

# Catholic Education Priorities

The purpose of this document is to outline the key issues and national priorities for Catholic Education for the 2022 Federal Election.

## About Catholic Education

From humble beginnings, Catholic education in Australia has seen extraordinary growth over two centuries to become the single largest provider of schooling outside of government.

Today, **1,755 Catholic schools** are educating over **785,000 students** from approximately 450,000 families. Our schools employ over **102,000 staff** across Australia. Nearly 40% of schools are outside of metropolitan areas, meeting the needs of regional, rural and remote communities.

Catholic schools have been serving Australian families for 200 years.

Catholic education has been working with government and other education sectors to develop and implement a fairer needs-based funding model for all schools to ensure every family has greater access to, and choice in, education.

We are supporting Catholic schools to:

- Form young people of faith
- Lift educational standards so that all students fulfil their learning potential
- Better support the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disability and disadvantaged communities
- Advocate for greater access to early childhood education, aligned with school delivery.

Our work is to foster a thriving Catholic education sector that offers parents affordable access to, and a choice of, a faith-based education for their children. Catholic education continues to advocate for fair and inclusive funding that sustains both public and accessible faith-based school systems widely available across Australia.

## FEDERAL ELECTION PRIORITIES

Catholic education is seeking the following commitments in the 2022 Federal Election:

### Supporting school choice

Support for Catholic schools to be an affordable choice for Australian families through:

- **Funding certainty** by continuing the 10-year agreement and the current level of **indexation** to reflect increasing educational costs
- Refining **loadings for student need**, school size, regional and remote location
- Maintaining the **Choice and Affordability Fund**
- Advancing the review of the **Capacity to Contribute** formula to 2024 to ensure fairer parent contributions
- Improving **capital funding** support to adequately resource learning environments

### Enabling faith-based education

- Appropriate **legislation and educational policy** to enable Catholic schools to operate and teach within a religious ethos

### Delivering national priorities

- Extending the **Non-Government Reform Support Fund beyond 2022** to support the delivery of the National Education Reform Agreement and emerging priorities such as quality teaching
- Supporting **Early Childhood Education** in the two years prior to school, capital funding to grow the number of services, and improved alignment for school delivery
- Better access to **Mental Health and Wellbeing** programs to address the increasing challenge of student mental health and wellbeing, particularly for educationally disadvantaged students
- Better access for **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students** in Catholic schools to Closing the Gap initiatives that support the complex needs of students

# SUPPORTING THE CHOICE OF FAITH-BASED EDUCATION

**PRIORITY:** Support for Catholic schools to be an affordable choice for Australian families through:

- **Funding certainty** by continuing the 10-year agreement and the current level of **indexation** to reflect increasing educational costs
- Refining **loadings for student need**, school size, regional and remote location
- Maintaining the **Choice and Affordability Fund**
- Advancing the review of the **Capacity to Contribute** formula to 2024 to ensure fairer parent contributions
- Improving **capital funding** support to adequately resource learning environments

- One of the most unique and valuable features of Australia's education system is the wide-ranging availability of genuine, affordable **SCHOOL CHOICE**
- Today, a school education costs over **\$12,000 per primary student** and more than **\$15,200 per secondary student** annually. For most Australian families this cost would be out of reach, especially if they have two or more children
- Genuine choice relies on governments providing fair funding and indexation to ensure Catholic schools are affordable and accessible to families who desire a **FAITH-BASED EDUCATION** for their children
- Currently, Catholic school families take on nearly 29% of the annual cost of their child's education
- In 2019, Catholic school families contributed approximately \$3.9 billion towards their children's education, representing a substantial **SAVING TO AUSTRALIAN TAXPAYERS**
- While an improvement on the previous funding model, the [Direct Measure of Income](#) funding model needs further refinement to ensure genuine choice and fairer contributions from families
- This can be addressed by advancing the review of the Capacity to Contribute formula, bringing it forward to 2024 - it is currently scheduled for 2027
- Nearly 40% of Catholic schools are located in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia
- Catholic schools are also educating increasing numbers of students from priority cohorts (students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, socio-educational disadvantage and low-English proficiency)

- Loadings for student need, small schools, and regional and remote schools also need to be refined to ensure funding adequately meets the additional needs and costs of students and schools
- Catholic schools also contribute to Australia's **CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE** through the building of school and community infrastructure
- In 2019 alone, this investment was about \$1.6 billion nationally, which represents 90% of the funding required to support school buildings and capital works with state and federal governments, on average, contributing 5% each
- Catholic education supports approximately 83,000 full time equivalent teaching and non-teaching jobs and estimates the total Gross Value Added<sup>1</sup> (GVA) **CONTRIBUTION TO THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY** to be approximately \$12.1 billion, which represents almost 17.1% of the school education sector per year

<sup>1</sup> Estimation based on 2019 Ernst & Young analysis of Catholic Education Western Australia.)

