
Catholic education welcomes review into impacts on regional, rural and remote schools

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) welcomes the Federal Government's announcement today of a review by the National School Resourcing Board (NSRB) into funding impacts on school communities in regional Australia.

The terms of the reference will be tabled at the next Education Council meeting, however, the government has committed to a "robust review" to commence in June this year, examining the Schooling Resourcing Standard (SRS) loadings as they impact students and schools in regional Australia.

National Catholic education executive director Jacinta Collins hopes the review will take into account the diverse challenges of schools in regional, rural and remote communities.

"Nearly 40 per cent of Australia's 1,746 Catholic schools are outside of metropolitan areas," Ms Collins said. "However, the diversity between these schools is vast."

"For example, of the 13 Catholic schools in the Kimberley region of Western Australia, five are in the town centres of Broome, Derby, Wyndham and Kununurra, while the remainder are further inland in isolated communities and some are the only school provider in their area."

"The experience of education in these schools can be vastly different even though they are all considered to be remote schools," she said.

Ms Collins, who visited two regional Catholic primary schools in Peterborough and Gladstone in South Australia last week, said the challenges for regional, rural and remote schools were often complicated by other factors.

"Many of these communities have difficulty attracting teachers and experienced leaders to the area, or there is a lack of specialist support and services available," she said. "There are also environmental factors such as drought, and the financial hardship that brings, and more recently, the bushfires affecting families and school communities."

"We know from the latest NAPLAN data, that schools outside of metropolitan areas are not performing as well as their peers in the cities," Ms Collins said. "It's critical that the review, not only examines the level of funding available to regional, rural and remote schools, but also the impact of that funding to ensure it is addressing the range of issues these communities face."

Nationally, Catholic schools educate more than 764,000 students – or one in five Australian students - in 1,746 schools, the vast majority of which are low-fee schools.