BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION

RESPONSE TO

A FLYING START FOR QUEENSLAND CHILDREN

June 2010
Introduction

Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) is the schooling arm of the Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane and is the second largest provider of schooling in Queensland after Education Queensland. The Brisbane Catholic Education Office (BCEO) administers 133 schools educating over 64,000 students.

BCE welcomes *A Flying Start for Queensland Children* and is appreciative of the opportunity to respond to the proposals. Our response is structured to provide commentary on each of the three key sections of the report. This response supports and complements the response of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission and those from Catholic school communities and other stakeholders in Catholic education.

Further discussion and consultation with the Queensland Government would be necessary after the Government’s determination regarding these proposals to ensure that strategies can be appropriately implemented and resourced.

David J Hutton  
Executive Director of Catholic Education  
Archdiocese of Brisbane
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION POSITIONS

KINDERGARTEN

Brisbane Catholic Education strongly endorses and shares the Queensland Government’s commitment to Objective 1.

We also strongly endorse the right of parents to choose the type of education from the outset of their children’s education as it will be initiated through the kindergarten program.

It is therefore essential that:

(i) the level of parental choice and access to what is available to parents in P-12 Catholic schools and kindergartens in the Archdiocese of Brisbane is at least maintained;

(ii) a higher level of collaborative, transparent decision making and availability of financial and planning data for the proposed 240 identified schools sites for the kindergarten program is provided; and

(iii) equitable capital and recurrent funding is available for the establishment and ongoing operation of viable and competitive kindergarten services.

VOLUNTEER READING PROGRAM

Brisbane Catholic Education provides in principle support for the development and implementation of a volunteer reading program in Queensland schools but requires further information and clarification around the structure of the program, the training of the volunteers and its implementation process in schools.

YEAR 7 TO SECONDARY

1. Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) supports the move of Year 7 to secondary school from a curriculum perspective with the following understandings:

- The Australian Curriculum has been written with Year 7 as part of secondary schooling
- The developmental needs of Year 7 students will most probably be more aligned with other students in secondary school than primary school from 2014
- The movement of Year 7 to secondary school will not, in and of itself, ensure deeper learning for Year 7 students
- The use of specialist teachers and specialist facilities will not, in and of itself, ensure deeper learning for Year 7 students in the various discipline areas
- The achievement of deeper learning will be attained for Year 7 students when they are taught by teachers (primary and secondary trained) who understand the nature and characteristics of young adolescent learners; who want to work together to teach these learners; and who are willing to change their practices,
both inside and outside the classroom to ensure deeper learning by these students.

2. Brisbane Catholic Education supports the move of Year 7 to secondary school provided that the provision of facilities, transition arrangements for school staff and adequate per capita grants are funded by government. BCE has the following understandings of these needs:

- The move of Year 7 into secondary school is similar to and complementary to the 2007 initiative to provide access to a preparatory year for all Queensland children. Although not compulsory this access is now almost universal. The move of the first cohort into Year 7 in 2014 is a natural progression from the preparatory year initiative.

- Full funding for facilities required for secondary schools, both government and non-government must be provided to allow the implementation of the Year 7 into secondary initiative. BCE notes that the introduction of the prep year was intended by government to be fully funded. (However the Catholic sector believes that although significant funding was provided this did fall short of full funding for all facilities required).

- Special planning provisions need to be devised for non-government schools similar to the BER provisions to ensure that additional secondary facilities can be completed in the necessary timeframes.

- Commonwealth General Recurrent Grants differ in the amount allocated to primary and secondary. The Queensland Government must ensure that both Commonwealth and State General Recurrent Grants for the non-government sector for Year 7 students will be paid at the secondary rate from 2014.

- Brisbane Catholic Education believes that the transition of Year 7 into secondary will mean an overall loss of enrolments across the 133 schools conducted by the Brisbane Archdiocese. Brisbane Catholic Education submits to government that there needs to be transitional funding made available for the years 2014 and 2015 to allow adjustments to be made to our global budget that supports the system of Brisbane Catholic Education schools.

- Professional development must be provided and funded for all teachers, both current secondary teachers and teachers transitioning from primary into Year 7 of secondary. This will help teachers address the curriculum issues outlined in this response.

- Professional development must be available and funded for all teachers on a state wide basis in both government and non-government schools.

- University re-training and conversion to secondary programs need to be developed and funded as soon as possible.

- Industrial agreements in place will require significant transitional funding commitments for non-government employers. The loss of Year 7 enrolments in primary and the increased enrolments in secondary will incur additional costs for employers under current industrial agreements. Government must provide significant interim funding to allow for this transition to be made by the non-government sector.
REVIEW OF TEACHER TRAINING

- Any review of teacher pre-service education within Universities involves the Queensland College of Teachers as a lead agency.

- Any review of teacher pre-service education programs address the issue of skilling aspiring teachers with a well researched repertoire of behaviour support strategies.

- Pre-registration tests for aspiring teachers do not progress.

- Government support be provided through the Queensland College of Teachers to the enhanced mentoring of graduate teachers in their first two years of teaching by experienced teachers.

TEACHING CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

- Universities are appropriately resourced to provide for quality practicums for student teachers.

- Schools are appropriately resourced to provide professional support and time release for supervising teachers.

- University partnerships are established (rather than teaching centres of excellence) with a range of schools and clusters across the various education sectors to research, develop, and disseminate best practice in respect to teaching practicums.

INDEPENDENT EDUCATION STANDARDS AUTHORITY

- The autonomy of the QSA is retained and that it is properly resourced to meet its core functions which should be revised in relation to the legislated responsibilities for ACARA.

- There is no merger of the QCT into a proposed independent education standards authority; the independence and core focus of the professional body should be retained.

- The present arrangements for decision making regarding approvals for funding of new and present non-government schools continue to remain with the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board.

- The Non-State Schools Accreditation Board retain its independence as a single authority and no merger of the Board’s functions or legislative responsibilities be made into a proposed independent education standards authority.
OBJECTIVE 1: Getting Ready for School

Improving children’s development, wellbeing and school readiness

KINDERGARTEN

Context

The above objective is currently being implemented in Queensland across the state so that all children aged 3½ to 4½ years will have access to kindergarten services by 2014, and be ready for the next stage of their schooling. In the schooling sector it will occur through the development of 240 services in a suitable state school where available. Where more school sites are required to meet unmet demand, other non-state (Catholic and independent) schools are being identified by the Office of Early Childhood Education and Care.

Brisbane Catholic Education’s Position

Brisbane Catholic Education strongly endorses and shares the Queensland Government’s commitment to Objective 1.

We also strongly endorse the right of parents to choose the type of education from the outset of their children’s education as it will be initiated through the kindergarten program.

It is therefore essential that:

(i) the level of parental choice and access to what is available to parents in P-12 Catholic schools and kindergartens in the Archdiocese of Brisbane is at least maintained;

(ii) a higher level of collaborative, transparent decision making and availability of financial and planning data for the proposed 240 identified schools sites for the kindergarten program is provided; and

(iii) equitable capital and recurrent funding is available for the establishment and ongoing operation of viable and competitive kindergarten services.

Rationale

The Queensland government’s initiatives in the provision of universal access for children aged 3½ to 4½ years to a kindergarten program by registered and qualified four year trained early childhood teachers and licensed under childcare legislation is welcomed.

The provision of these services in Queensland in long day care centres, privately run kindergartens and on some school sites has brought with it a level of unprecedented planning complexity and potential for the diminishment of parental choice.
**Parental Choice**
In the absence of appropriate levels of stakeholder involvement in planning and decision making and of government resourcing support, this complexity may negatively impact on the rights of parents to choose the type of education from the outset of their children’s education, i.e. in the kindergarten program.

The right to parental choice in the education/learning area and the Queensland government’s continuing commitment to this right may be called into question if some features of the current implementation processes and outcomes remain unchanged.

It is acknowledged that in the school sector 240 schools being identified through current government planning processes may be assisted with capital subsidies as well as recurrent funding to establish a kindergarten program. The selection of schools is based on an analysis of Statistical Local Areas where it is deemed that existing childcare centres and kindergartens cannot meet demand.

The program will take five years to roll out.

- **Round one** - commencing 2010:8 schools (1 Catholic school)
- **Round two** - commencing 2011:10 schools (no Catholic schools)
- **Round three** - commencing 2012:48 schools (? Catholic schools)
- **Round four** - commencing 2013:85 schools (? Catholic schools)
- **Round five** - commencing 2014:87 schools (? Catholic Schools)

**Transparent Planning and Decision Making**
Brisbane Catholic Education welcomes the opportunity to be a partner in the development and implementation of the kindergarten provision. However, no Brisbane Catholic Education school sites have been identified for the services in 2010 or 2011.

Moreover, whilst very preliminary consultation has occurred regarding the possibility of four schools being identified for 2012, no information is available on the number or location of Brisbane Catholic Education schools for 2013 or 2014.

The lack of availability of more detailed planning information regarding both the number and location of current and proposed school sites in all education sectors (State, Catholic and Independent) is prompting a deep concern about the potential diminishment of Catholic parental choice. It is also impinging on effective planning for this new and critical service.

**A more wholistic integrated approach to learning and wellbeing**
Such a model will allow for a more wholistic integrated approach to the learning and wellbeing of children, their readiness for schooling and improvement in current educational outcomes. This path for many school communities to enhance its offering to the growing community by the provision of a vertically integrated kindergarten program is represented as follows:
It is now timely for a new model of seamless integrated family support to be offered to families within our community. The school can be a place where both children and adults make social contact with diverse members of their community where links can be made to a whole range of other support services. A school which offers such a facility can therefore contribute to a community’s capacity for social and economic independence while at the same time, through immersing children in educational support networks, invests in the potential for the future.

