
Catholic Education welcomes COAG endorsing strong education goals and early learning

Catholic Education welcomes today's launch of the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* which was endorsed by COAG's Education Council yesterday.

The document strongly supports all educator sectors – secular and faith-based – which reflects the large number of Australian families who have chosen and invested heavily in faith-based schools.

One in three of Australia's 3.9 million students attend faith-based schools and, of that cohort, 60 per cent are in Australia's 1746 Catholic schools.

From humble beginnings almost 200 years ago, Catholic schools have become a vital part of Australia's education landscape and the Catholic Church a key partner of government in providing quality schooling.

"That is why the Education Declaration, which updates the 2008 Melbourne Declaration, is so important," National Catholic Education Executive Director Jacinta Collins said today.

"I congratulate all Education Ministers for signing on to these important educational goals which reflect a strong desire to improve academic standards and add more rigour to the curriculum. I am pleased that the critical role of early childhood education has been acknowledged and urge the Australian Government to extend that learning opportunity to all three year olds.

"Reinforcing the importance of literacy and numeracy will be welcome by families and educators along with the need to strive for deep content knowledge and develop critical thinking skills."

Australian families want schooling options that offer faith-based education and that is why the issue of religious freedom is so important. Catholic Education welcomes the Australian Government's second exposure draft and will continue to participate in the consultation process to ensure Catholic schools are free to share and teach Catholic beliefs and values.