



**Independent
Schools Victoria**

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Independent Schools not to Blame for Catholic Education's Woes

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Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) Chief Executive, Ms Michelle Green, today accused representatives of Catholic education of waging an ill-informed and divisive campaign against Independent schools.

'This increasingly desperate assault risks being seen as an attempt to distract attention from deep-seated challenges confronting the Catholic school sector,' Ms Green said.

'These challenges appear to be separate from the funding issue which is the stated focus of the campaign,' she said.

'Whatever the underlying issues, Independent schools refuse to be used as scapegoats.'

The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) has made a series of strident claims about the impact on Catholic schools of changes to Australian Government funding for non-government schools, introduced as part of the so-called Gonski 2.0 reforms.

The latest claim is that the funding model, based on schools' socioeconomic status (SES) and in operation for almost two decades, unfairly favours Independent schools.

Catholic schools selectively cited by the CECV as being underfunded in fact receive twice the level of Australian Government funding than the Independent schools the CECV chooses to compare them to.

'The way these comparisons are used is totally invalid and misleading,' Ms Green said.

'It overlooks the fact that Catholic education authorities choose how they allocate government funding to individual schools, so they can artificially depress fees regardless of the community the schools serve.

'The SES model that the CECV is now attacking is the same model the CECV uses when it calculates how it distributes funding when it cross-subsidises its Member Schools.'

The model has been in operation for 17 years, but in that time not one Catholic school has exercised its right to appeal against the SES score it has received.

Ms Green said: 'The intemperate and sectarian language increasingly used by CECV Chief Executive, Mr Stephen Elder, should not be allowed to distract us from the fact that Catholic schools are steadily losing enrolments to the Independent and government sectors.'

Enrolment growth in Catholic schools has stagnated, being outstripped by government and Independent schools.

Census figures show that almost half (46 per cent) of Catholic students now attend government or Independent schools.

Over the past five years, the number of Catholic secondary students at Independent schools grew by 4.3 per cent, compared to 3.4 per cent growth at Catholic schools.

The shift in enrolments appears unrelated to government funding.

Ms Green said: 'Mr Elder's attacks can't go unchallenged.'

'I don't presume to understand the challenges facing the Catholic sector, but it appears these challenges could relate to social change and the management system that operates and allocates funding to individual Catholic schools.'

'Despite its imperfections, the new Australian school funding system genuinely seeks to allocate funding on the basis of student need. It should not be used as a scapegoat or distraction from these broader issues.'