

# Media Release



CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF VICTORIA LTD

## **Backgrounder: Catholic Education funding from Menzies to Gonski 2.0 and beyond**

Federal funding for Catholic schools has been bipartisan policy in this nation for half a century.

Malcolm Turnbull and Simon Birmingham have undermined this bipartisanship – and trashed one of their party's founder, Sir Robert Menzies', greatest legacies.

Catholic schools operate from a sense of mission, not to make a profit, and seek to provide a quality, low-fee, open and inclusive values based education to all who want one.

The federal Coalition's funding policies threaten this mission to provide low cost, inclusive non-government schools – undermining another fundamental Liberal Party principal, parental choice in education.

Their new arrangements have already cut the amount of funding attracted by over 600 Catholic schools nationally and some 180 here in Victoria between this year and 2017 and threatened to make low-fee, inclusive, non-government schools unviable in many parts of Australia.

To rub further salt in the wounds, the Turnbull/Birmingham plan overtly discriminates Catholic schools that have had their funding cut. These schools only receive six years to adjust while independent schools are given a decade. This discrimination, which was teased out by Catholic education, rather than revealed the government, and only after the Gonski legislation was passed – will cost Catholic systems over \$1 billion between now and 2027.

Secret Education Department modelling leaked during the Gonski legislation debate last year showed the Turnbull/Birmingham package will leave Catholic schools \$4.6 billion worse off over a decade.

In contrast, with his letter this week Bill Shorten has re-committed to ensuring the type of education parents chose for their children is supported by government and acknowledged the importance of the future survival of low-fee, inclusive non-government school systems in Australia.

Labor has recognised that Catholic education has legitimate concerns over the fairness of current funding arrangements with Mr Shorten's statements that his party is 'concerned about the impact of the existing SES score methodology on Catholic parish primary schools' and that Labor supports 'the Catholic education sector in advocating for alternative arrangements to better support these schools.'

The Opposition Leader's further remark 'in government, we will implement changes to the role of "capacity to contribute" in school funding, including the SES scoring methodology' – along with his pledge to work with Catholic education 'to respond to the findings of the SES review currently underway' – again acknowledges our deep concerns about both the policy and process followed by Mr Turnbull and Senator Birmingham.