

24 May 2017



TASMANIAN  
CATHOLIC  
education office

Dear Parents and Friends of Catholic Education in Tasmania,

I write to you on a matter of importance for all who are involved in Catholic education in Tasmania.

Catholic education in Tasmania is committed to providing low-fee, inclusive Catholic schooling for Tasmanian families. For many years our schools have worked alongside, rather than in competition with, government schools.

Today across Australia, most families can choose from three schooling options: a government education, a low fee non-government school (mostly systemic Catholic schools), and higher fee independent schools. Our Tasmanian Catholic schools derive funding from three sources (Federal Government provides 61%; State Government 17% and parents 22% through the payment of school fees and levies). Unlike government schools that receive the majority of their funding from State Government, Federal Government funding is absolutely crucial to our 38 Tasmanian Catholic schools currently operating and funded as a system we call Catholic Education Tasmania (CET).

We welcome the Federal Government's plan to address funding the long term inequities in Australian education and acknowledge that the Federal Government's *Quality Schools* funding package does promise to deliver a modest increase to overall funding to Tasmanian Catholic schools. However the complex interplay of factors within the model delivers a variety of outcomes for individual schools and constrains the ability of our system to redistribute funds in a way that will allow Catholic education to continue to offer a low-fee schooling option to our families.

In Tasmania, in essence, it comes down to three concerns<sup>1</sup> that affect the way we currently operate:

1. The Federal Government's proposals fail to recognise the value of Catholic schools operating as a system
2. The Federal Government's proposal to change the way in which Students with a Disability are assessed and funded
3. The implications of the Federal Government's ten year funding model

Like all Catholic schools, your school aims to be welcoming and accessible to all families seeking a Catholic education. Catholic schools are not run to make a profit and every effort is made to minimise fees so that a Catholic education is accessible to all parents who seek it for their children. As a Catholic system of schools in Tasmania we are dedicated to ensuring that our schools remain a low fee, inclusive option for parents.

Please be assured that Catholic education leaders across Australia have been working hard to make sure the Government and the Opposition understand our concerns with the new funding model. Depending on how the negotiations with the Federal Government go over the next few weeks we may call on your assistance to also advocate on your school's behalf. In the meantime we will continue to keep your school briefed on developments through your Principal.

Yours in Hope

John Mula  
Director  
Catholic Education Tasmania

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<sup>1</sup> I invite you to read the additional notes with respect to the three concerns

## FEDERAL FUNDING - ADDITIONAL DETAILS - 24 MAY 2017

### 1. The Value of Catholic Schools Operating as a System

The Federal Government's *Quality Schools* package undermines the integrity of Catholic school systems by proposing the funding of schools as standalone independent schools. Over the course of the current debate the Federal Education Minister, Simon Birmingham has implied that funding schools as a system is a 'special deal'. Their recently released School Funding Estimator website is an example of the Federal government by-passing long standing system funding arrangements and the outcome will be to pit school communities against each other as they consider how their school will be funded in 2018 through to 2027.

Within Catholic Education Tasmania (CET) we distribute both Federal and State Government funding on the basis of *need* as proposed by the Gonski Review and our Catholic principles of *co-responsibility* and the *common good*. In Tasmania, operating as a System rather than standalone Catholic schools allows CET to do three key things:

- To operate schools across the state, not just the main metropolitan cities;
- To be a low fee education provider that complements public education and offers choice to parents;  
and
- To provide fee concessions to needy families wanting a Catholic education.

As a result of *Quality Schools* funding changes from 2018 some schools' funding will increase and some will decrease. Minister Birmingham is then relying on the goodwill of systems to redistribute funding to ensure that fees in some schools don't rise to compensate for their loss of funding. In the case of Tasmanian Catholic schools we will continue to ensure that fees do not rise past acceptable annual changes.

### 2. Proposed changes to the way in which Students with a Disability are assessed and funded

The Federal Government is proposing to change the way in which Students with a Disability are assessed and therefore receive additional funding. If the Government's change was applied to this year's funding of Students with a Disability it would mean a \$1.8 million decrease across our 38 schools for support of students requiring additional support.

### 3. The implications of the Federal Government's ten-year funding model

The Federal Government's *Quality Schools* funding package is a ten-year funding model. Their view is that the ten-year funding deal provides 'certainty' to schools and school systems. However, in proposing a ten-year funding model, they are assuming that the costs associated with education will not change over the ten year period and in fact that the very nature of schooling won't change over the next ten years. Reflections on how education has changed in the last ten years would suggest that this is an ill-informed assumption.

In the short term there will not be a great deal of change or impact. In the second half of the ten-year period however, the proposed changes will increase the pressure on our schools to maintain and improve on the quality of Catholic education they currently deliver.

In simple terms, over the course of the next ten years, the Federal Government's proposals will place additional pressure on schools we operate in regional and remote areas and it has the potential to put pressure on each school's ability to set affordable fees and provide fee assistance to families in financial difficulty.

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