
GOVERNMENT MODELLING REVEALS CATASTROPHIC CUTS IN SOME SCHOOLS

The National Catholic Education Commission has said the Turnbull Government's rhetoric around its school funding reforms is crumbling as the reality of drastic funding cuts to some school communities becomes apparent.

"Minister Birmingham is publicly claiming that his new funding model delivers needs-based, sector-blind funding," NCEC acting executive director Danielle Cronin said.

"If the Minister is indeed delivering what he claims, why are Catholic school systems and state and territory education ministers condemning the plan? Those responsible for running almost 90 per cent of Australia's schools are clear that this funding reform proposal will not deliver what schools and students need."

Ms Cronin said there is a great deal of anxiety among the community, with parents, principals and families wondering how the Government's policy will affect their school.

"The Minister might have been hoping that the initial pushback from schools and systems would abate once he eventually showed them the detail of his policy," she said.

"The reality, though, is that the more people come to know about the policy, the more concerned they become. Now that Catholic school systems have seen the Government's modelling, some schools and systems are finding the policy will impose immediate and inexplicable funding cuts on their schools."

Ms Cronin said in some Catholic schools across the country, Commonwealth funding – the main source of funding for more than 1,000 parish primary schools – will be cut by 50, 60 or even 70 per cent next year.

"Minister Birmingham is asking Catholic schools to be thankful that after a catastrophic cut to their Commonwealth funding in 2018, he will slowly dripfeed some of that money back to the school over the next 10 years," she said.

Ms Cronin said the Minister's initial claim that only 24 "overfunded" schools will see funding cuts under his new plan is also being shown to be incompatible with Government modelling.

"If a school will be receiving less per-student Commonwealth funding in 2027 than they are today – according to the Government's model – no one can credibly argue that school won't see its funding cut," she said.

"Yet analysis of the government's modelling shows that a growing number of schools across the country are facing a cut of that kind."

Ms Cronin said there is a growing consensus that the Government's school funding policy has so many flaws because of the rushed nature of its introduction and of the Minister's marketing campaign.

"We think we might understand why the Minister couldn't explain his school funding plan to Catholic education via usual consultation channels: It's possible he hadn't finalised it before the announcement," she said.

"Why else would it have taken 10 days for the modelling to be provided to Catholic and government school systems?"

"The increasing number of schools facing unacceptable funding cuts in 2018 also smacks of 'policy on the run'. These clear anomalies and the uneven treatment of schools and systems, probably caused by a hurried process, can still be fixed – if the Minister doesn't conclude that it's time to abandon the policy completely."