

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Inquiry into Commonwealth Funding for Schools

Submission no: 65

Received: 16/07/2004

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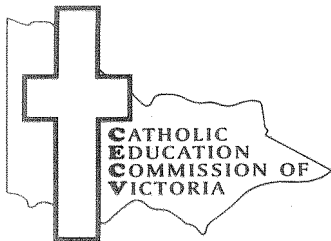
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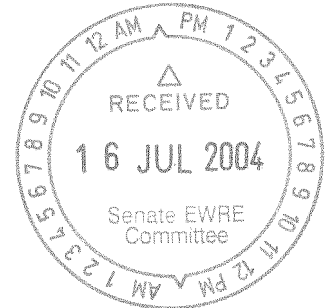
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In Reply Please Quote:

GE03/0161

12 July 2004

The Secretary
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations
and Education References Committee
Suite SG 52, Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Secretary

Re: Submission to Senate Inquiry into Schools Funding

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) appreciates the opportunity to have input into the Senate inquiry into Schools Funding.

Over the past year the CECV initiated a campaign with the Victorian State Government to address historic levels of under-funding. Victorian Catholic schools have received the lowest level of State/Territory funding for over a decade. In 2002, they received 16.3% of the Average Government Schools Recurrent Costs (AGSRC) against a national average of 19.3%. If Victorian Catholic schools received the national average in 2004 an additional \$47.3m would have been available.

The CECV campaign aims to bring about a resolution to the resourcing shortfall. The CECV argues that if Catholic schools are to sustain accessibility, preserve real educational choice and equity of opportunity into the future, additional State Government support is required for Catholic students. The CECV asks that State Government grants be linked to increases in costs in government schools (i.e. to the AGSRC) and that over time the grant to Catholic schools be increased to 25% of the cost of educating a student in a Victorian government school.

There have been a number of high level meetings to put the case for improved funding. At the end of 2003, a seminar on *Conceptions of Public and Private in School Education* was hosted by the CECV (see Attachment 1).

In addition the CECV has commissioned three research studies. The research on *The Affordability of Catholic Schools in Victoria* was conducted by the Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (CEET) at Monash University. This study found that Catholic schools have become less affordable over the past decade and that we are losing Catholic families to Government schools (see Attachment 2).

The research on *The Welfare Needs of Victorian Catholic Schools* was conducted by the Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne. This research found that schools are dealing with increasing numbers of welfare issues from family breakdown to mental illness (see Attachment 3). While the CECV has sponsored 700 teachers and principals to complete a Graduate Diploma of Welfare Studies at the University of Melbourne, the issue is that they do not have the time to devote to the problems.

The third study on *The Contribution of Catholic Schools to the Victorian Community and Economy* is being undertaken by the Centre for Strategic Economic Studies (CSES) at Victoria University. This study, which will be completed by early August, documents the social and economic contribution that Catholic schools make and the changes that are taking place in those schools and that contribution. The study will demonstrate the role of Catholic schools as community providers of a public service. It will highlight the Catholic sector's efficient use of public funds by delivering higher outcomes with lower expenditure. In addition, the study highlights the contribution of Catholic schools to community building and to the attainment of government participation and performance targets that are essential for building a knowledge economy.

All three research projects have been groundbreaking and support the CECV case for additional State Government funding for Victorian Catholic schools. Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to make contact.

Good wishes

Yours sincerely



Susan Pascoe
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR