

## National School Resourcing Board must be truly independent

The National School Resourcing Board announced today by Education Minister Simon Birmingham must be truly independent, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) Executive Director Stephen Elder has warned.

‘Senator Birmingham claims his board “will build even greater confidence”,’ Mr Elder said, ‘but there is no compulsion for him to act on its recommendations.

‘Senator Birmingham says the first priority for the Board will be a review of the Socio-Economic Status (SES) score methodology and current arrangements for determining the capacity of non-government school communities to contribute to the operational costs of their schools.

‘He talks about how he is acting on the original Gonski Review.

‘He should remember that over five years ago the Final Gonski Report called on the government not to review SES scores, but to replace them and “as soon as possible trial and implement a new measure for estimating the quantum of the anticipated private contribution for non-government schools.”

‘He should remember Gonski added “The current SES measure is ... subject to a potentially large degree of inaccuracy as the students attending a particular school are not necessarily representative of the socioeconomic averages of the areas in which they live.”

‘If he doesn’t believe SES scores are unfair he can finally look at the detailed paper on the subject we presented to him earlier this year that he chose to ignore when formulating a funding package that short-changes low fee, local Catholic parish schools while benefiting wealthy independent institutions.

‘There are serious questions about whether this review will be truly independent. Senator Birmingham only agreed to look at SES scores as part of his deal-making to push his unfair schools funding package through the parliament before the winter recess and score a short-term political win.

‘And he has already told schools in some electorates that in the main SES scores are a good guide to school communities and that SES scores only have problems at the margins.

‘It seems he has already pre-empted the findings.

‘Senator Birmingham says the Board will then look at the funding loading for students with a disability and the effective use of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability.

‘This is data that the Minister himself “fails a basic credibility test”, but that he has chosen to put at the heart of his new funding arrangements.

‘It is data that comes from assessment by teachers, not medical professionals.

‘It is data that has prompted fears of blows outs of as much as \$400 million plus.

# Media Release



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'It is data that being gamed by some wealthy independent schools, as Federal Education Department figures released under FOI showing disability loadings for Victorian independent schools will almost double from \$63.7 million this year to \$123.3 million in 2018, while the amount for Catholic schools – responsible for almost one in four Victorian school children – will drop from \$164.9 million to \$148.9 million across the same period demonstrates.

'His policy on students with disability contracts his own comments.

'That's why if his National School Resourcing Board is going to have any integrity, if the different schools sectors are going to have any confidence in its recommendations, it needs to be fully independent.

'It needs the power to affect real change, as opposed to the transaction politics games of the Turnbull Coalition Government.'

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