REPORT FOR ASSOCIATION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
12 November 2015

1. BoSTES and the Higher School Certificate

- The Board of Studies, Teaching and Education Standards (BoSTES) has begun a series of consultations on the HSC. These have been initiated to coincide with the separate consultation processes on draft syllabuses in Stage 6 English, History, Mathematics and Science. The new syllabuses will include content from the courses on the Australian Curriculum developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

- Mr Tom Alegounarias, President of BoSTES, addressed the Catholic Secondary Schools Association on Monday 9 November. Mr Alegounarias invited comments on the following issues:
  - Concerns about depth and the amount of content in syllabuses;
  - The degree to which options in syllabuses are sustainable;
  - Difficulties in encouraging high level performance in candidates;
  - Predictability in HSC assessment tasks;
  - The feasibility of using more assessment based on project work, including group work;
  - The possibility of extension courses in science;
  - Structures to encourage greater integration of knowledge across domains;
  - Student stress and the number and timing of internal assessments;
  - The degree to which there should be minimum achievement in literacy and numeracy before students can begin the HSC course of studies.

2. Student Opal Travel Card

- For the past 12 months, CECNSW has been consulted by Transport for NSW on the use of the Opal Card for school student transport. The key concerns for CECNSW have been preserving the current entitlements under the School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) and reducing to the minimum the administrative burden to schools. A trial of the new card is currently underway.

- On 29 October, the Minister for Transport and Infrastructure, Andrew Constance, announced that students whose travel includes areas covered by the Opal card will be able to apply for a “School Opal Card”. However students who travel in areas not covered by the Opal Card will continue to use the current cardboard passes.

- Applications for the new cards opened on 2 November. Initially applications will need to be printed and verified by schools. Once a pass has been issued, annual renewals will be automatic unless a student changes schools. Detailed information will be provided to schools shortly.
3. Countering Violent Extremism at School

- The Memorandum of Understanding for Information Exchange between Schools and NSW Police 2011 includes a requirement to contact police in the case of concerns that a criminal act may be about to be committed, which would impact on the safety of a school’s students and/or staff. Incitement to such acts is addressed by both the NSW Crimes Act and the Commonwealth Crimes Act. Part 5A of the NSW Education Act 1990 enshrines the legal obligations of schools to undertake measures to promote the safety of students and staff.

- In response to NSW government concerns, arising from an incident in a government school on 30 July, CECNSW wrote to metropolitan dioceses, attaching the advice to Principals from the Department of Education (DoE) and the NSW Police Force. Recently (prior to the murder of a civilian employee of NSW Police), CECNSW, the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AIS) and DoE signed a protocol to have all concerns regarding students about whom concerns are held because of extremist views/behaviours, addressed through a common, cross-sectoral process. The implementation of that protocol was dependent upon the broader NSW strategy to counter violent extremism.

- On 21 October 2015 the Premier announced a range of measures to support all schools including:
  
  o Establish up to five Specialist School Support Teams of psychologists and student support workers to work pre-emptively as potential threats are identified and to deal with incidents that have occurred. This measure is available to all schools.
  
  o Develop additional resources for teachers and parents to ensure they are able to identify and manage violent extremist behaviour by students, including in prayer groups (all schools).
  
  o Enhance the case management framework for supporting students identified as being at risk of radicalisation. This will be tailored support for young people who are identified being at risk of violent extremism or already engaged in extremism, and their families (all schools).
  
  o Establish a telephone hotline to securely report to the DoE any suspected radicalised behaviour by students (all schools).

- Regarding the last measure, this refers to the implementation of the protocol, referred to above, to have all concerns regarding students about whom concerns are held because of extremist views/behaviours, addressed through a common, cross-sectoral process. Following a meeting between officers from the DoE, AIS and CECNSW, the process to set up the phone hotline for non-government schools has begun.

