repeated false assertions from earlier publications and failed to provide a useful platform from which school funding can be discussed.

"Analysing only Commonwealth funding for schools creates a misleading picture of how school funding works in Australia," NCEC executive director Ross Fox said.

The Commonwealth is the majority funder of non-government schools, while state and territory governments are the majority funders of government schools, though both levels of government provide funding to all school sectors.

"The debate on school funding is an important one," Mr Fox said. "The NCEC has been advocating strongly for sustainable, needs-based funding for all schools beyond 2017. Funding policy must aim to support the needs of students in all schools, rather than stripping funding from Catholic and independent schools."

Mr Fox said the AGPPA report relies on data that is inaccurate or outdated and reaches conclusions that fail to take into account announced Commonwealth policy.

"Future funding projections don't factor in the 2015-16 Commonwealth Budget, which allocated more than 9.5 per cent in per student funding increases to government schools while non-government schools will see a 5.6 per cent increase per student," Mr Fox explained.

"Future projections in the report rely on a funding model that no longer exists. The Australian Education Act now determines school funding. Using earlier funding mechanisms to predict future funding is not credible."

The reality is that the number of students with disability and Indigenous students in Catholic schools has doubled during the past decade. Changes in student populations and their needs has changed funding for students in Catholic schools, Mr Fox said.

Everyone involved in school education is focused on meeting the needs of every student, Mr Fox said. Fomenting division between schools runs counter to the goal of educational collaboration.

"Across Australia, Catholic schools are building productive partnerships with government and independent schools focused on creating a better overall education system," Mr Fox said.

"This report, drawing upon questionable assumptions and ideological arguments, risks undermining that collaboration."

Catholic schools across Australia are educating more than 760,000 students – one in five school students – in every part of the country. In some communities, including some of Australia's most remote communities, Catholic schools are the sole provider of school education.

"Parents and families are choosing Catholic schools in greater numbers," Mr Fox said. "Those families would no doubt be surprised to find out that the president of the Australian Government Primary Principals Association considers government funding to support their child's education is 'radical'."

"Far from being radical, it is a matter of fairness. Government funding for students in Catholic and independent schools underlines the fact that Commonwealth, state and territory governments recognise that all Australian children should receive government support which reflects their educational needs, regardless of which school they attend," Mr Fox concluded.