

Media Release

Curriculum review must align with Gonski 2.0 & address middle years

Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) supports the NSW Government's review of the Kindergarten to Year 12 curriculum, particularly the focus on overcrowding and how to improve the design and presentation to better support teaching, learning, assessment and reporting.

CSNSW Chief Executive Officer Dallas McInerney said that the review was a critical opportunity to align NSW curriculum reform processes with the Australian Government's Gonski 2.0 agenda.

"The Federal and State governments need to have close regard for each other's reform processes and look for ways they can be progressed jointly to avoid competing objectives or timeframes."

Mr McInerney said the review must also address student engagement between Years 7 and 9.

"There is always much focus and discussion on what is best during the K-2 years of learning and in the lead-up to the Higher School Certificate.

"What is often neglected in curriculum debates are the middle years, particularly in Year 9 where research has shown that maintaining student engagement is often a real challenge.

"The review needs to focus on how students' engagement, performance and classroom experiences from Year 7 affect their engagement and performance in Year 9."

Mr McInerney said the review can address both problem solving skills and knowledge.

"This isn't an either/or situation. The two go hand in hand and support each other."

Mr McInerney also said the review must examine ways to make maths and science subjects more contemporary, more appealing and more accessible to students.

A 2014 University of Sydney study of student participation in NSW HSC STEM subjects found a substantial decline between 2001 and 2013 in students who undertook at least one maths and one science subject.

"The proportion of students going on to study the HSC without any maths tripled from 3.2% to 9.7%, highlighted by a big drop in 2 unit maths (down from 16.8% of students to 11.4%)," he said.

"We need to improve the way we teach these subjects to address those declines and maintain high participation rates, while ensuring rigour and confidence in the NSW curriculum."

Mr McInerney said Catholic Schools NSW looked forward to full engagement with the review process.

"Catholic schools educate one in five NSW school students. We are the biggest provider of schools outside the government sector," he said.

Catholic Schools NSW represents the state's 595 Catholic schools and their 255,000 students.

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