

Media Release

Rob Stokes' month of uncertainty puts non-government schools at risk

Hundreds of NSW non-government schools are unable to finalise their planning for 2019 because the NSW Government refuses to accept the new, fairer funding measures announced by the Federal Government last month, Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) said today.

"It has been a month since Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan announced new funding arrangements that will ensure low-fee schools will receive a fairer share of government funding," CSNSW Chief Executive Officer Dallas McInerney said.

"But NSW Education Minister Rob Stokes is still standing in the way.

"Constitutionally, he is required to sign an agreement with the Commonwealth before the NSW Government can receive and pass on Commonwealth funds to non-government schools in NSW.

"But Rob Stokes - the minister for all NSW schools, not just government schools - is refusing to sign.

"The Minister is using non-government schools as a bargaining chip in his spat with Canberra," Mr McInerney said.

NSW has 944 non-government schools – the overwhelming majority of them, low-fee schools - educating one in three students.

"Low-fee non-government schools rely on a mix of government funding (mostly Commonwealth) and school fees.

"They need to know how much government funding they can expect in 2019 and how much they need to collect in fees.

"All the risk and uncertainty caused by Rob Stokes' stand-off with the Commonwealth is being carried by non-government schools. This is unfair and unprecedented.

"He needs to stop mischaracterising the new funding arrangements as unfair, not needs-based and 'a special deal'.

"These comments were ill-judged, hasty and incorrect and he needs to withdraw them."

Mr McInerney said the new funding arrangements were necessary to deliver funding certainty and a more targeted, needs-based approach to local, low-fee Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, Muslim and Seventh Day Adventist schools.

"We support a strong and properly funded government schools sector, but the Commonwealth will always be a minority funder of state schools.

"It is therefore unfair of Mr Stokes to jeopardise the Commonwealth funds that have been committed to non-government schools who need to finalise their 2019 budgets."

Catholic Schools NSW represents the state's 595 Catholic schools and their 255,000 students.

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