

Queensland Education Accord – Response

15 September 2014

1. HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT ALL YOUNG QUEENSLANDERS HAVE ACCESS TO AN AFFORDABLE, HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION REGARDLESS OF THEIR CIRCUMSTANCES? IN PARTICULAR, HOW DO WE ENSURE YOUNG PEOPLE IN RURAL AND REMOTE LOCATIONS HAVE ACCESS TO WORLD-CLASS EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THAT BUILD ON THE STRENGTHS AND POTENTIAL OF OUR REGIONS?

- a) Enable enough schools and student places available across all areas of Queensland to address student needs**
- b) Enable choice and diversity for parents in selecting appropriate schools by providing equitable support for government and non-government (Catholic) schools**
- c) Enable adequate, stable and reliable recurrent funding to provide affordable access to schooling**
- d) Enable provision of high quality resourcing: technology, connectivity, human resources /teachers, curriculum resources; support resources to all sectors of schooling**
- e) Facilitate viable economic use of scarce government funds by partnering with Catholic education to provide Catholic schooling options across the state**

Delivering Quality Education

Queensland's Catholic schools serve metropolitan, regional, rural and remote communities in locations as varied as Thursday Island, inner Brisbane, Longreach and all Queensland regional cities. Catholic schools provide Queenslanders with a great education, regardless of where they live and their circumstances.

- Catholic schools aim to cater for the needs of all students and families and welcome students from diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds, including from some of the most disadvantaged communities in Australia.
- Catholic schools strive to remain as affordable as possible to remain accessible to all who seek their values. Catholic schooling seeks that no child should be denied a Catholic education because of their family's financial situation.
- Catholic schools are committed to the education of Indigenous students and students with disabilities and other special needs including new arrival and refugee students. Numbers of students in these categories have increased significantly in recent years.
- A number of 'flexible learning centres' catering for students who have become marginalised from mainstream schooling are also operated by Catholic schooling authorities
- Meeting the schooling needs of our growing population will be a major challenge in Queensland over the next two decades and beyond
- Demand for places in Queensland Catholic schools is projected to increase by around 50,000 students between 2011 and 2031.

- It is estimated that 41 new Catholic schools will be needed by 2031 to meet expected demand. Many existing schools will also need to be expanded.
- The Catholic sector has a strong track record of innovative and cost-effective delivery of school infrastructure. Through meeting the cost of land purchase and other Catholic community contributions, the Catholic sector also delivers new school places at a significant saving to government and taxpayers.
- The Catholic sector currently has firm plans for 31 new schools in designated growth areas across the State.

State Government Recurrent Funding

Catholic schools in Queensland receive around 80% of their recurrent income from Queensland and Australian Governments. Around 20% of this income comes from the Queensland Government. This support will help relieve pressure on school fees and assist more Queensland families to choose a Catholic school, therefore saving taxpayers' money.

The Catholic sector seeks a commitment from State Government to deliver budget outcomes that will:

- assist it to keep pace with the rising costs of operating schools, including teacher salary increases
- ensure that the gap in resourcing between the Catholic and State education sectors does not widen further
- ensure that any specialised funding arrangements such as Royalties to the Regions enable equitable involvement of Catholic schools and early childhood education and care.

Capital Funding for New and Expanding Schools: Supporting the Catholic sector to deliver its share of new school places ensures educational choice for families and saves State Government money.

- Enrolments in all Queensland schools are projected to increase by 303,000 students or 41%, to reach just over 1 million by 2031.
- Catholic sector enrolments are projected to increase by around 50,000 students over the same period, requiring an estimated 41 new Catholic schools and the expansion of many others to maintain current market share.
- Catholic school authorities currently have plans to develop 31 new schools (9 already underway) in high growth areas of the State. This leaves a shortfall of an estimated 10 schools.

In delivering new schools, Catholic education saves significant amounts of money for State Government.

- The Catholic community contributes an average of 23% to the cost of construction of new schools which average \$15million for Primary schools and \$30million for Secondary schools.
- The Catholic community also purchases land at an average of \$5million per site.
- The Catholic sector has a strong track record of delivering new school facilities efficiently and is currently delivering new school places for around \$25-\$44k. State sector estimate is \$35-\$50k per place.
- There are also very significant ongoing savings to State Government in recurrent costs when students are educated in the Catholic system. Of total income per student for Catholic schools in Queensland, 53.4% comes from the Commonwealth Government and 28.4% is contributed by parents and community, mainly through school fees. State Government contributes 18.2%.

