CATHOLIC EDUCATION ASKS FOR A FAIR DEAL, NOT A SPECIAL DEAL

Catholic Education Tasmania is asking for a fair deal, not a special deal in the wake of the Turnbull government's schools funding announcement.

The federal government claims Gonski 2.0 will see a funding increase across all three education sectors in Tasmania. By the government's own figures, on average over the next 10 years funding to government schools will increase by 5.4%, in Private Independent schools by 4.2% and in Catholic schools by 3.7%.

"We applaud the government for increasing school spending and for focusing resources on the neediest schools," said Director of Catholic Education Tasmania, John Mula.

"However, when compared to government and independent schools, why are the parents and families who choose a Catholic education for their children being targeted for adverse national funding support? Your typical Tasmanian Catholic schools fulfil a similar role to their neighbouring state schools and deserve similar support."

Mr Mula said Tasmanian Catholic schools already do a great job with less funding. Tasmanian Catholic schools operate at only at 92.5% of Tasmanian government schools income per student when all three sources of funding federal, state funding and parents' schools fees are added together.

"In addition to the current funding difference that already exists between education systems in Tasmania, the federal government is proposing a radical change moving away from a 'system funding' approach, to a funding distribution model based on locally assessed need."

Mr Mula said more than 50% of our 16,000 Catholic school enrolments are in the lowest two Social Educational Advantage (SEA) quartiles. The Tasmanian Catholic system average Social Economic Status (SES) is 95, the highest is 107 and the lowest 80; comparatively, the lowest of all Catholic systems in Australia.

"Our schools being part of a system using a 'System Weighted Average' allows Catholic education in Tasmania to provide an education for children from over 11,000 Catholic and other families from many different circumstances. The System Weighted Average allows our schools to be 'low fees' schools with the ability to accommodate many families in financial need.

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"The Federal government's own figures indicate some schools and colleges in Tasmania will have significant reductions in funding from 2017 to 2018 when they change to locally assessed need funding, and Catholic Education in Tasmania is expected to cover any funding shortfall."

Mr Mula said what is also apparent is the government's new "capacity to pay formula" has the potential to force up school fees in a number of other Tasmanian Catholic schools and colleges. Modelling in other states has found the same.

"It is also disappointing the Federal government has chosen to launch its new "School Funding Estimator" for all schools; government, independent and Catholic. Catholic, government and independent systems are empowered to redistribute funding to schools and students who need it most. The publication of school-by-school data of the kind the Commonwealth has published will not accurately reflect for families or principals the funding their schools will actually receive," Mr Mula said.

"This new "School Funding Estimator" website has essentially by-passed long standing system funding arrangements and will pit school communities against each other as they consider how their school will be funded in 2018 or in 2027. It has the potential to mislead and confuse parents and taxpayers in relation to actual funding levels for all Australian schools. That is especially true because only Commonwealth funding is included in the figures presented. It does not include other important sources of funding for schools that make up their total funding levels," Mr Mula said.

Catholic Education Tasmania is Tasmania's largest non-government provider of education, serving 16,000 students and their families via 38 schools and colleges.   **ENDS.**