



7 January 2015

The Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk MP  
Leader of the Opposition  
PO Box 15057  
City East Qld 4002

Dear Anastacia

On behalf of Queensland's 296 Catholic school communities we are writing to seek your response to a number of requests we are making in relation to policy and resourcing for Catholic schools by the next State Government.

We would like to communicate your responses to these requests, along with those of the LNP, to our school communities, ahead of the upcoming State election.

It is in the context of fairness and equity for Queensland Catholic schools that we are seeking the following commitments should the ALP be successful in forming government after the election.

**1. Annual per student funding that keeps pace with the rising costs of education**

Catholic schools in Queensland, on average, receive only about 81% of the government funding per student received by State schools (*MySchool website 2012*).

State government funding for Catholic schools helps relieve pressure on school fees and assists more families to choose a Catholic school. This also relieves pressure on the State school system and saves government money.

Catholic education is seeking to work with the next Queensland Government to achieve consistent budget outcomes that will:

- assist Catholic schools to keep pace with the rising operating costs of education delivery
- ensure that the gap in resourcing between Catholic schools and state schools does not widen.

## **2. Increased capital funding to deliver the additional student places required to meet the needs of Queensland's growing population**

Demand for places in Queensland Catholic schools is projected to increase by around 60,000 students between 2011 and 2031. This will require the development of 2-3 new schools every year and the expansion of many others.

The Catholic sector cannot keep pace with this level of growth under current capital funding arrangements.

If Catholic education authorities are unable to cater, at least for existing market share, and students need to be accommodated in State schools, this will cost government significant amounts of money in both capital and recurrent cost of education.

Catholic education is therefore seeking a commitment from the next Queensland Government to:

- work in partnership to help deliver the school infrastructure required
- provide a capital grants program that reflects the real cost of delivering the required additional school places. Queensland Schools Planning Commission projections calculate that Catholic education will need to deliver an additional 60,000 places by 2031. QCEC estimates this will require an additional \$49 million per year in State government funding over the 20 year period to deliver the 36,000 places required in new schools. Current State capital funding streams of \$43m per annum will need to be maintained to expand existing schools by 24,000 places.

## **3. Students With Disability (SWD)**

The number of students with disability attending Catholic schools in Queensland increased by 92% between 2008 and 2013 meaning that most teachers in Catholic schools have a number of students in their classes for whom educational adjustments and support are required.

Catholic education is seeking a commitment from the next Queensland Government to deliver:

- a funding program to deliver expert support and advice for SWD's and their teachers, particularly in rural and remote settings
- cross-sectoral opportunities and/or targeted funding for professional development programs for teachers of SWD's
- opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration to prepare for the implementation of the NDIS.

## **4. Vocational Education and Training (VET) for secondary school students**

Catholic education strongly believes that VET must play a central role in the provision of pathways for students, and in doing so, help build a highly skilled workforce and contribute to keeping the Queensland economy strong.

The Catholic sector is seeking policy and funding reform from the next Queensland government to:

- increase student access to VET programs in regional and rural settings
- more appropriately assist schools that are delivering higher cost VET courses
- provide targeted or seed funding to schools to develop additional career development programs.

#### **5. Parent Engagement Strategies**

The Catholic sector is seeking a commitment from the next Queensland Government to:

- work collaboratively to support strategies to enhance parent engagement across all Queensland schools
- provide \$250,000 in funding to enable the Catholic sector to roll out its recently developed framework for parent engagement, including a bank of resources and standards that enable schools to measure their success
- collaboratively devise and support a program of research and planning to further connect schools and playgroups and assist parents with the necessary tools in the vital first three years.

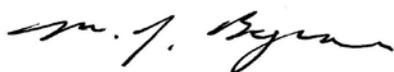
Annastacia, we are greatly appreciative of both your personal support and the support of the ALP for Queensland's Catholic schools. We are committed to working constructively with you, Dr Lynham and other members of your party.

Further, we also recognise the ALP's commitment to the education of young Queenslanders and would welcome any opportunities to collaborate with you on policy development.

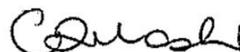
It would be appreciated if a response could be received no later than **Tuesday 20 January** to allow time for the responses, along with the responses from the LNP, to be published in school newsletters in the days leading up to the election.

Please contact us if you need any further information or if you feel we can be of assistance.

Yours sincerely



**Mike Byrne**  
Executive Director  
Queensland Catholic Education Commission



**Carmel Nash**  
Executive Director  
Federation of Parents & Friends  
Associations of Catholic Schools in Queensland