



# Media Release

## Catholic schools address literacy & numeracy - from Kindergarten

Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) today in principle backed a Federal Government initiative aimed at identifying students in need of additional literacy and numeracy support, but warned against a one-size-fits-all approach.

"Catholic schools already screen students from Kindergarten to identify those in need of extra support," CECNSW acting executive director Ian Baker said.

"Diocesan school authorities have developed and refined their own checks and processes over decades based on past performances. We therefore do not believe there is a void in the current methods of assessing student literacy and numeracy in the early years of schooling."

Mr Baker said Catholic education supported efforts to help teachers identify and lift student ability in this area from an early age.

"Basic literacy and numeracy skills are vital to the future development of every student.

"However, we need to ensure that we do not detract from the success of current approaches in order to have a national standardised methodology for all students in all schools from Year 1.

"The screening assessments proposed by the Government reportedly involve a mandated, one-size-fits-all online platform for scoring student results, which is a major concern.

"However, we note the commitment by Education Minister Simon Birmingham that these results would not be reported or disseminated."

Mr Baker said the report to the Minister by an expert panel did not detail the full range of current practice in NSW Catholic schools with regard to identifying students who require support.

He said screening for literacy and numeracy at Catholic schools was carried out in accordance with the NSW syllabuses from K-6.

"The report claims many Catholic schools do not have a strong phonics component as part of their literacy and numeracy checks. This is incorrect.

"Phonics is a clear element of the reading strand of the NSW English K-6 syllabus, which is addressed in NSW Catholic primary schools."

In its submission to the expert panel, CECNSW supported one-on-one 'soft checks' for students and promoted a renewed emphasis on the explicit teaching of reading for K-3 teachers in both pre-service and in-service programs.

It also said the needs of schools where Aboriginal English was spoken needed to be addressed in the design of any assessment for Year 1.

CECNSW represents the state's 591 Catholic schools, which educate some 258,000 students and employ 27,000 teaching and support staff.

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