

in reply please quote:

GE08/0071

31 May 2017

Dear School Board Chair

The federal Minister for Education, Simon Birmingham, has recently written to every Catholic School Board Chair in Australia.

In the letter sent to you, the Minister has provided the Turnbull Government's estimated funding information for your school.

I am writing to inform you that the information that has been provided to you is not correct.

Currently in Victoria, the federal Government funds all the Catholic schools as if they were one big school, averaging out student funding across the entire Catholic education system. This method of funding schools is known as a system-weighted average, and was recommended by the Gonski Review in 2011.

A central committee, which includes school principals and other local representatives, then allocates this money to schools based on the actual needs of each school. The amount of funding a school receives can vary significantly from any formula derived by bureaucrats in Canberra.

The Catholic education system uses federal government funding to provide many additional programs that are not picked up by the federal Government, including support for small schools, VET and VCAL students, refugee families, language initiatives and professional learning for teachers and leaders.

As a system of schools, we believe that programs like these are important to maximise the potential of every student and to ensure they can achieve their best, irrespective of where they live, or how much their parents may earn.

Our biggest concern for Catholic education is that the changes proposed by the Turnbull Government will expect many Catholic primary school parents to pay more than double the fees they currently pay.

School choice is an important part of the Australian education system. The Turnbull Government does not have the right to decide where you send your child, when we all know that parents are best placed to understand their child's needs.

Your voice will be important in the ongoing public debate on school funding. We will need you to lead your school community in this struggle to ensure our schools are accessible and affordable to Victorian families seeking a quality education for their child.

I have prepared a letter that you might like to use to respond to the Minister, raising the system's concerns about the Government's proposals from your perspective. I believe a response from school community leaders like you may better help the Minister understand Catholic education's position in this funding debate. Your principal will be able to provide you with a copy of this letter.

I look forward to being able to work with you.

Yours sincerely



Stephen Elder
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR