

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Commissioner a positive step for regional education says Catholic sector

The appointment of Australia's first Regional Education Commissioner will help support better outcomes for regional, rural and remote education, the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) Executive Director Jacinta Collins said today.

As Regional Education Commissioner former Senator Fiona Nash will apply her long-term commitment to regional Australia and oversee the implementation of recommendations from the National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy (the Napthine Review).

Ms Collins said nearly 40 per cent of the 1,755 Catholic schools were in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia.

"We know that students outside of metropolitan areas are not performing as well as their peers in the cities," Ms Collins said.

"2019 NAPLAN data shows that students in very remote areas are about three years behind their peers in major cities and it is critical these issues are addressed.

"The Commissioner's appointment will bring a greater national focus to the challenges facing schools in our regional, rural and remote areas and the educational disadvantage students experience.

"These challenges, including addressing the shortage of teachers and specialist teachers in regional areas, were identified in our recent Catholic sector National Regional and Remote Workforce Strategy Summit."

Ms Collins said the summit focused on recruitment and retention of teachers, formation and professional learning of teachers and community partnerships to support student learning.

"Another key challenge facing school communities in regional, rural and remote areas is the increasing need to support student mental health and wellbeing, particularly over the past two years of the pandemic."

Ms Collins said she looked forward to working closely with Ms Nash as the NCEC continued its advocacy for the improvement of education policies to better support students in regional, rural and remote areas.