

10 February 2025  
MEDIA RELEASE

## Headline speakers announced for the 2025 Australian Catholic Education Conference

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and the Diocese of Cairns are pleased to announce some of our headline speakers for the 2025 Australian Catholic Education Conference:



**Sr Nathalie  
Becquart** xmcj  
Undersecretary for the  
General Secretariat of the  
Synod, Vatican



**Prof Dylan  
Wiliam**  
Emeritus Professor of  
Educational  
Assessment at the  
UCL Institute of  
Education



**Dr Simon  
Breakspear**  
Educational expert and  
founder of Strategic  
Schools



The conference MC  
will be former ABC  
reporter  
**Philippa  
McDonald**

Bishop of Cairns Joe Caddy AM said he was absolutely delighted to welcome Sr Nathalie as a keynote speaker for the conference.

“Her groundbreaking leadership in the Synod of Bishops, and her work in education, youth ministry and formation, as well as her commitment to fostering dialogue and inclusion in the Church will bring invaluable insight to those working in Catholic Education,” said Bishop Joe.

Sr Nathalie, who will present the opening keynote address, said, “I look forward to participating in the conference and sharing my experiences and reflections on the formation of young people in Catholic schools, their teachers and leaders within the global Church as it embarks on a journey of synodality.

“Together we’ll explore how Catholic Education, which plays such an important role in the Church and society, can form students and leaders who embrace a synodal style of listening, dialogue and shared responsibility to become servant leaders,” Sr Nathalie said.

NCEC Executive Director Jacinta Collins said the keynote speakers have been chosen with a focus on Catholic Education’s national strategic priorities of Faith, Excellence and Access and the conference theme, ‘hope, anchored in faith’ which intentionally aligns with the Jubilee year theme, ‘pilgrims of hope’.

“School education is a highly complex landscape today and we can often focus on what’s challenging rather than on what we are achieving,” Jacinta said. “But as Catholic school communities we have a foundation of faith that in its essence is about bringing hope and light to the world.

“For this conference we want to focus on that hope, on what is working, on building on our best practice, on identifying fresh approaches to learning and teaching, to faith formation and to the many other aspects of our work.”

**Prof Dylan Wiliam** will present a keynote on an equitable approach to educational improvement, as well as two 90 minute masterclasses on school accountability measures and developing teacher mastery. On the final day of the conference (22 August), Dylan will lead a full day workshop on the topic of *Assessment of, for and as learning*. This workshop will be limited to 200 participants and can be added onto your conference ticket or participants can register as a standalone event. See the [registration portal](#) for details.

**Dr Simon Breakspear** will lead two 90 minute masterclasses on how strategic subtraction can unlock surprising progress and how the Teaching Sprints approach can help overload educators to enhance their craft. Simon will also present the Closing Keynote.

*A final headline speaker will be announced shortly.*

“With our Bishop Joe Caddy AM, the Diocese of Cairns is excited to be hosting this significant national gathering,” said new Executive Director of Catholic Education Cairns, Durm O’Riordan. “We are looking forward to welcoming our colleagues from around Australia and are putting together a diverse program of workshop presentations and masterclasses in addition to our headline speakers.”

Catholic educators and leaders have the opportunity to present workshops and masterclasses featuring their best practice and impactful research-driven approaches in the key focus areas of Faith, Excellence and Access. **Abstract submissions are closing soon (28 February).**

The Diocese of Cairns has also partnered with Traditional Owners and Elders of the region to create a number of one and five-day In and On Country immersive experiences which delegates can add onto their conference registration to deepen their understanding of First Nations ways in the Far North.

**Early bird registration is open until 30 March at \$1,099 (save \$100).**

**Don’t miss this chance to be part of this enriching, national Catholic Education gathering. For more information and to register visit [www.2025ACEC.edu.au](http://www.2025ACEC.edu.au)**

*Thank you to our Principal Partners: UniSuper, the University of Notre Dame Australia and Australian Catholic University, the Queensland Government, and all our partners and sponsors.*

#### MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Jude Coen, NCEC - 0419 425 406 [media@ncec.catholic.edu.au](mailto:media@ncec.catholic.edu.au)

John Phelan, CEDC - 0407 580 612 [jphelan@cns.catholic.edu.au](mailto:jphelan@cns.catholic.edu.au)

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