
FURTHER SCRUTINY OF GONSKI RECOMMENDATIONS NEEDED

National Catholic Education Commission executive director Ross Fox has said if the recommendations of the Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling are the starting point as the Commonwealth Government moves towards a new school funding model, the recommendations must be measured against the real needs of current students and schools.

“The Gonski Review made an important contribution to shaping understandings of needs-based funding in Australian schools, but the recommendations must be tested in light of the realities of school funding today, rather than a five-year-old understanding,” Mr Fox said.

“There are almost 250,000 more students in Australian schools than there were in 2011, and the needs of those students and where those students are being educated must be part of the discussion about how schools and students are supported into the future.”

Mr Fox said the major contribution Catholic primary schools make to Australian education would have been jeopardised if there had been a wholesale adoption of the Gonski Review’s recommendations.

“There are more than 1,200 Catholic primary schools educating more than 350,000 young Australians from all backgrounds,” he explained.

“If the Gonski recommendations had been implemented as they were handed down, the families of almost 150,000 students would have faced significant fee increases – some in excess of 200 per cent.

“For decades the Australian Government has supported Catholic school systems and over time they have proven to be efficient and inclusive. Low-fee Catholic primary schools are a recognised feature of these systems. Withdrawing support for Catholic systems would have widespread consequences.

“With many families making significant financial sacrifices to send their children to a Catholic school, which they have chosen as the best fit for their child, fee increases of that magnitude would place a Catholic education out of reach.

“That would see tens of thousands of students seeking enrolment in government schools, placing pressure on those schools and ultimately increasing government spending on education – which will likely have to be paid for by tax increases.”

Mr Fox said the recommendations of the Gonski Review were tested with education stakeholders from across all sectors and all states and territories. That consultation helped to create what would become the funding model that was enshrined through the Australian Education Act.

“It would be disappointing, if not damaging, if the developing consensus around school funding was lost by recalibrating the funding model without solid evidence for doing so,” he said.

“Before the Gonski recommendations are revived as the basis for school funding in 2018 and beyond, they need to be closely and rigorously scrutinised to ensure they will have a positive impact on school education.”

Mr Fox said the extensive consultation that was undertaken before the Australian Education Act was passed meant many voices were heard in the consultation process.

“Engagement must occur during the development of a funding model, not once it’s already been decided,” he said.

Mr Fox said the Funding Principles for Catholic Schools would guide NCEC’s approach to the consultation. The Funding Principles for Catholic Schools can be found by [clicking here](#).