

## MEDIA RELEASE

18 December 2025

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### Education can shape the national consciousness

The announcement by the Prime Minister this morning of the Antisemitism Education Taskforce, headed by David Gonski, has been heralded by Catholic education as an important and necessary step to end the scourge of antisemitism and hate-based rhetoric and action in our society.

Executive Director Jacinta Collins said “the taskforce is an important national recognition of the power of education to shape the national consciousness. Our children and young people are turning to their teachers and their schools for truth. In the age of 24-hour news cycles, click-bait and social media reporting, it is often in the classroom that our students are given the tools to critically interrogate what happens in the world.”

Catholic education has long worked alongside David Gonski to inform an education system that offers the best for all Australians. For Catholic schools, our deep commitment to Catholic social teaching sits at the heart of the many schools and systems who participate in multi-faith activities, excel in the study of world religions and celebrate how diversity of faith, belief and culture enriches our experience.

“Catholic education has a rich history of inter-faith dialogue and curriculum and pastoral programs that celebrate the inherent dignity of the human person” Ms Collins said. “We look forward to working with the government and school sectors of all faith traditions to ensure the initiatives identified by the taskforce can be rolled out with the urgency that tragic events such as Sunday and the increasing inertia toward hate and antisemitism demand”.

As Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP said, at a memorial on the steps of St Mary’s Cathedral, “How can anyone live faith openly when fear whispers to hide your identity and existence?”

This task force is an expression of the importance of embedding respect for faith in our schools and institutions to combat what Archbishop Fisher identified as “the oldest and darkest of human hatred”.

Community is at the heart of education – leveraging the power and potential of that community to help our students and their families identify and demand better of those who would bring antisemitic words and actions into our community is a moral and educational imperative.

#### Media enquiries

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*Australia’s 1,751 Catholic schools educate 820,000 (or one in five Australian students), employs over 112,000 staff and is the largest provider of schooling outside of the government sector.*

