

NEEDS-BASED FUNDING ARRANGEMENT FOR SYSTEMIC CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CANBERRA & GOULBURN

Prepared February 2024

INTRODUCTION

Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (CECG) comprises of 56 systemic schools across the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and New South Wales (NSW). CECG educates more than 15,000 students in 29 ACT schools and over 7,320 students across 27 NSW schools (see Table 1). CECG employs over 3,500 teachers, school support staff, teaching casuals and professionals who support these schools.

Table 1. The System: Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn

Category	ACT		NSW	
	No. schools	No. enrolments*	No. schools	No. enrolments*
Schools				
Primary	24	8,931	19	3,337
Secondary	5	6,120	3	1,650
K-10 Schools	Not relevant	Not relevant	2	761
K-12 Schools	Not relevant	Not relevant	3	1,386
Total	29	15,051	27	7,134

*2023 Census, including Part Time students.

CECG offers to communities in the ACT and NSW a complete education that is inspired by our greatest teacher, Jesus Christ. The learning and experiences in Catholic Education shape a strong sense of spiritual self and wellbeing, and equip students to be ethical, agile thinkers who strive to make a positive contribution in the world around them. This is made accessible to students and families through a fee structure that aims to be inclusive and affordable to families.

The purpose of this document is to outline the needs-based funding arrangement CECG uses to allocate resources to the 56 schools across ACT and NSW.

FUNDING CONTEXT

CECG operates in a resource-constrained environment with income and expenditure being closely managed to provide an accessible, low fee Catholic school option to the community.

The financial information included in this document represents the 2024 forecast largely based on historical information, 2024 approved budget and on assumptions about future events¹.

The financial information is provided to indicate the magnitude of the income and expenditure of CECG but should not be relied upon for its accuracy. The final financial allocations across the system are reported to the Australian Government and published at a school level on the ACARA My School website.

APPROVED SYSTEM AUTHORITIES

CECG is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity that allocates its resources towards educational activities and outcomes. Under the *Australian Education Act 2013*, CECG is an Approved System Authority (ASA) for 29 schools in the ACT. As the ASA, CECG directly receives recurrent funding from the Commonwealth and ACT government for distribution to its ACT schools. CECG is also responsible for reporting on the distribution of funds to its ACT schools and meeting other compliance requirements.

For CECG's NSW schools, Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) is the ASA for all Catholic systemic schools in NSW. CSNSW directly receives recurrent funding from the Commonwealth and NSW government for distribution to diocesan school authorities. Detail on the methodology used by CSNSW is available on its website (<https://www.csnsw.catholic.edu.au/funding/>).

CSNSW distributes government funding to CECG alongside other diocesan school authorities in NSW based on the approved CSNSW needs-based funding methodology². Once CECG receives its funding allocation from CSNSW, CECG uses this needs-based funding arrangement to distribute resources to its NSW schools.

SOURCES OF INCOME

CECG schools receive funding from three main sources. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of income by source.

1. COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT

The Commonwealth Government provides the most significant proportion of funding. Each student attracts a level of recurrent funding determined against the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) model. An explanation of the SRS model is available on the Australian Government Department of Education website

¹ The financial information and forecasts presented in this document is at the time of publication are unaudited and subject to revision. CECG undertakes no obligation to update or revise the financial information contained in this document to reflect events or circumstances that arise after the preparation of the forecasts. Inevitably, some assumptions included in the financial information will not materialise, and unanticipated events and circumstances may affect the ultimate financial results. Therefore, the actual results achieved may vary significantly, resulting in variations from the financial information published in this document. Income and expenditure values are exclusive of GST.

² CSNSW as an ASA receives an aggregated amount of government recurrent grants to cover all schools within its system and may distribute funds subject to meeting the requirements of a needs-based funding methodology. The NSW system includes schools within the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn. The Archdiocese receives a distribution from CSNSW for those schools. Note that this distribution amount does not equate to the amounts calculated by government under the *Australian Education Act 2013*.

(www.education.gov.au). In 2024, CECG expects to receive approximately \$266 million in Commonwealth recurrent funding (including base funding and loadings).

In addition to the Commonwealth recurrent funding, CECG also anticipates receiving \$1 million in Choice and Affordability funding. These two sources of funding are temporary measures. Since 2021, both the Choice and Affordability funding and the Transition Adjustment funding have reduced significantly.

