

MEDIA RELEASE

28 February 2025



Catholic Education highlights need for sustainable solutions for remote Indigenous boarding funding.

Catholic Education acknowledges the recent funding announcement by the Labor Government aimed at supporting First Nations boarding students in remote and very remote areas but stresses that a sustainable, long-term solution is crucial for creating meaningful change.

“We appreciate the interim funding that aims to help Indigenous students catch up, keep up, and finish school,” said National Catholic Education Executive Director Jacinta Collins.

“However, we must emphasise that lasting change and equity in education for Indigenous communities in remote areas require a long-term commitment.”

One striking example is Mount St Bernard College in Herberton, Queensland where 90 out of 114 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students board. The unique needs of these boarding students, such as support for living expenses, health, pastoral care, and cultural and social development, represent a significant financial burden for families.

“The costs associated with educational boarding are substantial, and both schools and families are struggling to keep this option viable, particularly in remote areas,” she said.

“This situation has created a funding shortfall, affecting essential educational and capital needs.

“Catholic Education is focused on improving Year 12 completion rates for our First Nations students with current trends showing we have 100 per cent completion in the Canberra Goulburn region and South Australia with upward trends in other states.

“Securing long-term funding is essential to fulfill our commitment to supporting these disadvantaged learners.”

Ms Collins urged the government to make ongoing investments in Indigenous education, stressing that consistent support is vital for empowering these students and ensuring their success.

“While the recent extension of funding offers immediate relief, we must advocate for sustainable, long-term solutions to effectively tackle these critical issues.

“We look forward to working with the government to secure long-term resources for viable boarding options and improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.”

Australia’s 1,755 Catholic schools educate 820,000 or one in five Australian students in and are the largest provider of schooling outside of the government sector.

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