Victorian Catholic Education Authority

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Catholic schools seek election commitments from Labor and Coalition on five education priorities

Victoria's 494 Catholic schools have called on the Labor Government and Liberal-National Coalition to commit to five key education priorities ahead of the November state election.

The Victorian Catholic Education Authority (VCEA) has written to Premier Ben Carroll and Opposition Leader Jess Wilson seeking formal commitments on recurrent funding, school infrastructure, payroll tax, planning reform and early learning.

VCEA Chief Executive Officer Professor Elizabeth Labone said both major parties had an important role in ensuring Catholic schools could continue providing affordable, accessible education for Victorian families.

"Catholic schools educate more than 218,000 Victorian students, serving around 160,000 families across the state. Our schools make a significant contribution to Victoria's education system, and we are seeking commitments that will provide funding certainty, support new and upgraded facilities and help meet the needs of growing communities.

"With the election approaching, Catholic school communities deserve clarity about what both major parties are prepared to deliver," Professor Labone said.

Catholic schools are seeking five commitments:

1. **Recurrent funding certainty:** retain the legislated minimum 25 per cent funding linkage and how it is calculated and rule out less funding through cuts or caps.
2. **A strong commitment to capital funding:** commit to substantial capital funding to support new Catholic schools, additional student places and upgraded facilities.
3. **Payroll tax**: abolish payroll tax on non-government schools.
4. **Planning reform**: identify and protect sites for Catholic schools, streamline planning approvals and support timely delivery of new schools.
5. **Early learning infrastructure**: continue the Building Blocks program throughout the next parliamentary term, ensuring Catholic schools remain eligible for early learning capital funding.

Professor Labone welcomed the Coalition's commitments to retaining the existing 25 per cent recurrent funding linkage and abolishing payroll tax on non-government schools.

"These significant commitments have come as enormous relief to Catholic schools and would provide much-needed funding certainty and ease financial pressures."

Government support for Catholic education helps keep school fees affordable, supports school choice and reduces pressure on the government school system. The latest Productivity Commission data shows government funding and in-kind support is more than $9,000 lower per student, on average, in Victorian non-government schools than in government schools.

"We are asking both major parties to respond to these priorities so Catholic school families can understand their policy commitments ahead of the election."

VCEA has requested formal responses from Labor and the Coalition by Friday 30 October and intends to publish a Catholic Education Election Scorecard in November.

The scorecard will compare the commitments of the Labor Government and the Liberal-National Coalition against the five Catholic education priorities, reflecting VCEA's focus on the two political groupings that have formed Victorian governments in recent decades.

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