

## Fair funding for schools: you can't kick the can down the road, Simon

Catholic school communities expect clear proof in tomorrow's Budget the Turnbull Government will back down from the high-risk policies that threaten to destroy low-fee schools and parents' right to choose the school that best suits their children's needs, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) Executive Director Stephen Elder says.

'On Friday, on ABC Radio National, Education Minister Simon Birmingham tried to kick the can down the road,' Mr Elder said.

'He refused to commit to fair funding. Instead, he referred to his review of school SES scores, currently the key determinant of non-government school funding.

'In a fudge that would make Sir Humphrey glow with pride, he waffled: "We will be taking a look at this report, its recommendations, and acting upon them when we get them. That'll be in the next couple of months. Now what it says, I can't prejudge, but I know they have been very thorough and rigorous in undertaking modelling".

'With all respect to the Minister, that's bunkum. Policies need to be paid for.

'Once the Treasurer has delivered his speech tomorrow night, Senator Birmingham won't be able to hide.

'The forward estimates will reveal his plans; if he cares about low fee non-government schools and parental choice or not.

'The families of the 766,000 students in the 1,750 Catholic schools in the 151 electorates across the nation will be waiting for an answer.

'Vague talk of raiding hollow logs somewhere down the track for future funding won't cut the mustard as it simply doesn't form a firm foundation for long-term, sustainable policy.

'Tomorrow night we're going to know if the Minister is fair dinkum when he boasts like he did on Friday "we want to give the greatest choice to Australian families in terms of their education."

'Senator Birmingham has already thrown good policy and process to the wind. Is he now really going to throw his House of Representatives colleagues in marginals to the wolves while he enjoys the luxury of a six-year Senate term by not fixing funding?

'The signs so far have been troubling. Senator Birmingham appears to have fixed the SES review. He ignored all feedback on the terms of reference. Once again the Minister seems to think he knows best. It seems he has learnt nothing from the past 12 months.

# Media Release



CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF VICTORIA LTD

‘Worse than that, Senator Birmingham seems to be pushing the SES review toward school funding arrangements that mean that some of the wealthiest independent schools with some of the most lavish facilities can be assessed to “need” the same funding as low-fee Catholic parish primary schools.

‘While this might please the lobby groups for wealthy independent schools, I don’t think many others would agree that this type of approach would be funding “need” or “school choice”.’

‘We believe “school choice” means giving greater funding to schools that commit to being inclusive, affordable and accessible, so that more families can chose them.

‘We believe the Australian public agrees with our definition of “school choice”. We know for a fact that our principals, our teachers, our parents and our parish communities share this belief.

‘And we believed the Federal Coalition did so too, or at least until Senator Birmingham came along.

‘We’ll know the answer tomorrow night – and if he has stuck with his definition of “need” and “school choice” the Minister won’t be able to kick the can down the road any more.

‘The difference between the two major parties will be stark and the Turnbull Government will stand exposed.’

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