



June 22,

Dear Parents/ Caregivers,

*This is a short update to keep you informed about school life. We have had a wonderful week with many celebrations.*

*The disco was held last Friday evening and it was a fantastic night. Congratulations and thanks to Jo and Nicola for the organisation, for the parents who helped and also to our students for their wonderful behaviour. The costumes were impressive; a lot of work went into their preparation. I would also like to thank all my staff members who gave up their Friday evening to be part of the fun.*

*Yesterday, Father Greg presided over our school Mass for the final time before he retires to a more peaceful life. Mrs Ball and the children prepared a very moving tribute to him and of course, there was cake. We are waiting to hear just who will replace Father Greg and we should know that soon.*

*The instrumental music/choir afternoon was just so special. We have lots of talent at St Teresa's and our wonderful Fran is working magic with the children. The presence of so many family members added to the joy of the concert. Thank you for your interest and support.*

*We have been informed this morning that our submission to build a new early years precinct was not approved. The enrolment issue was a mitigating factor. We will try again next year and the year after that if necessary.*

*No doubt you are aware of the federal government's push to overhaul school funding. Mr Bill Dixon (our Executive Director) has drafted a response and we have been asked to forward this to our community. This will be sent in a separate email.*

*School reports have been posted and will be added to the parent portal. I would like to thank Mrs Ball for the great work she has done in setting up the portal. It is a work in progress and we hope to upload lots of additional information, eg readings, for you in the future.*

*Our FUN sports day will be held tomorrow and we are looking forward to a great day as our three teams vie for the winner's trophy. The programme was in last week's newsletter and has been added to the parent portal. Mrs Smith, as usual has done incredible work in the preparation and I am very grateful to her for this.*

*School starts again on Monday, July 10, with Tuesday July 11 being the show holiday. Dates for Term 3 have been added to the calendar on the parent portal and we will continue to update this.*

*Meanwhile; Evelyn Sports Days are July 20 and 21 and Grandparents Day is Friday July 28. More details next term.*

*Have a safe and restful holiday with your beautiful children. I can imagine how wonderful it will be to dispense with those morning routines and relax. (I know that's a big call)*

*Thank you for your support this term.*

*Warmest regards*

Grant me the ability to be alone;

may it be my custom to go outdoors each day among the trees and grasses,

among all growing things, and there may I be alone,

to talk with the one that I belong to.

Rabbi Nachman of Bratzlava



21 June 2017

**To: The Catholic Education Community of the Diocese of Cairns**

**Subject: Federal Government Funding**

It has been now about 6 weeks since the Federal Government announced its proposal for the funding of schools in Australia for the ten year period commencing January 2018.

Since the announcement you would have heard from or read in the media (including social media) a range of reports, sometimes conflicting and confusing, as to what the Government's proposed funding method, known as Gonski 2.0, will mean for schools, in particular Catholic schools.

Over the weekend just passed and in the lead-up to the current Senate debate, this discussion has intensified, particularly in relation to how much Catholic schools across Australia might stand to lose during the next ten years from the Government's proposed funding methodology.

I am writing today to provide you with information regarding the impact that the Government's proposed funding method will have on Catholic Education:

1. In the Diocese of Cairns; and,
2. Generally across Australia.

### **The Diocese of Cairns**

The Diocese of Cairns operates under the Federal Government legislation as a "system" of 29 schools. As a system we are allowed to pool our Federal Government funding and then redistribute those funds according to needs at the local level to ensure that each school is able to operate with an optimal balance of Government funding and fees from Parents to provide an equitable allocation of funding for each school.

One example of the need for us to redistribute funding is in the area of students with disabilities – the Government funding received for students with disabilities is not sufficient to cover the costs incurred, therefore in order to adequately provide for our students we need to redistribute funding according to the needs of those students in each school. Redistribution also allows us to provide fee relief for financially struggling families through measures such as health care card discounts and remission of fees.

The Socio Educational Status (SES) of each school in the Diocese of Cairns is mostly in the bottom two quartiles of the SES range. Our lowest SES is 82 and our highest is 103. **Therefore in the Diocese of Cairns, Federal Government funding is projected to increase at reasonable levels each year over the next ten years which should see fee levels at our Catholic schools maintained with potentially only moderate increases in line with CPI during that period.**



## **Catholic Education generally across Australia**

Across Australia there will be other areas like the Diocese of Cairns - regional, rural, remote, low SES urban areas, that will experience an increase in Federal Government funding. However in other parts of Australia, particularly in the inner urban areas of Capital cities, there are many Catholic Schools that have an SES in the top two quartiles of the SES range – and there are some with an SES in the top quartile.

A handful of these Catholic schools could be said to be attended by “wealthy” people, however many of those schools also provide scholarships, fee remissions and other assistance for financially disadvantaged families to enrol their children.

The majority of these Catholic schools however, are systemic Catholic Primary and Secondary schools and the Parents of Children enrolled at these schools are mostly hard working people (single and double income families or small business people) who, because of their location, either have high mortgages or pay high levels of rent and generally experience a high cost of living due to transport and other cost of living pressures. These parents make sacrifices to exercise their choice to send their children to Catholic schools. These Catholic Schools are already facing fee pressure because of diminishing Government assistance – some of these Primary schools have fee levels of around \$5000 per year already.

We should all have pause for thought for what these families are now facing. With little or no prior warning or consultation many of them are now facing the prospect of not being able to afford to continue to send their children to a Catholic school. While this is not the case for our Cairns schools we should all recognise and reflect on the anguish and uncertainty now facing these families. We should also reflect that any change that is detrimental to any part of the Catholic Education sector inevitably weakens us all. And, who knows if our schools will be the next victims of this non-consultative ‘take it or leave it’ approach.

## **National Catholic Education Commission campaign**

It is important for Australian Society into the future that Catholic Schools (and non-Government schools generally) remain a viable choice for families. If it is easy now for a Government to decide to make the choice of a Catholic School unviable for a large section of our population (under the guise that those parents are perceived by a flawed measure to be “wealthy”), then it will be just as easy in the future for Governments to decide that all non-Government schools should receive decreasing amounts of Government assistance regardless of their Socio Educational Status.

That is why it is important that the National Catholic Education Commission campaigns strongly for fairness in the Federal Government’s proposed school funding method.

Yours sincerely



Bill Dixon  
Executive Director

