
Catholic education welcomes better early childhood options for the broader school sector

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) has welcomed the release of the Productivity Commissions Report [*A path to universal early childhood education and care*](#) including a wider range of early education options for the broader school sector.

“As a key contributor to the Australian Education system, Catholic Education has long recognized the critical role that high-quality early childhood education plays in fostering positive learning outcomes and social development,” National Catholic Education executive director Jacinta Collins said.

“As highlighted by Minister for Education Jason Clare, the report is ‘a significant input into our work to chart the course to a universal early childhood education and care system.’

“The Productivity Commissions 56 comprehensive recommendations address removing barriers and emphasise the importance of accessible, flexible and high-quality early childhood options. We believe this will help smooth transitions for children entering primary school, contributing to better educational outcomes and reducing developmental gaps.

Minister for Early Childhood Education Dr Anne Aly rightly stresses that ‘all children should be able to access the transformational benefits of quality early childhood education and care, no matter their background or postcode.’

“We welcome the recommendation to address barriers to providing subsidised wrap-around care in dedicated pre-schools and support universal access via an early childhood education and care (ECEC) development fund to thin markets. Catholic education has nearly 40% of our schools located in regional, rural and remote areas who face unique challenges where the fund can help alleviate some of the future demand.

Finance Minister Katie Gallagher recently outlined that work continues toward making affordable childcare part of the broader schooling system. ([ABC News, 9 August](#)).

“We welcome the establishment of an independent ECEC Commission to support system stewardship and look forward to a positive collaboration with the government to progress the Productivity Commission’s recommendations.”

Catholic education is the largest provider of education in Australia outside of government, enrolling one in five, or 805,000 students and employing over 109,000 staff in 1,756 schools. The Catholic sector has 15,000 children attending over 400 Catholic early learning and childcare centres across Australia.

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