



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Catholic School Funding: ABC vs The Facts

On Wednesday 2 September 2020, ABC News released a report on the Catholic Schools NSW Funding Model alleging that hundreds of millions of dollars in funds are distributed to metropolitan dioceses at the expense of smaller rural dioceses. Unfortunately, many of the claims made by the ABC are incorrect.

In responding to the report, Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) has identified no fewer than 16 incorrect claims made by the ABC. Available at <https://www.csnsw.catholic.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ABC-rebuttal-020920.pdf>, the CSNSW rebuttal of the ABC's claims begins with an acknowledgement that Catholic schools "are supported by the contributions of families and parents as well as government funding." It goes on to identify each of the errors in the ABC report and to counter them with the facts that seem to have been overlooked or ignored.

Council of Catholic School Parents NSW/ACT (CCSP) Chair, Narelle Burke, who lives in one of the dioceses allegedly disadvantaged by the funding model, said in response to the ABC report, "The re-distribution they're talking about is less than one percent of the total government funding. Students in rural and regional dioceses are still the highest funded in the state. Catholic schools remain a low-fee choice for parents regardless of where you live."

"What's more," added Mrs Burke, "Catholic school principals and system leaders go to great lengths to ensure that families seeking a Catholic education for their child are not turned away due to financial hardship. For instance, we have seen fee relief offered to families due to the drought, bushfires, floods and COVID-19."

"The Catholic school parents of NSW/ACT are very grateful for all the measures put in place to make Catholic schooling available to our children and affordable for families. Not only are Catholic schools places of excellence in teaching and learning, they are places of welcome and belonging for our children, their families and their teachers," said Mrs Burke.

CCSP Executive Director, Peter Grace, said the CCSP understands it is the aim of the CSNSW Funding Model to make all Catholic schools affordable and viable. "Enrolling in a Catholic school must be an affordable choice for all parents seeking a Catholic education for their children. This is what we say to the government on behalf of Catholic school parents and it is what we believe the current funding model administered by Catholic Schools NSW provides. Somehow, the ABC has overlooked this fact and in doing so, appears to have made a lot of mistakes."

This echoes the statement made by the Executive Director of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), Jacinta Collins, who has described the ABC's analysis as "simplistic and inaccurate" adding that it fails to "grasp the complexity of the funding model for non-government schools, and grossly misinterprets the way Catholic schools in New South Wales distribute funding." The NCEC response is available at <https://www.ncec.catholic.edu.au/news-events/media-releases/544-abc-analysis-gets-it-wrong-on-catholic-school-funding-national-catholic-education-chief-says/file>.

Notably, in a broadcast on Wednesday afternoon, ABC News itself reported that "a spokesperson from the Federal Education Department, said, 'School systems are best placed to understand the individual needs of students and to budget accordingly.'" This statement supports the approach taken by the NSW Catholic school sector in its distribution of funding. The CSNSW Funding Model is publicly available and complies with government legislation and compliance requirements.

As the peak parent body representing the parents and carers of more than 255,000 children and young people in Catholic schools, we at CCSP wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to all Catholic school system leaders, principals, teachers and staff for the excellent education and formation our children receive. This has been even more evident during COVID-19 with the extra effort that schools and dioceses have gone to in providing continuity of learning and ensuring that the health and wellbeing of students, staff, families and the wider community is given the highest priority.

**ENDS**

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*The Council of Catholic School Parents (CCSP) is the peak representative body for parents and carers with children and young people in Catholic schools in NSW.*