
CATHOLIC EDUCATION CONGRATULATES NEW SHADOW MINISTRY

The National Catholic Education Commission has welcomed the Australian Labor Party's announcement that Deputy Leader Tanya Plibersek will join Kate Ellis in the education shadow ministry, saying Catholic education will continue to work closely with the shadow ministers to promote policies that support students in all Australian schools.

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten announced his shadow ministry on Saturday, with Ms Plibersek named Shadow Minister for Education, with responsibility for schools and universities. Ms Ellis remains in the education portfolio, with a focus on early childhood education and development, as well as vocational education.

Andrew Giles will support Ms Plibersek as shadow assistant minister for schools. Terri Butler and Senators Jacinta Collins and Doug Cameron were also named to the shadow education ministry.

"Catholic education has appreciated the work of Ms Ellis over the past three years, and we look forward to continuing that relationship through Catholic education's increasing involvement in early childhood education and in vocational education and training," NCEC executive director Ross Fox said.

"Throughout this election year, Labor has given great emphasis to the education of young Australians and recognised the important role of Catholic schools as the educators of more than 765,000 students – one in five school students – across the country.

"For the Deputy Leader to focus her attention on Australian schools during the new parliamentary term, it is clear that Labor will continue to give education policy a prominent place in political debate in the coming years."

Mr Fox said Mr Shorten, who spoke at last month's National Catholic Education Commission Conference, praised the work of Australia's 1,731 Catholic schools.

Mr Shorten told the 1,400 Catholic educators at the conference:

"Catholic schools are as diverse as the nation, from the bush to the outer suburbs to the inner cities, from refugee kids, to country kids, to Aboriginal kids. You name it, you cover the diversity of the Australian story."

"Catholic education acknowledges the Australian Labor Party's support for parental choice through policies that distribute funding to all sectors according to need. We also recognise Labor's commitment to religious freedom in Catholic schools – allowing them to be the authentically Catholic schools that hundreds of thousands of families want them to be," Mr Fox said.

Mr Fox also thanked the former members of Labor's shadow education ministry for their contribution: shadow assistant education minister Amanda Rishworth; Sharon Bird, shadow minister for vocational education; and Senator Sam Dastyari, shadow parliamentary secretary for schools.