

Legislation addresses some concerns for Catholic schools

Queensland Catholic schools are now able to plan for the 2018 school year with more certainty following the passage of the Federal Government's school funding legislation through the Senate early this morning.

Queensland Catholic Education Commission Executive Director Dr Lee-Anne Perry said the focus of the Catholic sector throughout the last seven weeks has been on getting the best possible funding arrangements for all students and school communities.

Dr Perry said while the consultation process with the Catholic sector could have been better managed, the Federal Government had made some last-minute concessions addressing some of the sector's concerns.

"The review of the Socio-Economic Status formula is a very welcome addition to the Government's plans," Dr Perry said.

"This is something David Gonski called for in his original report and the Catholic sector has continued to advocate for this review.

"The SES score is central to how the Government determines the capacity of families to contribute to the cost of educating students in non-government schools and we believe the current model is deeply flawed.

"We still hold concerns that, once the intertwining elements of the new funding package are fully implemented, the affordability of our low-fee Catholic schools may be at risk.

"However, our schools and authorities will be working very hard to ensure the continued affordability and quality of our schools for those seeking a Catholic education for their children," she said.

Dr Perry acknowledged the new model will bring an overall increase in funding to Catholic schools in Queensland, including additional funds to help those schools facing a funding cut so they can transition more smoothly to the new funding arrangements.

"Our concerns about funding for students with disability are also unanswered.

"The new model will base the funding for these students on data which the education sector, and even the Minister, do not believe is reliable at this stage.

"As it stands, students with disability in Catholic schools stand to lose out and we will continue our discussions with the Minister over this and a number of other issues," Dr Perry said.

Dr Perry said the sector also had questions about other aspects of the package.

"We have no detail about how the National School Resourcing Board will work and what its role and functions will ultimately be.

"Now that the legislation has passed we look forward to a productive working relationship with the Federal Government to implement the changes and to resolve our remaining ongoing concerns."

[ENDS]

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