**Staffing**
The National Quality Standard in the Quality Area: Staffing arrangements identify standards and elements to ensure safe and predictable environments for children and qualified and experienced educators encourage children’s active engagement in the learning program. Until the following staffing arrangements come into place, state staff-to-child ratios and educator qualification requirements that are in force prior to the commencement of the National Quality Standard on 1 January 2010 will continue to apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Educator-to-child ratio</th>
<th>Timeframe for compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth to 24 months</td>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>1 January 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 35 months</td>
<td>1:5</td>
<td>1 January 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 months to school age</td>
<td>1:11</td>
<td>1 January 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixed age groups</td>
<td>Proportional formula based on the above ratios</td>
<td>1 January 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualifications for teachers and assistant teachers must confirm criteria in the National Quality Standard of the Australian government. The teachers must have a diploma or degree in Early Childhood Education and Care and the assistant teacher a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. In some circumstances those undertaking programs to obtain the above mentioned qualifications can be employed before they complete their course.

Research into current employment agreements for teachers and assistant teachers employed by current long day care, independent community, state and Catholic school providers of kindergarten, indicates that staff are employed under early childhood and care agreements. Under these agreements where staff are employed on different conditions (e.g. hours per week), collaboration on industrial issues with Education Queensland is needed. These have the potential to impact on the financial viability of kindergarten operations.

Teacher supply with appropriate workforce planning and recruitment may not be an issue of concern for Brisbane Catholic Education given current university courses (Australian Catholic University will have a graduating ‘early years’ teacher cohort [54] for employment in 2013). Professional learning for staff employed by any provider (long day care, independent kindergarten or school) and early childhood staff employed in schools will be required to ease the transition between the kindergarten service and the school in which the children will be enrolled. Appropriate government resourcing for this to occur will be essential.

**National Curriculum Coordination**
Brisbane Catholic Education affirms Queensland government commitment to and alignment with a National Curriculum for kindergartens across all service.

This curriculum, based on the national *Early Years Learning Framework* (EYLF) provides direction for all educators to support and enhance children's learning and development and is focused on children from birth to five years, as well as their transition to school.
Queensland Studies Authority’s draft Kindergarten Guideline alignment with the National Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) describes principles, practices and outcomes essential for young children’s learning.

Brisbane Catholic Education looks forward to the outcome of the 2010 trial of the QSA guidelines and to working collaboratively for their finalisation in 2011.

**Curriculum Practices**
Brisbane Catholic Education agrees that differentiated play-based learning is integral to the delivery of early learning programs for children from birth. Play is one of the vehicles through which young children make sense of their world. Therefore, early learning programs must be planned, purposeful, high-quality and promote learning that is lifelong and life-giving.

Brisbane Catholic Education welcomes the opportunity to work more collaboratively with the Queensland Office for Early Childhood Education and Care through the auspices of the Queensland Catholic Education Commission in the implementation of the National Quality Standard guiding principles, quality areas, standards and elements with adequate government resourcing.

**Financial Viability**
It is understood that identified school sites will be eligible for both capital and recurrent funding from the Queensland Government.

There is currently insufficient information available to assess the financial viability of the proposed kindergarten services.

From the information that is available and research conducted in consultation with current kindergarten providers, the picture that is emerging is that, without adequate capital and recurrent funding from government, few Catholic school communities including those identified as one of the proposed school sites will be in a position to offer a kindergarten program.

It is understood that in implementing their commitment to access of every child to a kindergarten program, it is not the Government’s intention that all schools (State, Catholic, Independent) will have kindergarten facilities on school sites.

If the Queensland Government in implementing Objective 1 is seeking to continue its commitment to the right of Catholic parents to choose the type of education for their children, there is an urgent need for more detailed demographic and financial planning information in order to determine associated feasibility and viability issues.

The development of some kindergarten programs on identified Catholic school sites is in essence a **public private partnership**. Such partnerships are to the government’s financial advantage and Brisbane Catholic Education is open to pursuing such partnerships into the future.

**VOLUNTEER READING PROGRAM**

**Context**

The first objective of *A Flying Start for Queensland Children*, Education Green Paper for public consultation is titled, **Objective 1: Improving children’s development, wellbeing and school readiness**. Within this objective, it is proposed to implement a
volunteer reading program in schools to support literacy development of young learners.

**Brisbane Catholic Education’s Position**

Brisbane Catholic Education provides in principle support for the development and implementation of a volunteer reading program in Queensland schools but requires further information and clarification around the structure of the program, the training of the volunteers and its implementation process in schools.

**Rationale**

Reading to children from a range of books and other types of texts assists young children develop their literacy knowledge and skills. Engaging children in discussion about the book, its story, its characters and plot assists them to develop an appreciation for literature and a growing understanding of how texts are created and how readers make meaning from them. Leading children to predict what next or what if around a story assists them in their own development as readers and writers of stories.

Volunteers who read to children in schools can be quite easily trained in some of the simple practices that engage young learners in the way described above.

The ‘Support-a-Reader’ program referred to on p.13 of the green paper is not a read to program. It is a structured reading process that involves supporting the child to complete an independent reading of a text. The ‘Support-a-Reader’ program is in operation in a number of our schools and is usually facilitated by trained school officers and parent volunteers.

BCE supports the training of community volunteers in the ‘Support-a-Reader’ program but cautions that the existing issues around the effectiveness of the program will be encountered in this proposal. ‘Support-a-Reader’ matches an adult with a child in a one-on-one session. The more regular the sessions, the more benefit to the child’s progress. Volunteers by their nature will not be as regular or as reliable as paid school staff. If volunteers are trained in a read to approach then their participation levels can vary without significant impact on individual children’s progress.

The Support-a-Reader program aligns with the BCE’s position on literacy and its recommended approaches to literacy and reading development. If another program is used to train volunteers, it would be necessary for schools to examine the approach used and to evaluate it in terms of how closely it aligned with the school approach. It is very important and in the student’s interests that all those involved in their literacy development use an approach that matches classroom practice.

Note: It is important that any of these approaches are implemented as additional activities to reading instruction that happens in the classroom. The young learners these programs target are those who require, first and foremost, the reading development process facilitated by the teacher in the classroom. Children should not be withdrawn from the classroom when daily literacy learning and teaching is being conducted to work with trained volunteers.
OBJECTIVE 2: Getting Ready for Secondary School

Improving transitions from primary to secondary school and supporting adolescent development

Context

Within this objective, the Green Paper states the intention as: “To better meet the developmental and educational needs of young people and achieve greater depth of learning, the Government proposes to move Year 7 into secondary school in 2014.” (p16)

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Commonwealth General Recurrent Grants differ in the amount allocated to primary and secondary. The Queensland Government must ensure that both Commonwealth and State General Recurrent Grants for the non-government sector for Year 7 students will be paid at the secondary rate from 2014.

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University re-training and conversion to secondary programs need to be developed and funded as soon as possible.

Industrial agreements in place will require significant transitional funding commitments for non-government employers. The loss of Year 7 enrolments in primary and the increased enrolments in secondary will incur additional costs for employers under current industrial agreements. Government must provide significant interim funding to allow for this transition to be made by the non-government sector.

CURRICULUM

Rationale

The Year 7 Curriculum
In 2014 the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) will have developed the total curriculum for all students in Australia P-10 and some learning areas for Years 11 & 12. The Year 7 curriculum used in all schools will be the Australian curriculum. The Learning Areas for the first phase of the Australian curriculum (English, Mathis, Science and History) will have been implemented in all our schools by 2013. The Learning Areas and subjects that are part of Phases 2 and 3 will be in the process of being implemented when the movement of year 7 is proposed.

The consultation drafts of the Phase 1 curriculum areas clearly indicate Year 7 being written as part of secondary schooling. This is evident in the organisational structure of the curriculum across the Learning Areas as P-Year 2, Years 3-6, Years 7-10 and Years 11-12. From a learning and teaching perspective, this organisation is most evident in the History and Science areas and can be clearly seen in the description of the associated skills as well as the organisation and description of content.
**Developmental needs of Year 7 students**

The real implications for educators of adolescents rests in how we understand and create effective environments for those adolescents who are operating effectively and the strategies we put in place for those who are finding this new stage of development more challenging. It is the developing adolescent’s sense of self-identify and belonging within their school community that connects or alienates them from school based relationships and processes. Working with adults who have this understanding and are able to provide flexibility that enables both those who are and those who are not handling adolescent changes confidently, is essential to these students’ sense of belonging and wellbeing within the school community.

The question of the placement of Year 7 in primary or secondary school based on the developmental needs of adolescents does not have a definitive answer. The imperative is to ensure that adolescent development and needs are understood in an empathetic and practical way and that this understanding influences the creation of effective learning and teaching environments. While it is possible for this provision to be met in both primary and secondary settings, it seems more logical to have 13 year olds, who are entering adolescence, connected with others who are in the same stage of development, albeit a more developed stage, together within the secondary setting.

**Educational needs of year 7 students**

The proposed move of Year 7 into secondary schooling provides a timely opportunity to once again look at the nature of learning and teaching in the middle years so as to address some of the issues currently experienced in relation to achievement, engagement and behaviour among young adolescent learners. It is not enough to opt for either a primary or a secondary approach to learning and teaching for these students. It is necessary to engage teachers who understand the nature of these learners, who want to be significant adult educators in their lives and who are willing to work with others to create the most effective learning environments to meet learner needs and engagement.