The Catholic sector seeks a commitment from State Government to work in partnership to develop short term (3 year) and longer term (10 year) as well as 30 year plans to deliver the infrastructure required to meet the schooling needs of Queensland's growing population.

This partnership should include a capital grants program reflecting the real cost of delivering the required infrastructure, including an appropriate share of the planned \$1 billion *Future Schools Fund* under the *Strong Choices Investment Program*.

The Catholic sector also suggests:

- It is recognised that technology can open up opportunities to improve educational outcomes and Catholic education seeks to work together to achieve greater outcomes for the bush: enable high quality alternative mechanisms for accessing education and resources: online courses; enabling affordable access to high speed broadband connectivity particularly in regional areas
- Enable flexible boarding school arrangements to facilitate access of rural and remote area students to schooling options
- Facilitate provision of specialist teachers
- Facilitate provision and retention of high quality teachers in regional and rural and remote areas
- Enable affordable access to quality professional learning for teachers in rural, remote and non-metropolitan areas

2. WITH COMPETING DEMANDS ON AVAILABLE RESOURCES, HOW DO WE ENSURE THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND SCHOOLS HAVE THE AGILITY, FLEXIBILITY AND AUTONOMY TO KEEP IMPROVING IN THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT OVER THE NEXT 30 YEARS?

- a) Catholic education saves significant amounts of money for the state government in the community purchase of land, contribution to the construction of schools and the delivery of school education**
- b) Support and partnerships with Catholic education in providing schooling will assist the state economy and make for viable use of resources in flexible new ways**
- c) Government initiatives to reduce red-tape and unnecessary bureaucracy are supported as mechanisms to enable greater autonomy, flexibility and agility in responding to changing environments. QCEC supports reasonable and proper compliance and accountability processes to ensure effective use of resources across the state.**

Every child educated in a Catholic school delivers significant savings to the Queensland Government and taxpayers.

According to the latest figures available Catholic schools received only about 81% of the total average government annual funding per student received by Government schools.

Even when parent contributions are taken into account, total net average annual recurrent income per student in Queensland Catholic schools is \$11,675 while for State schools the figure is \$12,021 and for Independent schools is \$14,426.

School fees paid by parents and grants from the Commonwealth Government deliver significant ongoing savings in costs of education to the Queensland Government when students attend Catholic schools.

Of total income of Queensland Catholic schools, 59% is provided by the Australian government, 20% by State government and 21% is provided by parent and community contributions

Catholic education can assist government in making good use of scarce resources by providing quality education at less cost to government.

3. WHAT QUALITIES DO WE – AS PARENTS, EDUCATORS, BUSINESS LEADERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS – EXPECT YOUNG QUEENSLANDERS WILL GAIN FROM THEIR SCHOOL EDUCATION?

- a) Catholic education has a distinctive view and underpinning philosophy of education as being directed at the development of the whole person : physical, intellectual, spiritual, emotional/psychological, cultural, ethical, aesthetic
- b) Catholic education values the common good as well as individual good and seeks to educate young people to be productive (employable) members of the community and broader society who can live in an ever-changing world
- c) Catholic education believes that providing equitable access to appropriate school and post school pathways serves not just the individual's needs but the common good in supporting productivity, social justice and just and sustainable use of resources
- d) Skills in literacy and numeracy (reading, writing and maths) are foundational to further learning and the right of every young person
- e) Qualities of resilience, confidence, integrity, loyalty, compassion and flexibility are important to develop
- f) All Queensland students should be able to access education / training opportunities that address their specific needs and help them reach their potential, giving practical skills for jobs, living and learning of the future

Enable the development in education of generic transferrable skills and qualities that will be applicable to future learning and work as well as to now:

- Critical and innovative thinking: creativity, resourcefulness, entrepreneurship, application skills, reflective thinking, reasoned decision-making
- Interpersonal skills: presentation and communication skills, leadership, organizational skills, teamwork, collaboration, initiative, sociability, collegiality
- Intrapersonal skills: self-discipline, enthusiasm, perseverance, self-motivation, compassion, integrity, commitment
- Global citizenship: awareness, tolerance, openness, respect for diversity, intercultural understanding, ability to resolve conflict, civic/political participation, conflict resolution, respect for environment

Catholic schools strive to provide a high quality education, advancing the common good of society. They believe in the intrinsic value of each student based on a distinctive educational vision inspired by the example of Jesus Christ.