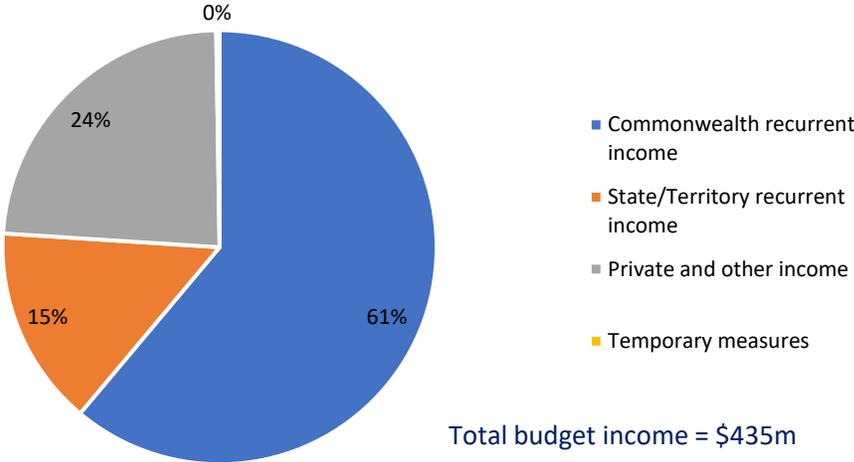
2. ACT TERRITORY AND NSW STATE GOVERNMENTS

The State and Territory Governments also provide significant funding referencing the SRS. In 2024, CECG anticipates receiving approximately \$65 million in State and Territory recurrent funding.

3. PRIVATE AND OTHER INCOME

Private income is received predominantly through tuition fees, school levies, voluntary contributions to building funds and other income. Private income contributes towards achieving the SRS as well as school operating expenses and the maintenance of school buildings and assets. Private income is paid directly to each school. In 2024, CECG forecasts to receive approximately \$103 million in private and other income.

Figure 1: Sources of System Forecast Income



KEY EXPENDITURE AREAS

CECG's income is used to support four main expenditure areas. Figure 2 provides a breakdown of forecasted expenditure by area.

1. STAFFING IN SCHOOLS

CECG employs over 2,600 teachers and support staff across its 56 schools. The principals, teachers and other staff in each school deliver a complete school curriculum and support students with varying degree of needs. School staffing expenses are largely determined by the Enterprise Agreement covering teachers and general employees in Catholic systemic schools in NSW and the ACT. In 2024, CECG expects to spend approximately \$308 million on base school staffing costs. Additional salary costs are incurred as part of a number of other programs.

2. SCHOOL OPERATING COSTS

School based operating budgets cover a diverse set of costs involved with the running, maintenance and operation of schools. These costs include additional classroom support for children with needs, extracurricular and sporting activities, facility maintenance, local administrative rates, water, and electricity. In 2024, CECG expects to spend approximately \$60 million on school operating expenses.

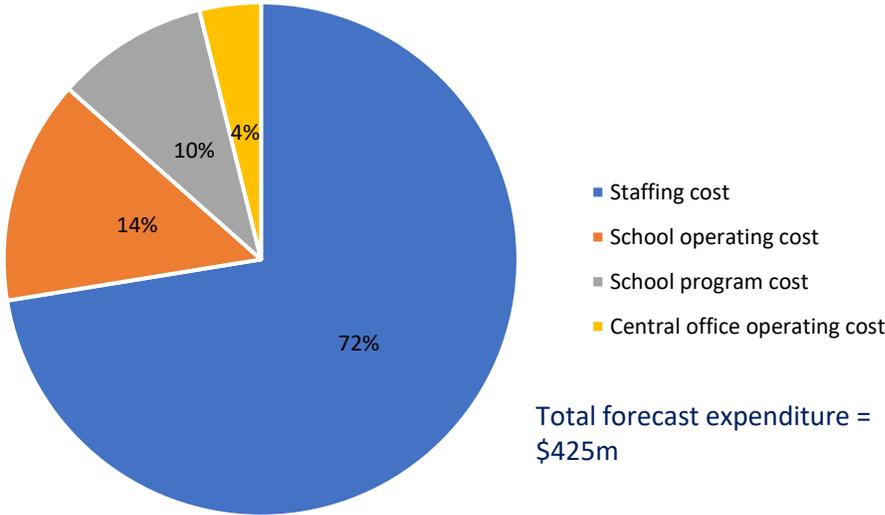
3. SCHOOL PROGRAM COSTS

Considerable cost is also incurred to implement supplementary school programs that target identified learning needs, provide extension opportunities, support disadvantaged students and foster wellbeing and catholic identity across the school community. Whilst some of these programs may be driven by government and other requirements, many of these programs are unique to CECG and are provided through teaching and learning initiatives to help provide a rich educational experience for students. In 2024, CECG expects to spend approximately \$41 million on school focused programs. A list of these programs can be found in Attachment A.