The educational needs of Year 7 students are aligned with those typically referred to as the Middle Years of Schooling and Middle Years Learners. In Australia this approach has its roots in the 1996 report *From Alienation to Engagement: Opportunities for Reform in the Middle Years of Learning*, a national cross sectoral research project conducted by ACSA (Australian Curriculum Studies Association) and sponsored by the then Department of Employment, Educating and Training. In the last decade and a half since the report was published many examples of middle schools or middle years’ structures within schools have emerged. Many of these approaches are merely structural in nature, failing to make significant inroads into the changes in teacher practice and pedagogy that were found to be effective in engaging adolescent learners.

**Achieving greater depth of learning**

“Top performing nations around the world, including Singapore, Finland and the United Kingdom, all have Year 7 in secondary school.” *(p16)*

The assumption here is that Year 7 students in secondary school will achieve more deeply and presumably more highly than will Year 7 students in primary school. This assumption needs to be tested in our own context.

It is commonly reported that Queensland students lag behind their southern counterparts in the national tests of Literacy & Numeracy. In terms of Queensland’s NAPLAN mean scale scores for Year 7 this is correct, with evidence showing that Queensland averages are below the Australian average for all areas covered in the testing.
There are at least two significant implications to be considered. The first is the recognition that literacy and numeracy achievement is a significant indicator of academic success and scaffolding the literacy and numeracy demands of these subject areas is as important as the discipline knowledge of the subject if deep learning is to occur. In this case, primary trained teachers will make strong contributions to middle years’ curriculum areas. The second implies that teacher pedagogy and practice needs to be based as much on an understanding of the nature and characteristics of these students and how to best engage them, as it does on the subject knowledge itself. Again, the partnering of both primary and secondary trained teachers who are committed to working with young adolescents will create the best outcomes for these learners.

Transition from primary to secondary schooling

Much has been written about the transition of young adolescents from primary to secondary schooling. The transition from primary to secondary schooling requires student adjustment to change in their experience of schooling. For some this change represents an ‘abrupt disjuncture’ whilst for others the change experience is short-lived with a reasonably quick integration into the life of the secondary school. (Williams & Bowman 2002) It is imperative that practical recognition is given to the fact that these changes in education and schooling are accompanied by the physical, social and emotional changes discussed previously.

The move of Year 7 to secondary school will not establish new or different transition issues. Rather it calls for a renewed examination of what is currently known to be the significant influences on successful transitions by students and the establishment of these in early secondary practice. Less focus is required on the structure of the middle school and more is required on:

a) The establishment of environments where students experience the ‘newness’ and increased sophistication they have anticipated in a way that enables them to develop their own sense of identity and belonging in the new environment through positive relationships with adults and other students

b) The establishment of a group of teachers who understand and want to work with adolescent learners and who will work collaboratively to create curriculum programs and pedagogy that engages their learners and builds on their shared expertise in subject knowledge and expertise, literacy and numeracy expertise and pedagogical expertise

c) The establishment of teacher collaboration and practices that uses student data and their own expertise to create learning interactions that enable all students to engage in deep learning and improve levels of achievement.

The proposed move of Year 7 to secondary school is a new opportunity to support the achievement of deep learning by our young adolescents. The Queensland Government will demonstrate its commitment to this by investing in the teachers who will work with our young adolescent students in this transition.

**Facilities and Staffing**

**Rationale**

**Facilities for the secondary sector**

The move of Year 7 into secondary can potentially provide a rich and appropriate curriculum for Year 7 students into the future. This will only be the case, however, if the facilities required by our secondary colleges are supplemented to provide extra
general learning areas and increased specialist facilities to cater for this significant population increase in the secondary sector.

Initial estimates would place the provision of these facilities across all secondary colleges in Brisbane Catholic Education at between $68m and $80m. Until proper planning on each site is undertaken it is unclear what significant extra infrastructure costs might be incurred at each site. Such costs as rerouting of water mains, increases in electricity supply and other works required to be undertaken by either local councils or state government authorities would be dependent upon proper master planning. We are seeking from government a commitment to the capital funds required for planning and infrastructure so that all of our secondary colleges can be upgraded to cater for the influx of students at Year 7 level. Special planning provisions will be necessary similar to the BER provisions to assure facilities are completed in the necessary timeframes.

**Income and expenditure**

At both Commonwealth and State levels the primary General Recurrent Grant per student is significantly less than that for secondary. Brisbane Catholic Education supports the move of Year 7 to secondary on the understanding that both Commonwealth and State governments will commit to funding Year 7 at secondary rates from 2014. Brisbane Catholic Education anticipates a decrease in overall of around 675 students as Year 7 moves into the secondary sector. Enrolments are lost each year in the transition to Year 8 and we anticipate this will now take place between Years 6 and 7. Around 675 students per year move to state high schools and Catholic schools run by Religious Institutes. Given the increase in staffing required in the secondary sector our preliminary calculations suggest the impact financially upon Brisbane Catholic Education would be an approximate negative impact of $3m on 2010 figures.

