
MINISTER'S TWEAKS FAIL TO ADDRESS CONCERNS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

National Catholic Education Commission executive director Christian Zahra says after two days of media speculation about possible changes to the Government's school funding reforms, a meeting with Education Minister Simon Birmingham has failed to satisfy Catholic education leaders that minor tweaks to the legislation will provide certainty for Catholic schools and their students and families.

"This evening, representatives of the NCEC met briefly with Minister Birmingham, who set out the minor changes he is proposing to make to his legislation in response to the very serious concerns that the Catholic school sector has expressed over the past several months," Mr Zahra said.

"Having heard those changes, the NCEC's position has not moved. We continue to feel that the Minister's Bill has not been properly thought through and it still poses an unacceptable risk to the 1,737 Catholic schools across the country."

Mr Zahra said the independent Parliamentary Budget Office analysis of a \$3.1 billion cut to Catholic schools over the next decade is an obvious cause of deep concern.

"The Minister did not allay our fears this evening," he said.

"Nor did he allay our fears, expressed by the Grattan Institute in *The Australian* today, that Catholic schools are 'the big loser' under the Minister's model because of the redirection of \$4.6 billion of funding away from Catholic schools over the next 10 years, as revealed by the Minister's own department.

"The Minister has followed a very poor policy process and is making poor education policy as a result. He remains focused on a political process, rather than a process of consultation and collaboration to support Australian schools and students."

Mr Zahra said Catholic education's view is unchanged: The Senate should not pass this legislation.

"There is still time for members of the Coalition, as well as cross-bench Senators, to see this flawed legislation voted down. We call on those who support Catholic education to do all they can to see this Bill defeated," Mr Zahra concluded.