

MEDIA RELEASE



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Catholic school Parents left in the dark around school funding

Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) said today that rather than delivering certainty, yesterday's announcement by the federal government around school funding has created increased uncertainty for Parents with children in Catholic schools across Australia.

Deputy Chair of CSPA, Mrs Carmel Nash said, 'These new funding arrangements have the potential to cut hard into Catholic schools and lead to increased school fees paid by Parents. Whilst Catholic schools strive to keep fees affordable and accessible to all families who want a Catholic education for their children, this decision may impact Parent choice as the family budget may not stretch to cover the increased costs.'

Mrs Nash questioned the statement by Senator Birmingham that, on average, the per student federal funding for State schools will increase by 5.2% and for Independent schools by 4.2%, but the increase per Catholic school student will be only 3.7%. 'This lower rate of funding growth for Catholic schools compared with the other sectors will potentially cause increases in fees, but equally important, there may need to be staff cuts,' Mrs Nash said. 'This average increase translates into one Catholic school authority receiving a decrease in real terms over ten years - how is this workable?' Mrs Nash asks.

As with any surprise announcements, the detail of what this actually means has not been provided. CSPA have not been consulted nor briefed and Parents are the ones who will be expected to shoulder the extra costs through this government decision. 'All attempts to date by CSPA to speak with the Minister have not been successful and the fact that no Catholic school authority has been consulted with in any meaningful or detailed way is of great concern,' Mrs Nash said.

Mrs Nash added, 'Minister Birmingham has made reference to halting the academic slide and returning the Nation to the top of global rankings. On face value, the federal government's plan for some Catholic schools seems to be a decrease in per student funding to bolster student outcomes.'

Late yesterday, correspondence from the Minister indicated CSPA representatives would be invited to a National Stakeholder Forum on School Funding and Reform to be held at some future date. CSPA strongly believes this future consultation should have occurred before yesterday's announcement.

Mrs Nash added, 'It is hard to have true consultation after the decision has been made,' and concluded, 'Catholic schooling needs to remain an accessible option and choice for Parents in every State and Territory'.