

Catholic sector welcomes budget commitment to education

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) has welcomed the Victorian Government's focus on education in the State Budget announced today.

CECV Executive Director Jim Miles said Catholic schools educate more than 211,000 or 20% of all Victorian students in nearly 500 primary and secondary schools across the dioceses of Melbourne, Ballarat, Sale and Sandhurst.

'The Catholic sector welcomes the government's \$1.6 billion commitment over four years to improve support for students with special needs, and welcomes the allocation of this funding that will flow through to Catholic schools as partners in educating these students.

'We also welcome the confirmation of fast-tracked capital grants for school building projects. The CECV will deliver 42 school building projects valued at over \$185 million in 2021, including fast-tracking around \$35 million in projects to help support Victoria's economic recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and recent bushfires.

'Catholic school communities will need to invest an estimated \$2.4 billion into capital works to meet student demand over the next decade. Meeting this demand will take pressure off government services and government schools, and we will be looking to the state government to play its part in helping our sector meet this community need.

'It should be noted that additional capital funding for Catholic schools saves taxpayers tens of millions of dollars each year because our school and parish communities also contribute significantly to these projects', Mr Miles said.

Mr Miles said Catholic schools would also benefit from the additional funding for schools to employ tutors to support students to get up to speed after long periods of remote learning in 2020, which was confirmed today.

'This program is anticipated to deliver around \$23 million to eligible Catholic schools to assist identified students, primarily through small group tutoring opportunities. Our teachers are already working to monitor and assess students and put in place extra support for those who may have fallen behind. This funding will provide further resources from Term 1 next year to support our teachers and build on this vital work in 2021.'

Mr Miles said the Catholic sector noted the state government's intention to merge the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) with the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE).

'The Catholic sector has been awaiting the outcome of the review of VCAL. We welcome the opportunity to explore the review's recommendations and the expected benefit for our students as a result of the changes', he said.

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