Research shows that parents and students choose Catholic schools for a number of reasons including:

- the Christian values taught by Catholic schools
- care for the well-being of students, teachers and staff
- a commitment to the holistic development of students: spiritually, intellectually, physically, culturally, socially and emotionally
- the pursuit of academic excellence
- the teaching of self-discipline based on respect for others
- a vision of hope for the future
- strong partnerships with parents, parish and community

Governments can enable education that develops a “person”, not just a set of distinct content knowledge.

4. HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT SCHOOLS EQUIP STUDENTS WITH THE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, APTITUDES AND VALUES THEY NEED TO STRENGTHEN OUR ECONOMY AND PARTICIPATE IN A GLOBALISED 21ST CENTURY WORLD?

- a) **Enable a contemporary curriculum focused towards transferrable knowledge and skills that will be applicable to the future rather than weighted with content**

- b) Enable flexibility in school models, pathways, courses and curriculum delivery to facilitate the development of qualities and characteristics, as well as knowledge and skills, required for future learning, earning and living**
- c) Focus on the development of literacy and numeracy skills as a foundational learning block for every student**

The development and implementation of a more refined Australian Curriculum focused on transferrable knowledge and skills, rather than content heavy, could help equip students with a broader range of skills and aptitudes.

The recognition of courses and pathways that develop and value work / trade related skills will assist students' rounded development

A curriculum that is responsive and focused on literacy and numeracy (essential skills) aids further learning

5. HOW DO WE ASSURE AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN OUR SCHOOLS? HOW DO WE ATTRACT, RETAIN AND DEVELOP THE VERY BEST TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS?

- a) Attract the right people into teaching**
- b) Provide quality teacher education courses and quality professional placement and mentoring for pre-service teachers**
- c) Provide continued professional learning, mentoring and support for teachers**
- d) Provide attractive working conditions for teachers and school leadership including supported incentives for quality teachers to teach in rural and remote areas**
- e) Continue to support initiatives that promote quality pre-service teacher education and ongoing quality teacher learning and development**

QCEC commends the State Government's Great Teachers = Great Results initiative which supports Catholic schooling authorities to implement meaningful programs for teaching and learning relative to their context and need.

QCEC also commends the Fresh Start initiative which is developing partnerships for better quality practicums, graduate profiles to guide employment applications and common assessment meeting the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

In the school setting, quality teaching is the single greatest contributor to improving outcomes for our students. The Catholic sector has welcomed an additional \$52 million (approximately) from the Queensland Government over four years beginning in 2015 as part of the Great teachers = Great results program.

This additional funding will assist Catholic schools to further support teachers to develop their skills and consider other ways to improve teacher quality and performance.

The funding will be used to:

- improve teaching and learning
- recognise and promote the development of high performing teachers
- promote and support great teachers, especially in the areas of early years, students with disability, learning difficulties and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advancement, family and community engagement
- promote partnerships across schools, authorities, sectors and providers to enhance and provide professional excellence

- develop excellence in mentoring and coaching
- develop aspiring leaders

6. HOW DO WE SUPPORT YOUNG QUEENSLANDERS IN MAKING A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION FROM HOME OR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE TO SCHOOL, AND FROM SCHOOL TO FURTHER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT?

- Support parents with flexible choices in early childhood and care arrangements**
- Provide equitable access to capital funding for kindergartens on school sites across the state, avoiding duplication of facilities and equitable recurrent funding arrangements for kindergarten providers**
- Support funding for early childhood education and care - retaining national quality framework for early childhood education and care**
- Consider regulatory arrangements that enable quality kindergarten provision in the most economically viable manner. This may require reconsideration of legislative and regulatory divide between school and kindergarten funding arrangements**
- Provide ongoing support for VETiS programs that enable VET delivery in diverse school settings**

In relation to Early Years:

- Catholic education in Queensland has made a strong commitment to increasing programs for preschool age children. In 2014, 23 stand-alone kindergartens are located across the five dioceses.
- Qualified early childhood teachers are delivering a fully –accredited educational program to over 850 children.
- Additional kindergarten services continue to be considered in locations where there is an identified need within Catholic parish and school communities.

