



Media Release

NSW Government delivers refugee funding for Catholic schools

The NSW Government has allocated \$2.2 million to NSW Catholic schools to help fund the provision of intensive English language classes for newly arrived refugee students from war-torn Syria and Iraq.

Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) today welcomed the new funding, which had previously only been available to government schools.

“We are pleased that the NSW Government has listened to our concerns and extended this funding to non-government schools,” CECNSW acting executive director Ian Baker said.

“Education Minister Rob Stokes wrote to CECNSW confirming the funding would be granted in recognition of the costs Catholic schools have borne as a result of the significant influx of refugee students due to the Iraqi and Syrian humanitarian intake.”

Mr Baker said the number of refugee students changes weekly but it is estimated there are almost 550 Iraqi and Syrian students currently enrolled - or in the process of enrolling - in NSW Catholic schools.

“More than 400 are in our largest diocesan school system, Sydney Catholic Schools, which has met the immediate language needs of refugee students in dedicated Intensive English Language Centres at its Fairfield, Wakeley and Lakemba schools.

“At least 100 refugee students are also in Catholic schools in the Parramatta and Wollongong dioceses, while two Eastern Catholic schools – a Maronite school and a Melkite school – currently have 29 refugee students between them for 2017 and 2018.”

Mr Baker said that, to date, the Catholic sector had funded intensive English language learning from within its existing budget because of the urgent need to ensure refugee students could participate in mainstream classes as quickly as possible.

“Part of the mission of Catholic schools has always been outreach to the poor and marginalised, especially those who have been deprived of an education. Our schools have a history of embracing refugee students, including from war-torn Lebanon, Vietnam and Sudan.”

Mr Baker said CECNSW and several Catholic school principals participated in a series of roundtables coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet that also included government and independent school representatives.

The \$2.2 million being provided to Catholic schools is part of a \$2.7 million allocation made by the NSW Government to non-government schools enrolling refugee students.

CECNSW represents the state’s 591 Catholic schools, which educate some 258,000 students and employ 27,000 teaching and support staff.

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