Brisbane Catholic Education is seeking from government a guarantee that this negative impact on general recurrent grants will be supported by transition arrangements for the years 2014/15 as the new arrangements for Year 7 into secondary are bedded down.

**Impact on enrolments and staffing**

Based on the assumption that all Brisbane Catholic Education primary schools lose their full Year 7 cohort in 2014 and that all Brisbane Catholic Education secondary colleges enrol an extra cohort which is the same size as their existing Year 8, Brisbane Catholic Education project a net loss of approximately 675, or 14% of current Year 7 enrolments.

Our projections are that there will be a requirement for fewer teachers in our primary schools of between 140 and 150 teachers across the Brisbane Archdiocese. There would be a corresponding need for in excess of 200 teachers in the secondary sector. It is imperative that transition arrangements be made for those teachers from primary school wishing to transition into secondary. This will require significant professional development funding including release time (estimated at $370 per day on average in 2010).

The Catholic sector in the Brisbane Archdiocese is unique state wide in that there are 15 separate Catholic school entities recognised in both civil and church law. Brisbane Catholic Education as the largest of these authorities can work with displaced primary school staff to ensure, as far as possible, ongoing employment in Brisbane Catholic Education secondary colleges. However, this will be more difficult in the greater Brisbane area, in particular in the Brisbane City Council areas. In those areas it may not be possible to find alternative employment for all Year 7 ex primary teachers as the employers in the Catholic sector are largely stand-alone
schools with separate governance arrangements. Supernumerary staff from primary cannot simply be allocated to these schools. To keep faith industrially with these teachers Brisbane Catholic Education may need to carry a number of supernumerary teachers in the greater Brisbane area for 1 to 2 years.

Alternatively it may be necessary to offer to teachers nearing the end of their teaching career an option to retire early from the teaching workforce. These early retirement packages would also need to be funded by government as part of the move of Year 7 into the secondary sector.

**Adjustments to salary**

In the primary sector industrial agreements exist for senior administrative staff and for school principals. There will be a decrease of enrolments for many schools as they lose Year 7 in 2014. For staff holding senior administrative positions their position will continue for the years 2014 and 2015 before staffing is adjusted. In the case of principals and other senior administrators where the school’s enrolment falls 10% below the number required for their current salary classification, they remain at their current level in 2014 before salary can be adjusted to the new enrolment patterns.

Brisbane Catholic Education would be seeking government financial support in 2014/15 to allow for transition of senior administrative positions and principals positions to be adjusted in line with industrial requirements.
OBJECTIVE 3: Boosting Performance for All Schools

*Improving school discipline, the quality of teaching and setting high performance for all schools*

**Context**

Objective three of the Green Paper concerns ‘improving school discipline and the quality of teaching and setting high performance for all schools’. This objective is based on evidence cited in the Green Paper that ‘high performing education systems set high expectations for all students and schools and have a low tolerance for ongoing poor performance’.

It is important to note however that international evidence also shows that the pursuit of high expectations and standards for education is most effectively attained through improvement strategies driven by internal processes owned by the school staff and wider community. The main drivers of review and improvement are internal to the school but are well supported by external agencies providing well targeted and focussed support and disseminating ‘good practice’.

Objective three is most likely to be attained through targeted external support to schools from key stakeholders such as government, universities, the Queensland College of Teachers, the Queensland Studies Authority and education employing authorities and the efforts of schools themselves through their own internal school improvement processes that are supported and monitored by education employing authorities.

**REVIEW OF TEACHER TRAINING**

**Rationale**

Queensland through the Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) has a wealth of experience in respect to managing the accreditation of teacher pre-service university courses. Through the legislated responsibilities of the QCT, formal opportunities for consultation and feedback are provided to schooling authorities and the teaching profession as to the suitability and efficacy of pre-service teacher education courses.

The advent of a national curriculum and the potential move of Year 7 from primary to secondary schooling in Queensland provide a timely opportunity to review the content and standards of teacher pre-service courses as they relate to preparing teachers for different stages of schooling in relation to the national curriculum.

Maintaining well disciplined learning environments and safe and supportive school communities is a necessary and minimum requirement for all schools; the research indicates that without such an environment the learning of students is significantly compromised. There is evidence of an inconsistent approach by universities to the teaching of behaviour management strategies and developing behaviour management skills in graduates through pre-service teacher education programs in recent years. There appears to be a lack of funding, expertise and support for this critical area in pre-service programs.
While quality pre-service courses contribute substantively to ensuring teachers are well prepared to enter the teaching profession so do the various induction and support processes provided to graduate teachers by education employing authorities and schools. Effective induction of graduates into the teaching profession is a shared responsibility across education employing authorities, school communities and the graduates themselves. It is pleasing to note the proposed review will consider ‘ways to give beginning teachers strong support in their first years of teaching’.

