



*"Fear not, for I am with you."  
Isaiah 41:10*

**4<sup>th</sup> of September 2020**

Dear friends in Christ,

Catholic Education is being discussed in some sections of the media at the moment. I thought I would offer my reflections and opinions on the main issues being discussed, namely, equitable school funding and the content of Religious Education programmes for Catholic schools.

### **Funding**

It is alleged that in the distribution of funding for Diocesan schools in NSW that funding is being taken from rural Dioceses to subsidise those in the city. People in western NSW are used to having to fight for their 'fair share' of anything, this includes health, government services, and of course, education.

To ensure, amongst other things, an equitable distribution of government funds for Catholic schools in NSW a company, Catholic Schools NSW, was formed. Since the foundation of Catholic Schools NSW I have been very happy with the support that they have given the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes. Catholic Schools NSW has worked hard and effectively to ensure that our Diocese receives the funding it needs and is entitled too. The parents of our schools can be assured that they are not paying higher school fees to somehow make up for an inequitable distribution of funds in NSW.

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## Religious Education programmes

Catholic Schools have a solemn responsibility to pass on the Catholic Faith to the children placed in their care. Parents have the right to expect that Catholic schools both teach the Faith and refrain from teaching what is contrary to the faith and ethos of the Catholic Church.

It disturbs me that in some Catholic schools in Australia children's faith is being actively undermined by religious education that focuses on a secular vision of life.

Our Catholic Faith offers hope in a troubled world. It teaches us that life is more than existing on this planet - it is eternal. It teaches that God created us in His own image and loves us unconditionally.

It teaches us that God the Father sent His Only Son Jesus Christ to be born of Mary, that He performed great Miracles, that He taught us how to live lives pleasing to God, that He Suffered, died and rose again to atone for our sins and opened Heaven for us. Our Faith also teaches that Jesus founded the Church to be His body on earth and to nourish the members of that body through the Sacraments. It teaches that Jesus wants a relationship with each one of us, that He will be with us all our lives in good times and bad, encouraging us and helping us. Wow! That is Good News.

The new Religious Education programme in the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, I am happy to say ticks the boxes on authentic Catholic teaching and is fun, engaging and joyful with students, teachers and parents learning together.

Yours in Christ



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