Schools are encouraged to communicate and develop networks with local early childhood education and care services to support children’s transition to school.

100% of Prep teachers in Catholic schools completed the AEDC (AEDI) checklists in 2009 and 2012. The AEDC data provides communities with information about the areas of strength and weakness across five domains of early childhood development prior to children starting school.

In relation to Vocational Education and Training in Schools (VETiS)

- support school employer engagement strategies and local community partnerships which facilitate the transition out of school and into productive pathways to work or further education
- provide support for at-risk young people who find difficulty in making the transition from school; who risk “slipping through the cracks” to homelessness and unemployment
- provision of multiple pathways for education and training in diverse educational settings

The Queensland Catholic sector is strongly supportive of the benefits of VET programs in schools. The provision of VET programs delivers multiple pathways for students as they transition to employment or further training.

The Catholic sector also believes that students benefit from the broader educational opportunities, support and guidance that is offered in the Catholic school context.

Skills training programs offered within Queensland Catholic education are designed to provide engaging curriculum offerings for the wide variety of student needs, and in addition address the workforce requirements of employers.

The Catholic sector has welcomed the State Government's formation of a Queensland cross-sectoral VETiS Working Group, providing a forum to collaboratively advance issues in this area.

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

- Provide ongoing support for VETiS programs that recognises the challenges of VET delivery in diverse school settings and communities.
- Develop new strategies and programs to assist successful school-employer engagement.
- Provide indexation of seed funding to the Catholic sector to support School-based apprenticeships and traineeships. This has been fixed at around \$866,000 since 2009.

7. HOW CAN WE DEVELOP GREATER ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES (INCLUDING PARENTS AND CARERS, OTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROVIDERS, LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS, BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRY)?

- a) Catholic education philosophy recognises parents as the primary and most important educators of their children.
- b) Catholic education seeks to work collaboratively to support and promote strategies to enhance parent engagement across all Queensland schools.
- c) 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
- d) work collaboratively with pre service teacher education providers to determine ways in which parent engagement strategies can be included teacher education courses
- e) enable flexible opportunities for industry, employers, community bodies and businesses to engage at local and larger level to consider areas of mutual interest and mutually beneficial ways to progress.

In addition to Question 6 the Catholic Sector also suggests:

- In secondary schools:
 - provision of support for schools and employer engagement to support student vocational learning and transitions
- In early childhood education and care:
 - encourage further connections between schools and playgroups to assist parents with the necessary tools in the early years that lead into kindergarten and prep and then into more formal schooling
 - build on opportunities to encourage parents and wider community to link in with schools to enrich learning for all

Support for Students with Disability

An issues paper *Achieving Educational Opportunity for Students with Disability in Queensland Catholic Schools: A needs analysis* highlighted that the number of students with disability attending Catholic schools in Queensland increased by 92% between 2008 and 2013.

However, data collected under the *Nationally Consistent Collection of Data* program in 2013 suggests that the real picture of numbers of students with disability and/or requiring adjustments to meet their learning needs, is much higher, with three times more students identified through the NCCD than in the 2013 Federal Census.

This suggests that most teachers in Catholic schools have a number of students in their classes for whom educational adjustments and support are required.

It is also important to note that some regions across the State are better placed to support students with disability due to established community/organisation structures. In particular, rural and remote areas regularly face the difficult task of accessing specialists for consultations and assessments.

- The Catholic sector is seeking ongoing cross-sectoral collaboration led by the Queensland Government to address the 'on the ground' needs of students with disability.
- This includes strategic planning with all levels of government to develop consistent definitions, and provide appropriate and co-ordinated resourcing to offer the best opportunities for this growing group of students.

Investment in Parent Engagement Strategies

Research shows that the engagement of parents in their children's learning is a key driver of successful educational outcomes for students.

In particular, research indicates that the first three years of life have the most impact on a child's brain development and future health and wellbeing. For optimum development, a child needs loving relationships and a stimulating environment in which to interact, play and learn.

These early years of parent engagement ensure that children are ready to learn when they reach the Preparatory year and provide vital foundations for successful learning during their school years.

The Catholic sector is seeking a commitment from the next State 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 employ a project officer 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.