



**CSPA RESPONSE TO
SENATE SELECT COMMITTEE ON SCHOOL FUNDING INVESTMENT**

Following is Catholic School Parents Australia's response to the Senate Select Committee on School Funding Investment. CSPA was given an extension until 18 March for our submission.

a) The impact of the cuts announced in the 2014-15 Budget and confirmed in the 2015-16 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

Basing indexation on CPI and enrolment growth will mean that funding for schooling will not keep up with school costs (based on average increases in school costs and average CPI increases over recent years).

This will potentially lead to program and staffing cuts in schools, therefore limiting a school's ability to adequately address student needs and for our Catholic sector it will lead to: higher fees, limit parents' right to choose school of choice, and force some families to increase work FTE to pay fee increases. A further complexity is some parents will not have an extra work option available to them due to current child care requirements and/or additional work availability.

Collectively, these will potentially impact family life and parents' ability to contribute to the life of their child's school. There would most likely be a subsequent drift of students from Catholic schools to Government schools, thus placing extra stress on the government sector to fund their government schools (i.e. a false economy).

This significant funding decrease will also result in less funding for Catholic education systems leading to a depletion in the delivery of central services, less provision of subsidies to support needy families through fee relief and less ability to, for example, deliver professional development and drive innovation. Once again this will result in further pressure on the government sector.

b) The impact on schools and students in regional, rural and remote areas.

Issues will flow onto location and school size loadings with particular impact on regional, rural and remotes schools. These issues would include:

- finding it increasingly harder to meet additional costs associated with recruitment (including re-location costs);
- further pressure on the retention and increased cost of delivery of professional learning for staff, including school leaders;
- increased pressure on costs for ICT hardware and professional learning around IT;
- financial pressures on general resourcing;
- loan repayments having to be met with less funding (higher costs to build in these areas means higher loads to build/upgrade/expand); and
- SES and SWD loadings would presumably decrease.

An important impact, especially in rural and regional settings, would be less resources for schools' and families' to access allied health and other specialised services for students with additional needs.

Current funding falls very short of meeting the real needs of students with disabilities. With the increased number* of students with disabilities enrolling in Catholic schools, the impact of inequitable funding in this area will increase. Currently, due to the lack of funding for students with disabilities, many Catholic schools cross subsidise to meet these students' special needs and this would be compromised if such a significant decrease in funding were to go ahead.

*Students with disabilities now represent 4.4% of students in Catholic schools, compared with 0.2% in 1985 (National Catholic Education Commission, 2016).

A decrease in funding in real terms could risk, at its worst, the closure of smaller Catholic schools in regional Australia where every student enrolment is critical towards ensuring the base operating income meets the minimum level to keep the school viable.

c) The impact on students acquiring the job skills of the future, including science, technology, engineering, arts and maths.

Comments above particularly pertain to a school's/system's ability to fund STEM and Arts programs (for example the provision of specialist teachers [e.g Maths, Sciences, Technology and associated resources]).

Also with decreased funding overall there is likely to be increased pressure to limit innovation and the offering of programs around Literacy and Numeracy, likely leading to an increase in students below the national benchmarks, and even less resourcing available for gifted and talented students. These potential negatives to personal capacity building, more explicitly the negative hit on maximising human potential, will majorly impact job skills for the future.

d) Any related matter

Increased federal funding for capital is an imperative given the predictions for enrolment growth/need for schools in new and urbanising suburbs. Funding for all sectors is required to adequately respond to this growing demand to ensure choice of education offerings for families.