4. NAPLAN Online: Update

- Transition to NAPLAN online will commence across Australia from 2017 with voluntary take-up by jurisdictions and/or schools. Full uptake by schools must be in place no later than 2019. The NSW Minister has not yet committed to an opt-in date; however, 2018 is the planning date.

- The NSW NAPLAN Online work group meets regularly. It includes representation from the three school sectors, BOSTES (the NSW NAPLAN Test Administration Authority) and CEnet.

- Whilst the first NAPLAN online test will be delivered in May 2017, national user acceptance testing of the platform will commence in April 2016 and will be available to schools in July 2016.
The test window for online testing will be two weeks (10 days) in May with the Monday of the first week being dedicated to preparation.

On 9 November, ACARA released an update on the technical requirements for NAPLAN online. The updated requirements are available at: http://www.nap.edu.au/verve/_resources/NAPLAN_online_technical_requirements_updated_October_2015.pdf

Current NAPLAN Online issues include (i) the impact of BYO/unmanaged devices, and (ii) implementation costs for the Catholic sector. With regard to the former, the diversity of devices in use across Catholic schools creates a complex environment for online testing.

5. Brother John Taylor Fellowship 2015

- Brother John Taylor was Executive Director of CECNSW from 1984 until his death in 1993. He had a key role in the development, organisation and management of Australian Catholic schools across three decades. The Brother John Taylor Award for Excellence in Catholic Education was an annual award and has been in place since 1995. In 2012, the Commission decided to introduce the Brother John Taylor Fellowship in 2013.
- The Fellowship is offered each year to one applicant who has demonstrated a capacity for research and effectiveness as a teacher in Catholic schools and who can contribute significantly in the future. The initial Fellowship was awarded to Mr Mark Gronow in 2014. The Fellowship for 2015 was presented on 10 November 2015 to Miss Zeina Chalich, St Finbar’s Primary School, Sans Souci, by the Chairman, Bishop Comensoli. Zeina will be focusing on research on the links between digital technologies and creativity.

6. Australian Government Online Safety Program

- The Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner has invited applications from prospective online safety program providers. Information about the scheme, along with the application form and accompanying Voluntary Certification Guidelines can be viewed and downloaded from the website at: www.esafety.gov.au/certification.
- Commonwealth and state governments are still in negotiations regarding the structure of this program. It is anticipated that significant developments before 2016 are unlikely.

7. Child Protection Education Program

- The NSW Government has undertaken to further strengthen existing child protection education measures in NSW schools by providing $4 million over 4 years to deliver a specialised program to children and young people. Representatives from CECNSW and the Association of Independent Schools have been invited to be part of an Advisory Group to oversee the project.
- Education authorities will be responsible for achieving minimum performance targets, formulating criteria to identify less resourced schools and/or schools with identified online safety issues in their respective jurisdictions, and selecting the schools that will participate in this project in accordance with the minimum performance targets.
- Funds will be delivered to the NSW Catholic sector through a project agreement between the Australian and NSW governments. It is expected that a NSW Steering Committee will be formed to coordinate state-wide implementation and reporting. The program funds will be focused on assisting a small number of schools each year.
• Invitations to quote for the research component of the project have been issued with the successful tender to be determined by the Advisory Group at its next meeting on 20 November.

8. Domestic Violence Toolkit for Use in Stages 4 and 5 PDHPE

• On 7 August 2015, BOSTES released an Official Notice outlining the amendments to the Years 7-10 PDHPE Syllabus to include Domestic and Family Violence education. The amendments become effective at the start of 2016. Whilst the syllabus has always provided the opportunity for students to learn about domestic violence, the amended content enables the issue to be taught more explicitly to ensure it is addressed appropriately.

• CECNSW has collaborated with BoSTES and other partners in developing a support document or toolkit containing a suite of activities to assist in the delivery of domestic violence education in Stages 4 and 5 PDHPE classes. The Toolkit was published on the BoSTES website on 9 November 2015.