

## **CECV vindicated as truth on school funding ‘special deals’ is finally exposed**

Today’s release of the National School Resourcing Board review of SES scores vindicates the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria’s opposition to the Turnbull Government’s school funding policies, and its defence of low fee schools, Executive Director Stephen Elder says.

‘Today, it has become clear that Education Minister Simon Birmingham has been told by the NSRB that SES scores, the main driver of funding for non-government schools under his policies, are fundamentally flawed. This confirms what we have said for 17 months: the Turnbull Government’s school funding model is not just unjust, but a failure,’ Mr Elder said.

‘This comes after one of the worst public policy processes in recent memory.

‘In 2017, instead of engaging in meaningful consultation with stakeholders and examining the detailed research from the CECV about SES scores – research endorsed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Minister’s own department – Senator Birmingham accused the Catholic sector of ‘pleading for a special deal’. His predecessor as education minister, Christopher Pyne, called Catholic education “dishonest”.

Senator Birmingham chose to ignore the recommendation of the original Gonski review panel more than six years ago that SES scores need to be replaced with a better, fairer model.

‘When they launched their Gonski 2.0 package last May, Mr Turnbull and Senator Birmingham promised an end to school funding ‘special deals’. The Minister is still boasting about it today.

‘But this report reveals the truth; one that the Catholic sector has known for several years and the CECV has already proven with several research papers: school SES scores are a massive special deal for wealthy independent schools’.

‘We’ve fought for fair – and efficient – use of taxpayer funds.

‘We’ve argued for a system that ends the Turnbull Government’s sweetheart deal with the wealthiest independent schools and instead delivers gains to the schools that need support the most – low fee Christian, Lutheran, Jewish and Islamic schools, not just schools in Catholic systems.

‘We have been the only ones genuinely fighting to preserve the rights of parents to choose the education they believe is best for their children, not paying lip-service to the idea while pricing it out of reach.

‘Now the hard work needs to begin on developing a fair funding model that better meets the needs of all non-government schools. A funding model that supports school choice and diversity – just like the Government has said it wants.

# Media Release



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‘This work needs to begin now. There is no time to waste. Senator Birmingham has already wasted over a year.

‘And those calling for a delay in moving to a better measure for funding should be called out for attempting to perpetuate a special deal for wealthy schools that comes at the expense of low-fee schools.

‘Low fee independent schools in particular should know the truth: any delay in moving to a new measure will simply benefit wealthy independent schools at their expense.

‘We note with concern that, despite the NSRB telling the Minister that SES scores are a special deal for wealthy independent schools, they are also recommending rolling over these arrangements for another 12 months. This is not acceptable – and will just delay the transition to fairer funding.

‘Even more worryingly, we note the utter absence of any estimates of funding impacts from Senator Birmingham’s release today.

‘It looks like the Minister is trying to kick the can down the road past the next election – to try and avoid being held accountable for a bungled school funding policy.

‘This won’t wash. Parents who send their children to low fee schools should demand action now.

‘We welcome the commitment of the Minister to consult with Catholic education before moving to a new model. It looks as though the Minister has finally recognised the importance of consultation.

“We are particularly keen to discuss some key concerns about the NSRB report.

‘Part of this relates to the Terms of Reference that were given to the NSRB. These were too narrow; a product of a sham consultation process in which Senator Birmingham ignored all stakeholder input.

‘The simple fact is that this report should have taken a broader look at the notion of “capacity to contribute” – not just at how it should be measured.

‘We will have more to say about the shortcomings and deficiencies of the NSRB report after we examine it in more detail.

‘For now, however, we expect action from the Turnbull Government – if only to save them from further embarrassment.’

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