The release of the Gonski Review into Funding for Schooling on 20th February represents the first step in the Australian Government’s plan to introduce a new funding system for all Australian schools from 2014.

There is no doubt that the review is significant and comprehensive, but it provides only a theoretical framework for a new funding model—key questions remain unanswered.

Substantial analysis needs to be done to test the model and recommendations before a sound assessment can be made of what this means for our schools.

The government has announced a consultation phase, including analysis and testing of the proposed model, to commence immediately. This work will be used to help define a concrete funding model.

The government also acknowledged in their response to the review that families face financial pressures and do not wish to see school fees rise beyond their reach.

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) will be working hard during the consultation phase to ensure we do not end up with a model that has the potential to put pressure on school fees.

School funding reform of the magnitude suggested by the Gonski review cannot occur without adequate funding.

The NCEC strongly backs the review’s call for an additional $5 billion in funding for all schools—this represents less than one half of 1% of Australia’s gross domestic product (GDP)—and has called on governments to commit to increased funding sooner rather than later.

There’s a lot of work to be done over the coming months. The NCEC will be actively working for the interests of our school communities and will keep communities updated throughout the consultation phase.

Further information:
- A full copy of the Gonski Report can be accessed from the Your School Our Future website www.schoolfunding.gov.au
- We also invite you to visit www.fundinginfo.catholic.edu.au
1. **What is the Government’s Review of Funding for Schooling?**

The Funding Review was required to examine all funding for all schools — Catholic, government and independent — and to recommend a funding system for all schools from 2014.

Catholic schools are on average the least resourced of all schools. Even after parent contributions are taken into account, our schools operate with 10% less recurrent funding than government schools.

The final report of the Gonski review team was presented to the Government in late 2011 and released on 20 February 2012.

2. **What does the Funding Review mean for Catholic schools? What will the impacts be?**

The final report of the Gonski Panel on *The Review of Funding for Schooling* provides a theoretical framework. It’s too soon to provide a comprehensive analysis of what its recommendations mean for Catholic schools. There are key questions that remain unanswered. Substantial analysis needs to be done to test the proposed funding model.

The Government has announced a consultation phase, including analysis and testing of the model, to commence immediately.

In its response to the report, the Government recognises that families face financial pressures and do not wish to see school fees rise beyond their reach.

NCEC will be working hard during the consultation phase to ensure we do not end up with a model that has the potential to put pressure on school fees for parents in Catholic schools.

NCEC strongly backs the Gonski Panel’s call for an additional $5 billion in funding for all schools. This represents less than one half of 1% of Australia’s gross domestic product (GDP).

3. **Does the Catholic sector support the proposed new funding arrangements?**

The Gonski report provides a theoretical framework and it is too soon to know the full impact of the proposed funding arrangements.

There are key questions that remain unanswered. Substantial analysis needs to be done to test the model and the report’s recommendations.

4. **Why can’t school funding be indexed to CPI?**

Education is like health. Over time, school education costs rise twice as fast as CPI. Teacher salaries in both the government and Catholic school sectors are just one of the school education costs which must be taken into account in annual funding increases. Teacher salaries are agreed in advance. They rise by around 4% annually. CPI is around 3%.

Government funding to Catholic schools must be maintained in real terms. NCEC cannot support a funding model which does not include annual indexation that reflects the actual costs of school education.
Both the NSW and Victorian governments support the Catholic position. Funding for schooling must be increased each year to reflect actual school costs.

Quality improvement in all Australian schools is an expectation of governments, parents and the community. Quality improvements include school staffing profiles and salaries, specialist and support staff, and information technology with its continual innovations, maintenance and upgrading.

5. Are Catholic schools “overfunded”?

Under the current arrangements, Australian Government recurrent funding to about half of all Catholic schools is “maintained” at 2004 base levels, plus cost increases.

NCEC is concerned that the Gonski model preserves and improves the current base line funding for Catholic systems.

NCEC will be working with the Government in the next phase of the funding review and contributing to the analysis of the Gonski report’s recommendations to understand fully its impact for Catholic schools.

Australian Government funding for most Catholic schools (96%) is block funded. This means that the funds go to State/Territory Catholic Education Commissions and are then distributed to schools on the basis of need assessed at the local level.

The Catholic school sector is committed to block funding arrangements.

Catholic systems promote equity and accountability, and productive levels of school autonomy.

6. How much funding does the government currently give to non-government schools?

Catholic schools operate on average with about $10,000 per student, of which $7,700 comes from government funding. Parents contribute $2,300 per student as well as an average of $900 per student each year to help pay off school building loans.

Government schools operate on average with about $11,000 per student from government funding and about $540 from parent contributions.

7. Will school fees go up?

Catholic schools are committed to accessibility and affordability. Catholic schools need government funding support to keep fees at a reasonable level.

NCEC will work hard to make sure that the Gonski model does not put pressure on school fees.

We need your help to persuade the government of the day to maintain its current funding commitment to Catholic schools in step with the actual costs of running government schools. This will help keep school fees at a reasonable level.

8. What role should government play in supporting Catholic schools?

Catholic schooling is a partnership between schools, parents and the state/territory and Australian Governments. This partnership is crucial for effective and affordable Catholic schooling.
Australian Government funding support for Catholic schools is bipartisan. It has long been recognised by successive Australian Governments that Catholic schools deliver value for the taxpayer’s dollar and help build a better educated and fairer Australian community.

9. **Does the new funding model recognise the need to support students in the equity groups (students from low SES backgrounds, students with disabilities, Indigenous and students in regional and remote areas)?**

Yes.

10. **Is there more funding for students with disabilities?**

NCEC anticipates that the Gonski model would result in more funding for students with disabilities.

NCEC will be contributing to the analysis of the Gonski report’s recommendations to understand fully its impact for all students in Catholic schools.

Students with disabilities require equal funding, wherever they are enrolled.

11. **Does the NCEC support the proposed Schooling Resource Standard (SRS)?**

While the NCEC supports in principle the concept of a schooling resource standard, a lot depends on the modelling of the actual outcomes of the model.

NCEC will be participating in consultations and undertaking further analysis of the impact of the Gonski SRS for Catholic schools.

12. **Where to from here? What do the next steps involve?**

The Government has announced a consultation process with key representatives of the school education sectors to look more closely at the implications of the Gonski model.

The model must be tested and actual outcomes analysed before any final decisions are made on future school funding.

NCEC is looking forward to being a keen participant in this exercise.