

Media Release

Debate on teacher training needs to focus on quality, not quantity

Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) says the current debate on teacher education must focus on the full range of qualities needed to produce effective teachers.

“As students receive their HSC results this week, it’s a good time to reflect on the outstanding contributions made by the teachers in schools across all sectors, particularly our younger teachers,” CECNSW A/Executive Director Ian Baker said today.

“It’s also timely to address the debate that has been simmering for some time about whether entrance levels for teaching courses are too low or too high,” Mr Baker said.

“There is no doubt that more teachers are graduating from our universities than ever before.

“It is pleasing that so many young adults are choosing teaching as a profession and that the shortage of teachers we once feared has not transpired.

“The focus, therefore, should now be on identifying people with the right attributes to become successful teachers.”

Mr Baker said teaching is the single biggest in-school influence on student learning outcomes.

“It is a critical vocation that requires a range of essential skills - not the least of which is being able to communicate complex ideas and concepts to a classroom of children and young people with different cognitive abilities, capacities and interests.

“Parents and school leaders expect, at the very minimum, their teachers to be literate and numerate.

“For this reason, CECNSW has supported initiatives by the NSW Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, to improve minimum standards for the next generation of NSW school teachers.

“We also agree with the Minister that ATAR levels alone are ‘a blunt instrument’ for selecting the best candidates for teaching courses – particularly as many of those entering teaching courses are not directly from Year 12.

“In this regard, CECNSW is of the view that all universities should develop and implement systems such as interviews and aptitude tests to identify the best teaching candidates from those who can address the new minimum standards for entry.”

NSW Catholic schools authorities work closely with relevant universities to develop students undertaking teacher education programs, Mr Baker said.

NSW’s 588 Catholic schools employ some 20,000 teaching staff and educate more than 253,000 students – or one in five NSW school students.

Yesterday, 25 Catholic school students received awards celebrating their achieving first place in a 2016 HSC course of study.

Almost one in four students who participated in the 2016 HSC was from a Catholic school.

Of the Catholic school students awarded the HSC, 87% were eligible for an ATAR (compared with the state average of 82%).

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