

Catholic School Parents Australia
Submission for the *Review of the socio-economic status (SES) score*
methodology

As a national, peak parent body, Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) advocates for the parents/carers with children and young people in Catholic schools nationwide. CSPA sees the review of SES as a critical undertaking, the outcomes of which will influence the allocation of federal government recurrent school funding for the next quarter of a century. CSPA encourages the review to present an outcome that is equitable and considerate of parents with children enrolled in Catholic schools, and CSPA encourages the government to respond with a steadfast resolve to ensure that there is sensitivity around parents' capacity to pay, as this is the implied presumption whenever a funding level is struck for a school.

CSPA's response to the review is formed around the (NCEC) National Catholic Education Commission's *Funding Principles for Catholic Schools (2009)* - CSPA worked with NCEC in generating these principles. CSPA recognises that, across Australia, different Catholic education jurisdictions and Catholic schools are likely to respond in different ways in proposing how the SES methodology should be changed. As a national body, CSPA must consider all these jurisdictions, as what may prove beneficial for one may not be beneficial for another. CSPA believes that for the majority of families with children in Catholic schools, on average, family backgrounds and capacity to pay are more aligned with parents with children in government schools, than parents with children in the independent school sector.

It is suggested that the funding mechanisms resulting from the review of the SES need to alleviate such current inequities as a low income family with three children and living in a rented house, being deemed to have the same capacity to pay school fees as the high income, single-child family who owns and resides in the house next door. This unfair reality only serves to increase the gap between wealthy and low fee schools and somehow needs to be addressed as an outcome of this review.

Based on the National Catholic Education Commission's *Funding Principles for Catholic Schools (2009)*, CSPA recommends that the review should deliver a funding allocation mechanism which reinforces*:

- a) Parental choice - in accord with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all Australian parents “have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children”;
- b) Commonwealth and State Government funding that actively supports and encourages parental freedom of school choice by way of religion (religious freedom) for their children;
- c) Funding equity, which includes:
 - i. Catholic schools accessing additional funding support to meet the needs of increasing numbers of Indigenous students, students with disabilities and refugee students, as well as students/schools at risk and schools serving disadvantaged communities; and
 - ii. The capacity for Catholic State and diocesan school systems to be able to cross-subsidise schools according to assessed local need.
- d) Catholic schools working in positive partnership with parents and governments to implement the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*;
- e) Funding certainty such that Catholic schools and school systems will receive secure, guaranteed funding that is stable and predictable over a specified future period;
- f) That funding allocations to Catholic schools are based on reliable, objective third-party data and mutually acceptable public criteria;
- g) Specific funding for students with additional identified learning needs;
- h) Funding levels are indexed annually using a transparent mechanism;
- i) Funding levels are reviewed and updated periodically;
- j) That all Catholic schools are eligible, on a needs basis, for Commonwealth and State Government capital support; and
- k) That access to State and Territory Government funding of Catholic schools is consistent across States and Territories.

[*Much of the above are extracts from NCEC’s *Funding Principles for Catholic Schools* (2009)]