**PRIORITY:** Appropriate legislation and educational policy to enable Catholic schools to operate and teach within a religious ethos

- One in five Australian students attend a Catholic school reflecting their family's values and beliefs - this is an important aspect of a pluralist society
- Around 63% of students are from a Catholic background
- Catholic schools also welcome families from other faith traditions and none
- Australia has ratified a number of International Covenants to protect freedom of religion including establishing religious schools and the right of parents to ensure the religious and moral education of their children, and to provide a compulsory, free education for all students
- A free and fair Australia requires governments to ensure **LEGISLATION AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY** support the right of parents to choose a school in line with their beliefs and values
- Catholic education supports appropriate legislation and educational policy to enable Catholic schools **TO OPERATE AND TEACH AS CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**, while ensuring a fair and reasonable balance with other protected rights
- Catholic schools do not, and are not seeking to, discriminate on the basis of a person's attributes

# DELIVERING NATIONAL PRIORITIES

## PRIORITY: Extending the Non-Government Reform Support Fund beyond 2022 to support the delivery of the National Education Reform Agreement and emerging priorities such as quality teaching

- The scale and systemic nature of the Australian Catholic school sector enables close cooperation with government and education bodies across federal, state and territory levels to deliver national and local priorities
- The **NON-GOVERNMENT REFORM SUPPORT FUND** has been a positive support to assist Catholic systems to deliver the National Education Reform Agreement and national priorities including:
  - Learning progressions and online formative assessment
  - Initial Teacher Education
  - National Evidence Institute
  - Teacher accreditation systems
  - Review of Senior Secondary Pathways
  - Review of the Disability Standards for Education
  - Implementation of the Unique Student Identifier
  - Review of the Australian Curriculum
- The Non-Government Reform Support Fund is due to conclude at the end of this year and Catholic education seeks a commitment to extend the fund to continue to support these and other emerging national priorities

## PRIORITY: Supporting Early Childhood Education in the two years prior to school, capital funding to grow the number of services, and improved alignment for school delivery

- Catholic education is increasing the delivery of **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**, a vital component of each child's development. With over 15,000 children in 400 centres across Australia, we are working towards a future where all children have access to high quality early childhood education in the **TWO YEARS BEFORE COMPULSORY SCHOOLING**
- For children experiencing disadvantage, early education plays an even more significant role in turning the curve on inequality. Underpinning this strategy is the commitment to ensure every child has access to a fair start to life, **OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS FOR FAMILIES** are reduced and funding is applied consistently across jurisdictions and sectors
- Catholic schools are well placed to meet this need, with many **NEW EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTRES** being built onsite with Catholic schools - this responds to the needs of families with young children and puts early learning at the heart of our school communities

- Early childhood education centres located within schools also deliver **GREATER ECONOMIC EFFICIENCIES**, allowing for shared infrastructure and facilities that reduce operating costs, offer children and their families the opportunity to participate in the life of a Catholic school community, enable smoother transition to primary school and facilitate increased knowledge exchange between educators