4. CENTRAL OPERATING COSTS

Central operating costs includes salaries for approved authority staff, finance, system wide technology, compliance, capital and maintenance works, insurances and administrative costs. The approved authority provides direct support, specialist advice and administrative services to schools in areas such as finance, compliance and payroll, technology, capital planning and facility services, human resources, child protection, legal and spiritual and pastoral care. In 2024, CECG expects to spend approximately \$16 million on central operating expenses.

Figure 2: System Forecasted Expenditure



OTHER INCOME AND EXPENDITURE MATTERS

Tuition fees and school based levies for each school are set by the approved authority. In setting tuition fees, the approved authority references each school’s capacity to pay based on Direct Measure of Income (DMI) and the funding shortfall to achieve sufficient resource levels. As part of this process, the approved authority determines the amount of school fees to be remitted to the central funding pool (remitted fees are used to support staffing costs, school programs and approved authority operating expenses). Once schools have been consulted on the school fee and remittance levels, the Catholic Education Commission (CEC)

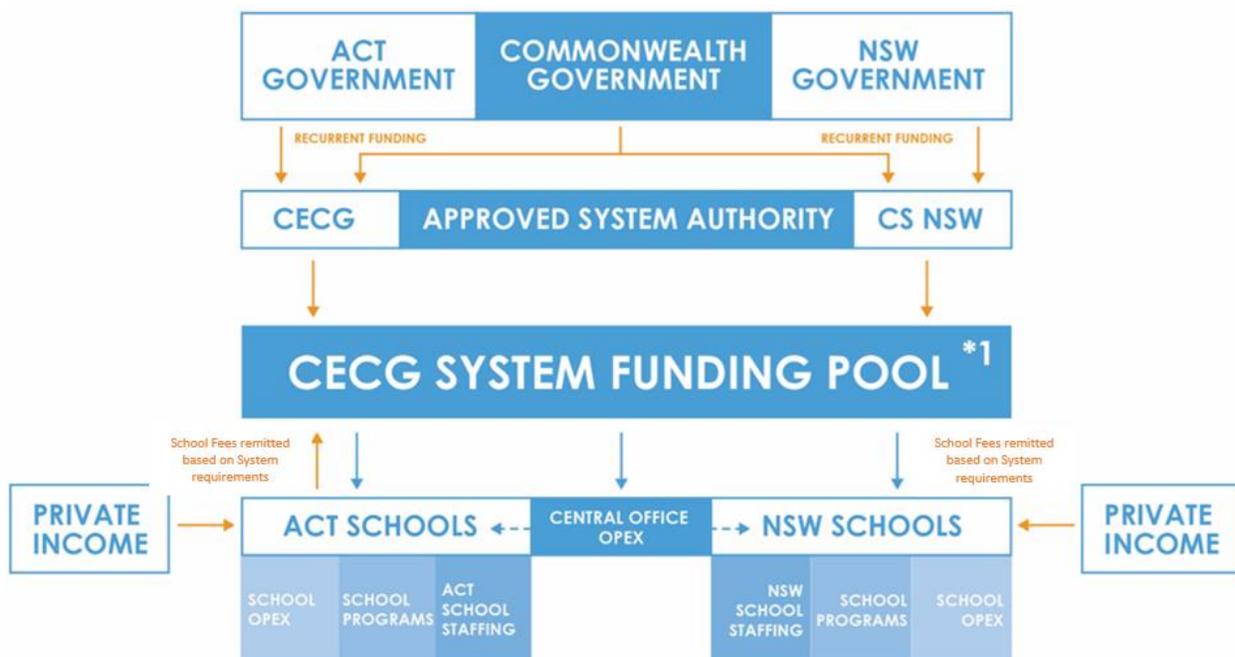
determines the fee policy for the coming year. CECG's Fee Policy includes fee reductions for multiple siblings and explicitly prohibits denial of enrolment based on inability to pay.

CECG may also receive funding from other sources (e.g., Block Grant Authority) to upgrade existing schools or develop new schools. These projects are identified based on individual school need and opportunities to provide a Catholic education within a community where it may not otherwise be accessible. Any capital funding received is spent in accordance with grant provisions and is not included in the analysis provided.

