

Non-Government Reform Support Fund Strategic Plan

2019-2023

Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan will support the vision and mission of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC), uphold its values and help to achieve the reform directions in Australia's 2019-2023 National School Reform Agreement and the Bilateral Agreement between Queensland and the Commonwealth on implementation of school education reform.

- **Vision:** Shaping the future through prophetic leadership in Catholic education.
- **Mission:** Service the Catholic Church through Catholic Education in Queensland by leading, collaborating, and advocating for the common good.
- **Values:**
 - Integrity – we value discernment and faithful stewardship of our responsibilities.
 - Justice – we value the dignity of all people and the courage to challenge injustice.
 - Hope – we value a sustained sense of optimism in the future.
 - Collegiality – we value subsidiarity and working together for the common good.
 - Service – we value and seek to model Jesus' servant leadership to our communities.

Under the National School Reform Agreement QCEC will engage in activities aimed at:

- Supporting students, student learning and student achievement.
- Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement.
- Enhancing the national evidence base.

Details of the proposed activities are outlined in the Bilateral Agreement and the associated workplan.

Current context

Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) is the peak strategic body with state-wide responsibilities for Catholic schooling in Queensland. QCEC works with the five diocesan Catholic School Authorities (Brisbane, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, Townsville and Cairns) and 17 Religious Institutes and other incorporated bodies which operate a total of 313 Catholic schools and educate 150,708 students.

There are 197 primary schools (with 66,142 students), 79 secondary schools (with 48,054 students) and 37 primary-secondary combined schools (with 43,512 students). Sixteen boarding schools offer education to 1,981 boarders. Nearly ninety per cent of schools are co-educational (279 schools) with 19 girls only and 15 boys only schools. There are also a number of flexible learning centres which offer opportunities for young people to re-engage in education in a flexible learning environment.

Queensland Catholic schools range in size from small (<100 students) to large (300+ primary/700+ secondary). More than half of all schools are classified as large schools and 13 percent of schools are small schools. Flexible learning centres and remote schools account for the majority of very small schools.

Almost half of the schools are in the major cities along the coast of Queensland. However, there are also a significant number of schools in regional and remote areas. All very remote schools are

small primary schools educating 785 students in total in Queensland.

In 2022, 5.4 percent of all students in Queensland Catholic schools identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, with the highest concentration in remote and very remote schools. English is not the first language for 8 percent of students who attend remote and very remote schools.

For 4.5 percent of students in 2022 English was not their first language, with 73.7 percent of those students attending schools in the Brisbane Archdiocese which spans most of South East Queensland.

In regard to students requiring learning support, 17.8 percent of all Queensland Catholic students have been identified as having a disability under the NCCD criteria, which includes students who receive adjustments for Cognitive, Physical, Sensory and Social-Emotional impairments.

Schools are best placed to respond to the needs of their students and school communities within their individual school settings. The proposed activities will assist schools to advance the priorities identified in the national and bilateral school reform agreements by focussing on student learning and achievement, school leadership and school improvement and contributing to national data sets to inform policy development.

QCEC will continue to report progress and outcomes achieved through the usual reporting cycle to government, such as the QCEC annual report.

National Policy Initiatives

The National School Reform Agreement identifies three reform directions as follows:

- Supporting students, student learning and student achievement.
- Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement.
- Enhancing the national evidence base.

The reform directions will be progressed nationally through national policy initiatives that:

- recognise and build on existing national, State and Territory and sectoral reform activities that are proven to be lifting outcomes for students.
- have a robust and evidence-based rationale for how national policy initiatives will directly or indirectly improve outcomes through national coordinated effort.
- concentrate reform efforts on the key enablers that drive improvement in educational outcomes.
- take into account jurisdictional and sectoral context and allow for jurisdictional and sectoral flexibility in implementation of national policy initiatives, including in resource allocation.

The national policy initiatives that support the three reform directions include:

- Supporting students, student learning and student achievement.
 - Enhancing the Australian Curriculum to support teacher assessment of student attainment and growth against clear descriptors.
 - Assisting teachers monitor individual student progress and identify student learning needs through opt-in online and on demand student learning assessment tools with links to student learning resources, prioritising early years foundation skills.

- Reviewing senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training.
- Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement.
 - Reviewing teacher workforce needs of the future to attract and retain the best and brightest to the teaching profession and attract teachers to areas of need.
 - Strengthening the initial teacher education accreditation system.
- Enhancing the national evidence base.
 - Implementing a national unique student identifier (USI) that meets national privacy requirements in order to support better understanding of student progression and improve the national evidence base.
 - Establishing an independent national evidence institute to inform teacher practice, system improvement and policy development.
 - Improving national data quality, consistency and collection to improve the national evidence base and inform policy development.