Brisbane Catholic Education in recent years has strengthened its induction processes for graduates to ensure that a graduate’s first years of teaching are supported at both school and system level. Targeted support by government in this area would be welcomed.

The proposed introduction of ‘pre-service registration tests’ by government would need much careful consideration if it was to in any way advance the quality of teaching by graduates on entry to schools. Such testing can become one off compliance testing that targets a narrow demonstration of skills in artificial contexts. Teaching is a complex art, highly context specific the successful practice of which requires many years to master. It would be far better to target resources at increasing the quality of mentoring and support of graduates in schools by successful practitioners within the profession.

**BRISBANE CATHOLIC EDUCATION’S POSITION:**

- Any review of teacher pre-service education within universities involves the Queensland College of Teachers as a lead agency
- Any review of teacher pre-service education programs addresses the issue of skilling aspiring teachers with a well researched repertoire of behaviour support strategies
- Pre-registration tests for aspiring teachers do not progress
- Government support be provided through the Queensland College of Teachers to the enhanced mentoring of graduate teachers in their first two years of teaching by experienced teachers.

**TEACHING CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE**

**Rationale**

Teaching placements or ‘pracs’ support the practical demonstration and enhancement of teaching skills, and professional knowledge of aspiring teachers; they are a critical and essential component of quality teacher pre-service programs. The efficacy of such programs depend not only on the willing support of experienced teachers to act as ‘supervising teachers’ but also on an effective engagement by university practicum supervisors with aspiring teachers and their supervising teachers at schools.

There is evidence in recent years that the resourcing by universities of practicum supervisors to visit schools and engage effectively with aspiring teachers and their teacher supervisors has significantly decreased. Personal and professional support through the practicum for both aspiring teachers and supervising teachers is essential to a successful practicum and ultimately better quality teaching graduates.
It is becoming more and more difficult to find experienced supervising teachers willing to take on ‘prac’ teachers; the small monetary support provided in no way addresses the significant increase in workload for supervising teachers. Professional support and time release at the school level and proper resourcing of the practicum at the University level would greatly enhance the quality of the practicum.

The five proposed teaching centres of excellence located at specially chosen schools are unlikely to provide significant enhancements to the quality of a practicum for the vast majority of students. Five centres of excellence will only cater for a very small number of student teachers. Also there may be a tendency to overload teaching ‘pracs’ on the students in such schools. It would be far better to resource strategic university partnerships with a range of schools from the various sectors whereby best practice in practicum can be researched and disseminated among clustered schools.

**Brisbane Catholic Education’s Position**

- Universities are appropriately resourced to provide for quality practicums for student teachers
- Schools are appropriately resourced to provide some professional support and time release for supervising teachers
- University partnerships are established (rather than teaching centres of excellence) with a range of schools and clusters across the various education sectors to research, develop, and disseminate best practice in respect to teaching practicums.

**Independent Standards Authority**

**Rationale**

The Green Paper includes a proposal to establish an independent education standards authority to set and monitor high standards for teachers and all schools across Queensland.

The establishment of such an authority will involve the merger of three independent education authorities that presently operate in Queensland. Those authorities are the Queensland Studies Authority, the Queensland College of Teachers and the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board.

The creation of such an authority is proposed at a time of continuing significant educational change in relation to the introduction of an Australian Curriculum and the selective national public performance reporting of schools.

The proposal comes less than eight years after the announcement of the Educational and Training Reforms for the Future (ETRF); major reforms such as the implementation of Preparatory Year and the Queensland Certificate of Education within the ETRF have taken a number of years to implement and embed. As well as the ETRF, changes to the professional learning requirements for the ongoing registration of teachers through the QCT are impacting on teachers, schools and educational authorities.

There is already evidence of ‘reform fatigue’ across schools and principals; the establishment of a new body with a raft of new processes for ‘quality assuring’
schools is likely to further stretch the capacity and ability of schools to implement change effectively.

Brisbane Catholic Education notes that the establishment of ACARA will change the way in which non-government educational employing authorities and schools in Queensland engage with the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA).

ACARA now has responsibilities for:

- National Curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12 in specified learning areas
- A national assessment program aligned to the national curriculum that measures students’ progress.
- A national data collection and reporting program that supports:
  - analysis, evaluation, research and resource allocation; and
  - accountability and reporting on schools and broader national achievement.

The ACARA initiative signals an ongoing reduction in the curriculum development and possibly course accreditation functions of QSA. There remain the significant functions of testing, assessment, moderation and certification which at present are addressed at state level by QSA.

QSA has a good reputation for managing quality assurance in relation to curriculum, assessment and student certification through collaboration and consent. QSA has been integral to maintaining the externally moderated school based assessment system in Queensland.

The collaborative engagement of teachers and employing authorities from across the educational sectors has helped produce high levels of co-operation and in-kind support across all educational sectors in Queensland. QSA and its predecessors have been strongly supported by Brisbane Catholic Education.

