



8 June 2016

Mr Ross Fox
Executive Director
National Catholic Education Commission
Level 3, 156 Gloucester Street, Sydney
NSW 2000

Dear Mr Fox

Thank you for the opportunity to outline Labor's school education policies. Please find the ALP's response to the Commission's questions below.

How will your policy support parents to choose the education they want for their children and ensure religious freedom for Catholic schools is preserved?

Labor has a strong record of supporting Catholic education and values the role of Catholic schools in educating the next generation. Labor respects parents' choice in schools and has no plans to change the legislation in relation to exemptions for religious schools.

In government, Labor worked cooperatively with the Catholic education systems to partner in delivering the Gonski needs-based funding reforms, which will drive better student outcomes.

If elected, we will continue to work closely with Catholic schools to implement these important reforms.

How will your education policy advance the educational outcomes of students in all schools?

Labor's school funding policy is sector-blind and needs-based, which means every child in every school will get a better education.

Labor's *Your Child. Our Future* plan will deliver the Gonski reforms that we introduced when in government, on-time and in-full. This plan will see an additional investment in our education system of \$3.8 billion compared to the Liberals in 2018 and 2019 and help keep fees down in Catholic schools.

It will also mean teachers in Catholic schools will have the resources they need to provide students with more individual attention, and for schools to tailor programs to meet the needs of their students and improve results.

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How will your policy affect the ability of Catholic education systems and schools to distribute funding according to locally-identified needs?

In government, Labor worked closely with Catholic schools on funding reforms to get the balance right between flexibility and autonomy, and accountability and transparency.

We will continue this approach in delivering the six-year funding agreement with Catholic schools on-time and in-full, with systems continuing to distribute funding in line with the needs-based funding principles.

With Labor, \$3.8 billion more needs-based support will reach schools in 2018 and 2019 alone, compared to the Liberals. This will put downward pressure on fees.

Parents need to be sure that taxpayers' money is reaching the classroom and delivering evidence-based programs that boost student results. With *Your Child. Our Future* school systems will need to be transparent and accountable for how they distribute additional funding to improve student outcomes.

Labor has also committed \$82 million in additional funding for Catholic education commissions and Independent school associations in 2018 and 2019 to deliver a Teaching and Learning Support Program.

The funding will allow the non-government school associations to continue their important work, including:

- Providing better coaching for teachers.
- Establishing centres of excellence for the teaching of STEM.
- Employing School Leadership Consultants – to work with principals to make sure schools have a school improvement agenda in place to lift student outcomes.
- Supporting schools to implement the Australian Curriculum.
- Delivering best practice professional development to support Indigenous Independent Schools.

How will you ensure your policy minimises red tape and regulation on schools, teachers and school systems that distract from quality teaching and learning?

Teachers and principals in Catholic schools know best the needs of their students and how to meet them. Labor's priority is ensuring federal investment reaches classrooms and giving schools the flexibility to use additional investment to drive evidence-based improvements in teaching and learning.

A Shorten Labor Government will work with Catholic schools to ensure integrity in funding arrangements and transparency for parents, without red tape.

How will your policy deliver funding certainty for schools and ensure funding keeps pace with the educational needs of students and the real cost of educating a child?

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To make sure needs-based reforms drive a permanent improvement in education, Labor has provisioned \$36 billion more than the Liberals over the decade to give schools, principals and teachers long-term funding certainty. This will put downward pressure on fees over the long-term.

A Shorten Labor Government will more than reverse the Liberals' \$29 billion school cuts and provide funding certainty for schools and parents. The Liberals' medium-term policy is to fund schools in line with CPI. The National Catholic Education Commission has warned linking school funding to CPI would compromise the quality of education, lead to fee increases and could result in school closures.

How will your funding policy ensure that students with additional needs – across all sectors and in all schools – receive the support they need and that funding grows with needs?

Labor's *Your Child. Our Future* plan will put needs-based sector-blind funding permanently at the heart of our school system – so every student in every school will get the support they need to achieve their best.

All students will benefit. Especially for those with the most to gain, with needs-based loadings for:

- Students with a low socio-economic background.
- Indigenous students.
- Students with disability.
- Students with limited English.
- Small schools.
- Rural, regional and remote schools.

Labor's plan will mean more one-on-one support and attention for every student, early intervention programs in every school, and better remedial literacy and numeracy support. Additional investment will also be used to offer more vocational education opportunities in schools, boost Year 12 completion rates and deliver more allied health support – such as speech and occupational therapists.

A Shorten Labor Government will provide \$320 million from 2017 to better support student with disability – more than reversing the Turnbull Government's cuts to the More Support for Students with Disabilities program.

Parents currently pay most of the capital costs in Catholic schools. How will your policy support the capital needs of new and existing Catholic schools?

Labor understands the importance of long-term certainty to enable schools to improve facilities and grow. That's why we have provisioned \$36 billion more than the Liberals for schools over the next decade – keeping fees down.

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This will also allow Catholic schools to plan for their capital needs in a way that would simply not be possible under the Liberals' \$29 billion cut.

In addition, Labor will provide over \$140 million in capital grants for non-government schools each year through the Capital Grants Program, taking further pressure off fees.

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