



2022 South Australian Election

Response to Catholic Education South Australia

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the families and staff connected with Catholic Education, Catholic schools and parish communities with the Marshall Liberal Government's vision for building a stronger future for South Australia.

Thank you for including the Government in your *Towards 2027: Expanding Horizons and Deepening Practices – Strategy for Catholic Education* launch. The Marshall Liberal Government is delighted that the Premier was able to make the two significant commitments noted in your correspondence: continuing support for Catholic students at 22% of srs as is currently the case (and putting that figure into the forward estimates on an ongoing basis) and increasing support for Catholic school buses from \$1 million per year to \$1.5 million per year.

As a Government, we are committed to delivering world-class educational opportunities for South Australia's children and young people – from early childhood right up to employment pathways. We want all our schools to be world-class in South Australia, whether they be public, Catholic or independent. We see Catholic Education not as a competitor to the public sector, but rather as a partner to government in serving South Australian children and young people.

With respect to the annual capital grant allocations, we are proud to have been the first South Australian government ever to provide infrastructure grants to Catholic Education SA and we commit to continuing the program at the current indexed level in the Budget. As you would be aware, that is in the order of \$6 million for Catholic Education in 2022/23.

In any given year, through the annual Budget process we will be pleased to give consideration to your submissions for supplementation of this grant, as we did in 2020 and 2021, dependent on prevailing circumstances and the capacity of the Budget to support such an increase at the time.

In relation to your request for specific funding for preschool programs, you would be aware from discussions of the Government's view that a better approach to partnership, that will serve both Catholic Education and the community well, is for a re-elected Government to work closely with Catholic Education to develop a framework for planning new services, particularly in areas of significant population growth, to identify opportunities for partnership in serving growing communities and reducing the duplication of effort.

In relation to your comments about year 7 funding, the Government notes that Catholic Education made the decision to move year 7 to high school well before the 2018 election, and that your preparation was already well underway when we discussed our commitments ahead of that 2018 election. We have certainly fulfilled our commitments to Catholic Education that we made ahead of that election.

The Government believes that Catholic Education SA leadership, teachers, staff and families should be proud of their work in transitioning year 7 into high school ahead of the public system, and this decision has provided many benefits to Catholic schools, including financially.

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Catholic Education has been the beneficiary of considerable additional funding over the last four years compared to the funding provided under the previous Labor government, and we are eager to continue our approach of cooperation rather than competition between the sectors. As advised previously, we do not think it appropriate that the Gonski formula for year 7 students be at a different high school/primary school rate dependent on sectors and therefore do not support a retrospective payment of \$10 million.

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided unprecedented challenges for the education sector, and the Government is particularly pleased that the Department for Education has worked to ensure that Catholic and independent schools are supported in the same way as government schools. The Government acknowledges that the current arrangement between the Commonwealth and SA Health in relation to Rapid Antigen Tests has provided essential support at a crucial time for all schools at the resumption of the 2022 school year.

Finally, if re-elected, the Government will be pleased to continue our partnership with Catholic Education for the provision of vocational education and training in South Australia. The Government has been grateful for the participation of Dr McGoran on the Ministerial Advisory Committee for VET in schools and look forward to continuing the partnership in this area best demonstrated by the fact that Catholic Education SA won the bid to build the new Western Suburbs Technical College. We are sure you'd agree it is hard to imagine that happening under the previous administration.

The Government looks forward to further building on the outstanding partnership we have built over the last four years, and to continuing our regular engagement should we be successful in re-election.