

## Statement regarding the Hon James Merlino

*Attributable to Jim Miles, Executive Director, Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd:*

On behalf of the Victorian Catholic education sector and community, I would like to pay tribute and sincerely thank Deputy Premier James Merlino for his long-standing service to Victoria.

Most notably, his significant contribution as Minister for Education has seen James work tirelessly to ensure Catholic education is a key partner in the government's commitment to transform Victoria into the Education State.

The first piece of legislation James introduced to parliament, and subsequently passed with bipartisan support, related to ongoing recurrent funding arrangements for Catholic schools. This has meant fees have remained affordable for Catholic families and our schools have ongoing certainty to plan for the future.

Since then, James has led significant reforms in how the non-government sectors interact with government. The establishment of the School Policy and Funding Advisory Council was an important step in ensuring great collaboration across the sectors, and improved learning outcomes for all Victorian students.

We also greatly value his support for capital investment in non-government schools, which has meant growing communities in areas such as Armstrong Creek, Mernda, Sunbury, Lucas, Huntly and Clyde can exist in one way, shape or form – again thanks to the funding support from the Andrews Labor Government.

Most recently, we commenced fruitful discussions with James about the Andrews Government's ongoing support for Catholic education across Victoria.

There are many commitments we are seeking, as together we work towards a world-class education sector. This includes further and much-needed capital funding support, expansion of dental support services for low-fee schools, and opportunities to share and grow kindergarten provision in Catholic schools.

We look forward to continuing these conversations with Natalie Hutchins, as she becomes the coordinating minister responsible for education, and warmly welcome her appointment.

Finally, all of us in the growing Catholic education sector have the utmost respect for James and are grateful for his tenure as Education Minister. He leaves a long-lasting and meaningful legacy. We wish him, Meagan and their three children, every good wish now and into the future.