Senator the Hon Simon Birmingham

Minister for Education and Training

PO Box 6100

Senate

Parliament House

CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Minister

As the parent of a child enrolled at <School Name> in Victoria, I am alarmed about the Turnbull Government’s decision to change funding arrangements for Catholic schools.

While I acknowledge the Government’s commitment to increase funding to some Catholic schools in this state, I have concerns about the direction of your new 10-year funding plan.

Parents have chosen to send their child to their local Catholic school in preference to the local government school. The accessibility and affordability of Catholic primary schools make for an attractive alternative when coupled with the values and faith–based education that children receive. My choice of a Catholic education for my family also means that state and federal governments contribute less funding towards the education of my child.

Under the changes being proposed under your funding model, some Catholic school parents will face unreasonable and unrealistic fee expectations for choosing a Catholic education for their children. Parents in Catholic primary schools in particular will be expected to pay fees in excess of $4,000 per student per annum. There is no doubt that if parents are charged these fee levels, many will be compelled to attend the local, and free, government school instead – at a higher cost to taxpayers.

The government must reconsider how it calculates funding under its proposed model. As you are aware, school Socioeconomic Status, or SES, scores – which form the basis of this calculation – are a deeply flawed and discredited measure that needs to be replaced.

Your decision to fund students with disability in schools based on the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on Students With Disability (NCCD) is also of concern. There is significant evidence that the NCCD dataset has serious flaws, and even you have previously claimed the data ‘fails a basic credibility test’. It defies belief that you would fund students with a disability using a dataset that you know is not credible. I urge you to continue using the existing arrangements until this data can be used properly.

School choice is a fundamental right for all parents in Australia. I choose to educate my child in a Catholic school because I believe it’s the right place for my child to grow as a whole person – intellectually, spiritually, physically, morally and emotionally. Yet the changes you are making to the funding model would greatly disadvantage those of us who choose a Catholic education for our family. Please don’t punish my family for that choice.

Yours sincerely

Parent Name

cc. Senator Richard Di Natale, Leader of the Australian Greens