State-based Reforms

The bilateral agreement between Queensland and the Commonwealth on implementation of school education reform sets out state-specific actions in line with Queensland's education priorities across government and non-government sectors.

The state specific actions aim to build on Queensland's existing successful education reform agenda by:

- continuing the state's longstanding improvement trajectory, adopting a 'sharp and narrow' focus on actions that have the greatest impact across the system.
- adopting strength-based narratives, discourses and programs.
- pursuing learning gain alongside social and emotional well-being for students and teachers.
- enabling schools to lead their own improvement journey– with strong regional and system support and within frameworks for quality assurance.
- continuing a focus on building an evidence base and using it to determine next steps at the micro and macro levels.
- engaging with stakeholders to co-design strategies so they have the support of those who will implement and be affected by them.
- maintaining high standards across a range of learning options to ensure students can participate in a rapidly changing economy and society.
- working effectively across schooling sectors to improve student learning outcomes.

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission is committed to delivering the following actions across the life of the agreement (2019-2023):

- **Reform Direction A– Support students and student learning**
 - Literacy and numeracy in the early years – review and extend early years screening tools in Queensland Catholic schools.
 - Senior assessment and tertiary entrance reform – implement Queensland's new senior assessment and tertiary entrance system.
 - Indigenous education – expand the Transition Support Service for Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander students transitioning to and from boarding schools.

- **Reform Direction B– Support teaching, school leadership and school improvement**
 - Governance and finance – support school leadership and school improvement through initiatives aimed at enhancing school governance and financial management.
 - School leadership – support school leadership and school improvement through initiatives aimed at enhancing strategic leadership for existing and aspiring school leaders and for school boards.
 - School improvement – enhance school improvement processes and planning with Catholic schools
 - Highly accomplished and lead teachers – recognise the explicit value of teaching experience and proven ability in the classroom by rewarding highly accomplished and lead teachers
 - Rural and remote wellbeing – facilitate support to school communities in rural and remote areas to enhance student wellbeing.
 - Parent, community and industry engagement – provide professional learning opportunities and resources to enhance parent, community and industry engagement with Catholic schools.
- **Reform Direction C– Enhancing the national evidence base**
 - Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on Students with Disability – conduct moderation of Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on Students with Disability across Queensland schooling sectors.
 - Data literacy and development– develop strategies to enhance data literacy among Catholic school leaders and teachers, support development of data tools and frameworks to inform planning and development of education policy and practices in Catholic schools, and support roll out of NAPLAN Online to Catholic schools.

Many actions will commence in 2019 and will continue across the life of the agreement.

Several actions in the state Bilateral Agreement are cross-sector actions and QCEC will work closely with the Queensland Government and Independent Schools Queensland in implementing these actions. These include:

- Senior assessment and tertiary entrance reform.
- Transition support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boarding students. Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers.
- Nationally Consistent Collections of Data on Students with Disability.

QCEC strategic objectives and activities

QCEC’s strategic objectives are guided by the national and the bilateral agreements signed in December 2018 and include:

- Improving student outcomes.
- Increasing teacher effectiveness.
- Supporting school leaders.
- Enhancing the school environment for students, teachers, parents and the community.

Workplans developed for each year of the NGRSF outline QCEC's proposed activities to promote these objectives, and corresponding annual reports provide an overview of the impacts of programs the progress the Queensland Catholic sector has made toward the objectives to date.

Structure of NGRSF Governance in the Queensland Catholic sector

In 2019 the QCEC, as the Non-Government Reform Body for the Queensland Catholic sector, agreed for Catholic School Authorities (CSAs) to design and implement localised activities to support the strategic directives to compliment the centrally-hosted programs run by QCEC. While previously all reform activities had been centrally managed by QCEC, from 2020 QCEC retained a portion of NGRSF funding to support centralised activities and the remaining funds were allocated to CSAs according to their number of student enrolments. From 2020, CSAs are responsible for the design, execution of and reporting on reform activities supported by their allocation of NGRSF.

Measurement and evaluation

Each QCEC action set out in the bilateral agreement will be fully scoped and require progress reporting as detailed in the individual project plans. Progress reports will be used to assess whether strategic objectives are on track to be met and where necessary corrective actions put in place to ensure alignment with the national agreement's performance framework.

Evaluation methodologies to determine project success will be tailored to each project but will include:

- Measuring participation and access to resources.
- Direct feedback from participants for each program or resource.
- Timed reviews of resource use and application of acquired knowledge.
- Projects audits.

Specific evaluation methodologies are provided in annual workplans to be agreed with government.