The depreciation of school buildings and assets represents a considerable cost to CECG each year, estimated at \$29 million in 2024. This cost is not included in the analysis provided as it does not from part of recurrent funding but is necessary to cover future capital replacement.

As illustrated in the breakdown of income and expenditure provided above, CECG is significantly dependent on government funding, which represents approximately 76% of all funding income in 2024. Figure 3 provides an overview of system funding flows.

Figure 3: Overview of System Funding Flows



KEY
 → Income
 → Expenditure
 - - - → Support

*1 No cross subsidisation of funding occurs between state/territory jurisdictions

*2 Except ACT Secondary Colleges

NEEDS-BASED FUNDING ARRANGEMENT

PRINCIPLES

CECG allocates all the Government funding it receives each year across its systemically funded schools. In distributing its funding each year, CECG aims to maximise the benefits to students and schools based on need. The methodology used by CECG is guided by the following principles:

1. Maximise the direct benefits to students across the full educational spectrum based on needs.
2. Maximise benefits to schools based on context.
3. Provide schools with funding flexibility to meet individual school and student needs where applicable.
4. Maintain system level capacity to support individual schools according to need.

CECG's methodology works through a series of steps to allocate its funding based on school and student needs. This approach aligns available funding to real costs and considers the dynamics of operating a system of schools such as, the cost difference between senior and junior teachers, classes sizes, combined classes, local school needs and emerging educational issues. The key steps are described in more detail below and include:

1. Forecasting student enrolments based on Census information.
2. Determining available funding and budget.
3. Determining staffing required using the Staffing Methodology (base, students with disabilities loading and size loading).
4. Determining school programs using the School Programs Methodology (base and all loadings).
5. Determining operating expense requirements.

STAFFING METHODOLOGY

CECG allocates annually to each school the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff that may be employed as part of base staffing. This allocation is determined by CECG policies and priorities, the educational needs of schools, equity across the organisation and available financial resources. A rigorous process for the allocation of staffing is commenced well in advance of requirements to provide Schools with sufficient time to plan.

The process for allocating funding to staffing involves:

1. Developing an initial forecast of student enrolments utilising current student census data and potential changes in enrolments in the new year. This process addresses base funding requirements and contributes towards known student loadings including students with disabilities and school size.
2. Determining the number of staff to be allocated to each school based on the forecasts developed and the Guidelines for Setting School Staffing 2024. The Guidelines are based on the Enterprise Agreement and prescribe the minimum staffing required using student enrolments, class structures and school demographics. The Guidelines prescribe base teaching staff as well as classroom support and assistant staff to contribute to meeting student needs.
3. Consulting with each school principal on the proposed staffing levels for their school to help identify any special needs and confirm the appropriateness of the proposed staffing.

4. Convening the Schools Staffing Committee to review proposed staffing levels. This committee discusses each school's staffing level considering available funding and enrolments.
5. Convening the School Staffing Validation Committee to finalise staffing levels for each school, ensuring equity across each school and transparency in decision making.
6. Informing each school principal of the final staffing levels and associated budget provisions for the following year.
7. Refining staffing levels as the school year unfolds. Staffing levels are finalised once enrolment numbers are confirmed through the February census. There may be some subsequent adjustments, but these are generally minor in nature and are managed on a case-by-case basis.

Changes in the school environment are monitored, with any funding impacts managed to ensure continuity in services for students and schools.

SCHOOL PROGRAMS METHODOLOGY

Each year CECG staff research, identify and implement a range of school programs to enrich student outcomes and meet government and grant requirements. These programs range in nature and include, for example, access and equity programs for students with special needs, professional development to maintain high quality teaching staff, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) support, student wellbeing, school counsellors and Catholic identity programs.

These programs can be identified by school staff, for example as part of the Annual Improvement Plan process, or by staff at the system level as part of a strategic initiative for all schools. The process for allocating funding to school programs includes:

1. Identifying a clear student or school need through carrying out research into best practice teaching and pedagogy, direct student and school experience, analysis of NAPLAN results and other student performance metrics, exposure to education networks including the broader Catholic education system, monitoring government policies or advice from internal and external expertise.
2. Developing a proposal outlining how the program would address the identified need, the benefits / value to students and schools, links to loading areas for disadvantaged students or to CECG's Strategic Plan, and the investment required.
3. Classifying and prioritising each program according to the needs they address. The purpose of this is to ensure a portfolio of programs is implemented across all CECG's students, schools and staff, and that multiple needs are targeted.
4. Setting an appropriate budget for school programs each year, taking into consideration available funding after staffing and operating allocations.
5. Prioritising programs drawing upon the expertise of Specialist Officers and considering the budget available, and the range of needs being targeted.
6. Providing the allocated budget to the relevant area in the organisation to develop a detailed implementation plan and to coordinate the program. Further detail on the direct funding allocated to each school is outlined in the Direct School Program Funding Allocation for 2024.
7. Monitoring processes throughout the year to track progress against outcomes and expenditure.