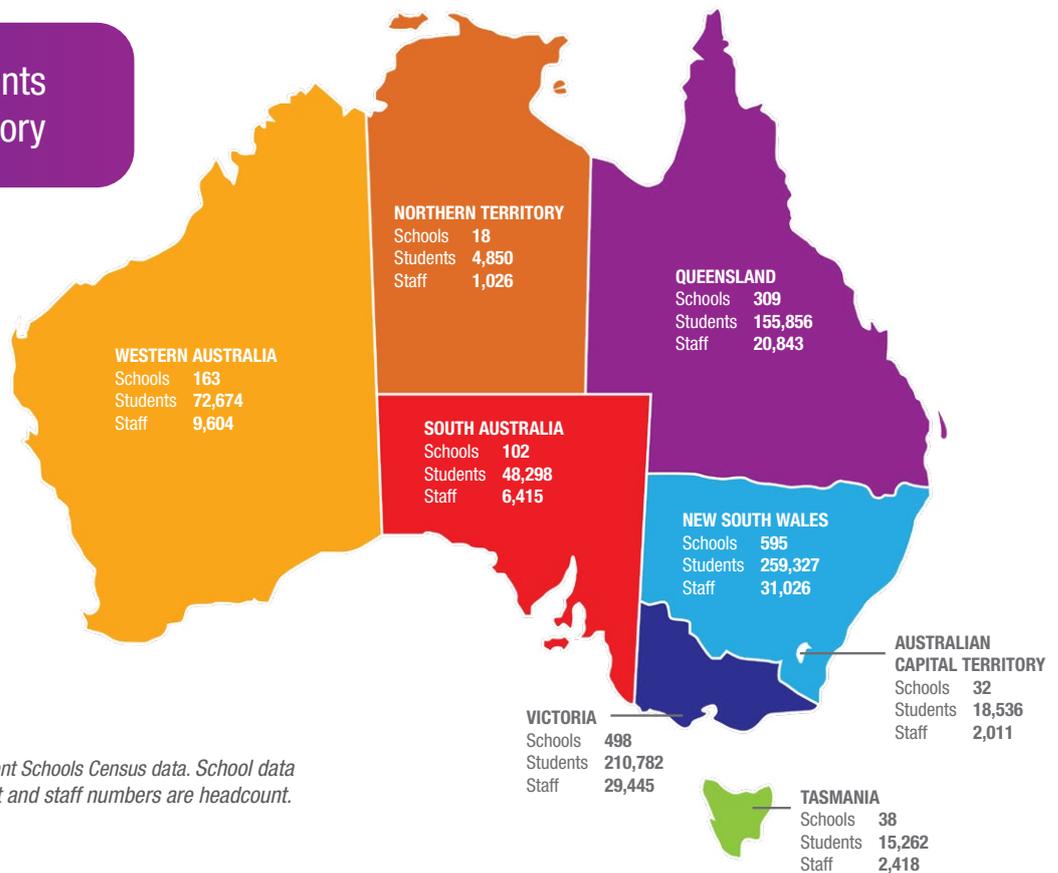
## PRIORITY: Better access to Mental Health and Wellbeing programs to address the increasing challenge of student mental health and wellbeing, particularly for educationally disadvantaged students

- With the increasing incidence of youth **MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING** challenges, schools are an important partner in identifying, supporting and monitoring student wellbeing
- While Catholic schools already have a strong focus on pastoral care and wellbeing, greater recognition and better access to mental health and wellbeing programs and services to support students and families is needed (e.g. Chaplaincy program, psychology services, etc)

## PRIORITY: Better access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Catholic schools to Closing the Gap initiatives that support the complex needs of students

- Over the past 20 years, the number of **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS** has increased by 180.2% in the Catholic sector
- Catholic schools are focused on **CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS** and initiatives to respond to the complex needs of students across a range of urban, remote and boarding centres, including:
  - Lifting the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in early childhood education
  - Promoting health and wellbeing programs
  - Supporting targeted early literacy and numeracy development in the early years
  - Developing transition to school and post-school programs
  - Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, language and perspectives in early childhood education and school curriculum delivery
  - Supporting young people to be engaged in meaningful employment and education opportunities
- Catholic education is seeking **BETTER ACCESS** to national initiatives to continue to support these efforts

# Catholic schools, students and staff by state/territory



Map is based on 2021 Non-Government Schools Census data. School data includes main campus only. Student and staff numbers are headcount.

## SNAPSHOT OF AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC EDUCATION



38% of Australia's 1,755 Catholic Schools are in regional and remote areas

Over 785,000 students attend Catholic schools



785,585 headcount / 785,396 FTE



Over 102,000 staff work in Catholic education

Staff - 102,788 headcount / 83,194 FTE  
Teachers - 66,080 headcount / 57,586 FTE



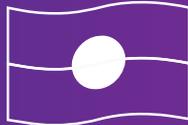
1 in 5 Australian students attend a Catholic school

Primary - 17.7%\*  
Secondary - 21.3%\*  
\*2020 data



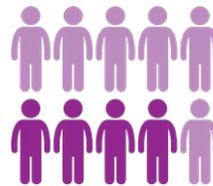
Students with disability make up 20% of student population in Catholic schools

156,818 FTE



Since 2000 the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Catholic schools has increased by 180.2%

41%\* of Catholic school students are funded for socio-educational disadvantage



91% of Catholic schools are co-educational  
3% are boarding schools



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