



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for Catholic Education

Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, Chairman
Bishop Mark Edwards OMI
Bishop Gregory O'Kelly SJ

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TURNBULL GOVERNMENT'S SCHOOL FUNDING POLICY DEEPLY CONCERNING

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, through the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education, has expressed its grave concerns over the impact of the Turnbull Government's school funding announcement on Catholic schools across Australia.

The Chair of the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education, Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, said the Government's proposal will impact the affordability and accessibility of Catholic schools in a number of jurisdictions, particularly the ACT and Victoria.

"We are deeply concerned with the lack of consultation and the potential for the Government's proposal to undermine the integrity of Catholic school systems," Archbishop Costelloe said.

"Despite the Government's announcement, funding uncertainty continues, which means schools and families are unable to adequately plan for their educational, administrative and financial needs.

"We want to work with the Government to uphold the integrity of Catholic systems and keep Catholic schools affordable and accessible. That is why we are calling on the Government to urgently commence negotiations with the Catholic sector on the proposed changes," the Archbishop said.

"We are also deeply concerned about the Government's intention to launch a new website that will outline how much federal funding each school in Australia will receive under the proposed changes.

"The website ignores the reality of Catholic education systems and indeed other schools systems, which are able to redistribute funds according to the needs of individual students or schools.

"The website will effectively undermine system autonomy and mislead parents who could easily assume that the Commonwealth will now determine Catholic school fees. Is the Commonwealth seeking to abolish system autonomy and regulate fees for Catholic schools by ignoring the role of school systems?" Archbishop Costelloe asked.

"The Government is proposing radical changes to how school funding is distributed on the basis of locally assessed need.

"Catholic education strongly supports needs-based funding. However, the Turnbull Government's current funding proposal fundamentally changes the nature of needs-based funding," Archbishop Costelloe concluded.

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