The proposed merger of QSA into the new authority comes at a time when there is some evidence to indicate that the infrastructure and support services for some QSA functions (namely year 11/12 accreditation of work programs and moderation processes) has diminished in recent years. QSA does not presently have the capacity to progress new initiatives within its budgetary process separate to that of EQ budgeting priorities. Brisbane Catholic Education requests urgent attention to ensure that QSA has the governance and funding to develop and address its core functions.

The proposed merger comes eight years after the significant merger of Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC), the Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies (QBSSSS) and the Tertiary Entrance Procedures Authority (TEPA). Adjusting to the merger of QSCC and QBSSSS on schools and authorities was felt by schools and schooling authorities for a number of years. No evaluation or public reporting of the benefits of that merger has yet been carried out.

The present Queensland College of Teachers (QCT) will no longer operate as a separate authority with the establishment of the proposed new authority. The present purpose of the QCT is to regulate, enhance and promote the teaching profession in Queensland in the best interests of the public and the profession. The proposed merger has the potential to negatively impact on the independence of the Queensland College of Teachers.

The QCT receives no funding from government; operating costs are covered by income derived from registration fees from the profession.
BCE along with unions and other employing authorities have a long history of productive engagement with the QCT (formerly Board of Teacher Registration). BCE and its teachers have confidence in the independence of the QCT and the manner in which it enhances and promotes the quality of teaching in Queensland through discharging its registration and pre-service teaching course accreditation functions.

Queensland (along with South Australia) has a wealth of experience in respect to managing teacher registration and accreditation of teacher pre-service university courses. There is a significant body of expertise held within QCT to ensure proper quality assurance for initial and ongoing registration of teachers from both within and those applying from outside of Australia. There are no examples in Australia where the functions of teacher registration and accreditation of appropriate courses are not jointly held by an independent body.

There is no evidence to suggest that a merger of QCT into a larger standards authority would produce a better quality teaching profession in Queensland.

At present the accreditation of non-state schools in Queensland is addressed through legislative powers held by the Non-State Schools’ Accreditation Board (NSSAB). The NSSAB powers not only relate to the establishing and monitoring of standards as proposed for the new authority in the Green Paper but to the eligibility of schools for government funding. The establishment of the proposed new authority will impact negatively on the independence of the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board.

The NSSAB Funding Committee works collaboratively but independently with the NSSAB to ensure that the public can have confidence in the standards of Queensland non-state schools.

The Funding Committee has the power to assess, or reassess, the eligibility of a school's governing body for government funding for the school; and make recommendations, for the Minister’s consideration, about the eligibility of a school's governing body for government funding for the school.

The Board also has the power to accredit international schools and ‘private for profit’ schools who are not approved for any government funding.

There is no public process for the accreditation of new government schools. New schools are just “announced” by the Minister; submissions from the department are made at the time forward estimates are set by Treasury. These processes are internal.

Any accreditation standards that would apply to all Queensland schools need to be sufficiently inclusive to encompass the variety and quality of educational provision already existent in the government and non-government sector. The fostering of educational choice of school is a fundamental principle of the present Education (NSSA) Act, 2002.

NSSAB has developed a successful model for the accrediting, re-accrediting and monitoring of accreditation standards in schools that allows for schools and systems to demonstrate in a variety of ways that they are meeting the accreditation requirements. An inspectorate model as suggested in the Green Paper does not align with the present and successful performance monitoring conducted by the QSA and NSSAB. The level and frequency of monitoring and reporting against standards need to align with current educational evidence relating to improving the quality of educational provision.
The above features of successful school review and improvement, well developed in research literature, are strongly represented in Brisbane Catholic Education’s approach to review and improvement and underpin BCE’s cyclical review reporting on accreditation requirements to the NSSAB. The underpinning values and approaches named above have a strong rationale rooted in the most successful practice internationally.

Investing powers in a single authority that also monitors accreditation with respect to school discipline and student welfare needs to be assessed in relation to the present powers held by the Children’s Commission.

The Office of Non-State Education works with a small board and a secretariat of seven people. Its current arrangements are both efficient and effective.

BCE would not support any ‘one size’ fits all process for monitoring and reporting against educational outcomes and improvement for all schools in Queensland. BCE explicitly rejects the use of inspectors to monitor and report against educational outcomes and improvement cross all schools in Queensland.

**Brisbane Catholic Education’s Position**

- The autonomy of the QSA be retained and that it be properly resourced to meet its core functions which should be revised in relation to the legislated responsibilities for ACARA

- There is no merger of the QCT into a proposed QESA; the independence and core focus of the professional body should be retained

- The present arrangements for decision making regarding approvals for funding of new and present non-government schools continue to remain with the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board

- The Non-State Schools Accreditation Board retain its independence as a single authority and no merger of the Board’s functions or legislative responsibilities be made into a proposed QESA.