

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### REPORT PAINTS MISLEADING PICTURE OF SCHOOL FEES

Catholic Education challenges Futurity Investment's *Cost of Education Report 2026* (released this week) as painting a misleading picture of the nature of fees in Catholic schools across the country. This causes unnecessary alarm for parents who make the choice of education that best suits the needs of their children – whether that is a government, Catholic or independent school.

#### Issues with the report

The report published on the Futurity website (which also sells education bonds and financial services to parents) presents compounded cost projections consistent with the 5-6% increase in school fees. The astronomical increase in costs is derived from ancillary spending based on a very small sample size of parents estimating additional costs in categories ranging from uniforms and technology to after school tutoring and before and after school clubs.

These ancillary costs are modelled on the responses of 2,500 parents – a minute proportion of the millions of parents who educate their children. It provides no context for the choice and family circumstance of the remarkably small sample size.

#### The facts

The cost of education is rising. It is rising for families and for schools and school systems (across all sectors). Cost of living pressures impact families' disposable income as well as the costs that schools incur when providing educational services. Fee increases across the Catholic sector are consistent with increases in other sectors and represent the costs of delivering education.

The Catholic sector receives stable, means-tested government funding indexed with reference to both the Consumer Price Index and the Wage Price Index. This recognises the additional costs of delivering education, particularly wages which have increased significantly in the past few years. We value our teachers and recognise the vital role they play in educating and nurturing students, so paying them fairly for their expertise and dedication is essential.

Other unavoidable costs also contribute to fee increases, including insurance, regulatory compliance, and the upkeep of safe, high-quality schools that provide the best learning opportunities for students.

In some areas, costs are further exacerbated by government policies which unfairly target non-government schools such as the exclusion from Commonwealth Teaching

Scholarships, limited access to school based cost of living relief and the removal of a payroll tax exemption in Victoria. These divisive policies further increase the costs of education which impacts families through fees.

The Australian government is aware that the indexed increases to funding are being surpassed by the cost to educate a child in Australia. This is why the Choice and Affordability Fund is available and why the government is undertaking a critical review of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). We look forward to working with them as part of this review. This is an essential step to ensure our funding system truly supports parental choice in education and provide families with an option that reflects their values and aspirations. It is essential that funding frameworks recognise and sustain this commitment.

### **A message for families**

Year after year parents continue to choose a Catholic education because it is the best fit for their child and family. Parents should keep in mind that additional costs beyond tuition can vary greatly, and not every family experiences all the ancillary expenses mentioned in the report. As the Resolve report notes, these costs are not universal, and given the small sample size and the nature of the data collection, the findings should be viewed as indicative rather than definitive.

Catholic education is committed to accessible education and works with its families to ensure that an inability to pay does not deny a family access to a Catholic education.

Our schools have long been a mechanism to support the most disadvantaged and provide for the common good. Any family who needs assistance is encouraged to speak to their school principal about options for support.

### **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.*