



Catholic Schools Office
Diocese of Broken Bay

Caroline Chisholm Centre
Building 2, 423 Pennant Hills Road
Pennant Hills NSW 2120
PO Box 967, Pennant Hills NSW 1715
Phone: (02) 9847 0000
Fax: (02) 9847 0001
Email: mail@dbb.catholic.edu.au
Web: www.csodbb.catholic.edu.au

22 March 2018

Dear Parents and Caregivers

I refer to coverage in today's Australian, Sydney Morning Herald and Daily Telegraph newspapers regarding the recent loss of enrolments in Catholic systemic schools in the Diocese of Broken Bay.

I want to assure all parents that Bishop Comensoli, myself, our principals and teachers are absolutely committed to the continued operation of every Catholic systemic school in the Diocese of Broken Bay.

As you would be aware, school funding has been an issue of concern for families with children enrolled in local Catholic systemic schools for some time. In 2017 the Catholic Schools Office took the unprecedented step of significantly increasing fees in order to align with Commonwealth government expectations.

The latest February 2018 school enrolment census has confirmed my concerns about the impact of recent changes to school funding. In the twelve months to February 2018 Broken Bay systemic schools have experienced a loss of 624 enrolments, an unprecedented decline of 3.5%. The majority of this loss has occurred since August 2017, and coincides with the public debate regarding school funding.

Even with the support offered by way of fee relief to families, I deeply regret that some parents have not been in a position to continue with a Catholic education for their children.

I acknowledge that there may be other factors contributing to this loss of enrolments including broader cost of living issues, flat wages growth and the risk of mortgage rate increases faced by families with large mortgages. However, in my opinion, school funding changes and the resulting increase in fees is the significant factor in this decline.

Mindful of the pressure increased fees place on families, and to provide longer term certainty in relation to school fees, I wrote to you on 13 March 2018 **providing an undertaking that fee increases would be between 1.5% and 3% each year for the next five years. I stand by those assurances.**

During this week parent representatives from each of our schools gathered for leadership forums to explore ways to deepen their engagement as genuine partners in their children's education. The theme of these meetings was future focused, looking toward a strong and innovative future in Catholic education in our schools. I am confident about the future of our schools due to the enthusiasm and support which has been demonstrated by our parents.

Again, I would like to express my thanks and acknowledgement for the sacrifices you make as parents to Catholic education. **I assure you that I will continue to advocate for our local Catholic schools in the strongest terms possible.**

Yours sincerely

Peter Hamill
Director of Schools

A ministry of leadership and service to Catholic Schools