

Enough of the hypocrisy and ignorance on school funding

Ross Gittins' Fairfax Media comment piece today is yet another example of the hypocritical and ignorant attacks being made by public education advocates on funding for Catholic schools, according to Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) Executive Director Stephen Elder – attacks that should not be allowed to stand.

'Mr Gittins claims that the significant improvements to non-government school funding announced by the Morrison Government are somehow a "special deal" that is the sole preserve of the Catholic sector', Mr Elder said.

'He then attempts to conflate funding for Catholic schools with increasing levels of segregation in schooling in Australia and asserts that New Zealand funds schools "on the basis of religion, not need".

'Unfortunately – as so often happens in Fairfax Media reporting on school funding – the facts simply do not match what is on the page.

'Firstly, the funding arrangements announced by the Morrison Government are an acknowledgment that the earlier model was fundamentally flawed, as the independent Chaney review found back in July and our own research long-showed.

'As an economist, Mr Gittins deals in data. Surely he wants public policy – and public spending – informed by the best possible metrics available.

'The previous funding model used a faulty measure of need and failed to deliver government objectives on school choice for non-government schools.

'It defies belief that fixing these flaws can be described as a "special deal".

'Secondly, Mr Gittins appears obsessed with the Catholic sector, another regrettable characteristic of Fairfax Media.

'The Morrison Government's arrangements do not preference Catholic schools over any other religious schools.

'They simply give parents the liberty to exercise their right to choose a low-fee religious school of any denomination – Islamic, Jewish, Catholic, Lutheran or other – for their children, a right that Catholic education will always fight for.

'Thirdly, it is hypocritical for Mr Gittins to complain about funding for Catholic schools while linking this to segregation in schooling in Australia.

Media Release



CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF VICTORIA LTD

'He can't have it both ways. Government funding to Catholic schools keeps fees low and our schools accessible to low-income families.

'It is not Catholic schools that have driven segregation in schooling in Australia. In many suburbs there is little difference in the socioeconomic profile of Catholic primary schools and government primary schools.

'School fees are a major cause of segregation, and they are much higher in elite independent schools than most Catholic schools.

'Fourthly, Mr Gittins simply does not appear to understand school funding arrangements in New Zealand. New Zealand, like many other countries around the world, gives families the choice of a low-fee, religious non-government school.

'Catholic schools in New Zealand are fully publicly funded, on the condition that they maintain low fees. This is very similar to arrangements in Australia.

'That's precisely why the hypocrisy and ignorance on display today deserve to be corrected.'

Further information: Christian Kerr, Media Adviser, 0402 977 352