



3 May 2019

Dear Colleagues and Friends of Catholic Education in Tasmania

This letter outlines the approved communications strategy that Catholic Education will adopt for the upcoming Federal election and is informed by market research being undertaken for the National Catholic Education Commission.

The Objectives of the strategy are to:

1. Engage the major parties on matters of critical importance to Catholic education.
2. Ensure Catholic stakeholders and supporters understand the key issues and Catholic Education's position.
3. Encourage School Principals and parents to raise key issues with their local candidates.
4. Build a critical mass of internal stakeholder and supporter contacts (who will continue to receive communication from Catholic Education after the election).

The Key messages during the campaign are:

- Government funding is crucial to keeping Catholic schools affordable and providing Australian families with a real choice about where to educate their children.
- Without Government funding, schools would need to charge parents fees that cover the full cost of their child's education.
- Catholic and independent schools are partners with government in delivering quality school education to one third of Australia's 3.9 million students.
- Public schools are not disadvantaged by Catholic schools receiving government funding; public school funding has risen every year, in line with enrolments and indexation, since public funding was extended to Catholic schools (*to counter misleading claims in the AEU Fair Funding campaign*).

The key issues for Catholic Education, this election campaign are:

- **Increased Capital Funding**

With the rising cost of land, construction and classroom technology, Catholic schools cannot continue to rely on parents and the rest of the school community to shoulder the burden of increased capital costs to the same extent into the future.

As you can see from our information brochure Catholic school communities funded approximately 85 per cent of the capital works in their schools – nearly \$58 million (2014-18) – while the federal and state governments jointly provided \$13.3 million over the past 5 years to be used across our 38 schools.

- **More Resources for Early Childhood Education**

Catholic Education is also increasing its focus on the delivery of early childhood education, a vital component of each child's development. Our Catholic schools are well placed to meet this need through programs such as the Setup for Success parent engagement strategy however our reach into early childhood education is limited without further investment into recurrent funding for staffing and capital expenditure to enhance early childhood facilities. This will make life easier for families with young children and puts our preschoolers at the heart of our school communities.

- **Religious Freedom in Schools**

Catholic schools, respecting the rights and freedoms of parents and carers to choose schooling for their children in the Catholic tradition, should continue to be free to form and instruct students in the Catholic faith and celebrate the faith as an integral and inseparable activity of the Catholic school.

To highlight these key issues, National Catholic Education is seeking responses from all parties to the following questions;

1. *As the Commonwealth is the predominant funder of non-government schools, how will your party ensure Catholic schools remain affordable for most Australian families?*
2. *What support will your party provide to help Catholic and other non-government schools upgrade learning facilities and keep pace with enrolment growth, given the rising costs of land, construction and classroom technology?*
3. *What is your party's position on the right of religious schools to retain faith based exemptions from anti-discrimination legislation in relation to staffing, enrolment and policy matters?*
4. *Catholic schools are providing an increasing number of pre-school services for families that chose Catholic Education. What will your party do to support this important stage of early childhood education?*

Communication Strategy

National Catholic education will produce communications material for internal and external audiences. Communications will be co-branded with Catholic Schools Parents Australia. This material can be adapted for local use and disseminated through existing Catholic networks, as follows:

NCEC → State Commissions → Diocesan education/school offices → principals and staff → parents → candidates

The national communications strategy will include an election webpage, a weekly election newsletter, electorate profiles on the most marginal seats in each state, hosting a Federal Election Education Forum with the Minister and/or shadow Minister, collaborate with Catholic School

Parents Australia on advice to parents, creating a social media campaign addressing the various school funding myths and producing draft short items for insertion into school newsletters.

I have enclosed a copy of the 2019 NCEC Election Fact Sheet. This material (or sections of it) can be used in school newsletters over the coming weeks.

Locally, we have updated our *Catholic Schools in Tasmania* information brochure (also attached). This information brochure puts a local Tasmanian perspective on the key national issues. Sufficient copies of the updated *Catholic Schools in Tasmania* information brochure, will be provided to each school prior to the election for distribution to families and/or staff but could also be used as an insert in your school's Prospectus/enrolment information or in your foyer information displays.

There is also a link to the brochure on the About Us section of the CET website (<https://catholic.tas.edu.au/about-us>) that I would encourage you to also provide to your communities by your school website and/or social media presence.

Thank you to our school and parent bodies who are raising awareness among families, staff and local candidates of the key issues facing Catholic schools. In this campaign, like previous campaigns our ongoing focus is to remind our communities and our local elected representatives of the contribution of Catholic education in both Tasmania and Australia over the past 200 years till the present day.

Yours in Hope

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Mula', with a stylized flourish at the end.

John Mula
Executive Director
Catholic Education Tasmania