The outcome of this methodology is the implementation of a range of school programs that address student, school and staff needs at the most appropriate level. This approach makes sure that programs remain current and relevant to school needs, are assessed against needs and available budget, and deliver value as they are implemented. CECG's school programs to be implemented in 2024, along with allocated budget is provided in Appendix A.

In addition to Systemic Programs, CECG may also receive funding from Commonwealth or State and Territory Governments to meet defined educational policy and program needs. The funding associated with these external grants is distributed in accordance with grant obligations.

OPERATING EXPENSES METHODOLOGY

Funding for both school and system operating expenses is allocated annually using known recurrent historical ongoing costs, cost increases and any one-off cost items to meet annual strategic initiatives. As a matter of standard practice, each expense item is reviewed annually, and savings identified where possible. Any new operating expenses must align with CECG's Strategic Plan.

DERIVING PER STUDENT BASE AND PER SCHOOL LOADING VALUES

Through the application of the staffing, school programs and operating expense methodologies, CECG's annual funding is fully allocated on a per student and / or per school basis.

Figure 4 below shows the base funding per student as well as the loading per school by each market segment, namely, ACT secondary, ACT primary, NSW secondary and NSW primary schools. The funding amounts shown are based on total system forecast income for 2024 with the Commonwealth Government contributing 61% of recurrent funding as referenced in Figure 1: System Sources of Forecast Income.

Figure 4: 2024 Expected base funding and loadings amounts

State or Territory	School Level	Base Funding (per student)	ATSI (per school)	SWD (per school)	Size (per school)	LBOTE (per school)	Low SES (per school)	Location (per school)^
ACT	Primary	\$10,042	\$32,399	\$917,919	\$69,140	\$2,258	\$242,128	Not Relevant
ACT	Secondary	\$9,580	\$148,672	\$1,971,118	Not Relevant	\$11,383	\$1,161,295	Not Relevant
NSW	Primary	\$11,218	\$54,497	\$383,402	\$155,756	\$769	\$317,378	\$139,097
NSW	Secondary	\$16,381	\$251,753	\$1,359,197	\$218,126	\$4,440	\$1,573,045	\$895,988

^ No schools in the ACT attract location loading.

In deriving these amounts several assumptions have been applied including:

- School staffing expenses are split into base funding and funding for students with disabilities. The loadings for students with disabilities are based on staff position titles.
- School program expenses map to both base funding and loadings and are referenced in greater details in Appendix A.

DRIVING EFFICIENCY

CECG seeks to maintain an efficient organisation that maximises value to students. This continues into 2024, with the strategy including a greater focus on increased efficiency and prioritisation of programs and initiatives.

CONCLUSION

CECG's needs-based funding arrangement places student needs at the centre of decision making. As a significant educator in Australia, CECG each year evaluates and revises its practices so that all funding received leverages the greatest outcome for students, teachers, parents, schools and the wider community. CECG will continue to refine its needs-based funding arrangement also taking into consideration investment in data, systems and processes.

Appendix A: CECG School Programs 2024

School Program	2024 Budget Allocation (\$ million)
Aboriginal Education ACT	0.8
Aboriginal Education NSW	1.2
Career Education Program	0.2
Child Protection Program	0.2
Child Safe Advocate	0.5
Curriculum	0.1
ICT Program	7.0
School Context Funding Program ACT	2.8
School Context Funding Program NSW	1.8
School Languages Program ACT	0.3
School Languages Program NSW	0.1
School Performance and Improvement	3.0
Spirituality & Catholic Identity	0.8
Student Centred Learning Program ACT	1.8
Student Centred Learning Program NSW	1.2
Student Counselling ACT	2.2
Student Counselling NSW	1.4
Students With Disability ACT	10.4
Students With Disability NSW	4.7
Vocational Education Programs	0.3
TOTAL	\$40.8