22 December 2016

Hon Peter Collier MLC
Minister for Education
10th Floor, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005
minister.collier@dpc.wa.gov.au

Dear Minister

We write to you regarding the forthcoming State Election in March 2017. Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) is the second largest provider of education in our State, and we are proud of our bold strategic intent that welcomes all, focuses on learning, engagement, accountability and discipleship as key enablers, and has established a world-class digital transformation initiative.

Together with the Parents and Friends Federation of Western Australia (PFFWA), CEWA are eager to partner with the new State Government to deliver the best outcomes for all students in our State. In doing so, this letter conveys the four key policy issues that we seek to see addressed by the next State government. Your response to our election commitment questions will be shared across our system of over 50,000 parents and 12,000 staff, prior to the election date.

Key Issue 1: Recurrent and Capital funding

Recurrent funding: As has been previously communicated with you over the course of this year, CEWA enrolls over 78,000 students, which in doing so represents a financial saving to the State Government of over $8,000 per primary student and almost $10,000 per secondary student – when compared to the cost of these students being educated in government schools. In total, this represents an annual saving to the State government of $656million.

Election Commitment 1: Will your government confirm that the long standing agreement for the State government to fund Catholic student places to at least 25% of the Average Government School Recurrent Costs (AGSRC) will remain in place for the term of your government?

Capital funding: CEWA is responsible for all capital funds associated with constructing new schools together with the funds necessary to debt service all new developments and refurbishments. The costs associated with constructing a new K-12 school is approximately $70million.
CEWA student population projections to 2026 indicate the need for an additional 11,500 extra primary places, and 10,500 extra secondary places, to cater for demand for Catholic schooling. To meet this demand and continue to enable choice for parents in schooling which best meets the needs of their children, over the next decade, CEWA will need to construct 23 new primary schools and 9 new secondary schools.

If these additional student places are unable to be built, the demand for new student places will fall to government schools, with significant additional costs associated. Over the course of the next ten years, the cost saving to the State Government provided by CEWA, should student demand be met, will be $2billion. CEWA currently receives capital assistance from the State Government through a Low Interest Loan Scheme. The amount available to CEWA through this program is $30M per annum.

**Election Commitment 2: Will your government support a new annual capital grant commitment of $40million per annum over the course of the next 10 years (replacing the existing Low Interest Loan) that will enable CEWA to cater for the growth in student population and in doing so will save the State Government $2billion in recurrent expenditure?**

**Key Issue 2: Equitable psychology support for Catholic students**

Despite the Australian Psychological Society (APS) recommended ratio of 1 psychologist:500 students, current funding limitations determine that the CEWA psychology support ratio in schools is 1:5000 students. This compares inequitably to government schools in WA who receive the financial support from the State government to provide a ratio of support much more in accordance with the APS recommendation.

**Election commitment 3: Will your government increase the funding available to provide additional psychologists in Catholic schools, to represent a ratio more in keeping with government schools, and in doing so deliver annual indexation on the funding amount?**

**Key Issue 3: Cross-sectoral partnership planning for new schools**

There is currently no managed process to establish who builds new government, Catholic and independent schools where and when. This leads to the potential for under-supply of schooling and a disjointed and inefficient way to manage the future schooling requirements of the State.

**Election commitment 4: Will your government establish a cross-sectoral committee to plan for new government and non-government schools in WA?**

**Summary:** CEWA and PFFWA believe that during a time of clear financial difficulty for our State, the first of these policy initiatives sets out a clear cost saving to the new State government, through two election commitment strategies. The second issue provides for equity of service provision to allow all Catholic students in WA improved access to psychological support. The third serves to maximise the use of State government funds by enabling effective and efficient future school planning. All three initiatives provide current and future families with accessibility and choice in the education of their children.
We invite you to provide a response as to how your government would work with CEWA and PFFWA to address these policy opportunities after March 2017. As has been the case in previous elections, CEWA and PFFWA will share the written responses of both major parties across both our System and its stakeholders prior to the election date. We therefore welcome a response from you by Friday 3 February 2017.

Yours sincerely

Tim McDonald
Executive Director
Catholic Education WA

Siobhan Allen
President
Parents & Friends Federation of WA Inc