

The Role of Catholic Schools NSW

What does Catholic Schools NSW do?

The aim and mission of Catholic Schools NSW Ltd (**CSNSW**) is to support the Bishops of NSW in bringing to life the Church's evangelising mission through Catholic schools. To achieve this mission, Catholic schools works to improve the education and faith outcomes of students in NSW Catholic schools by creating communities of faith and learning. This task means joining the "work of education with the explicit proclamation of the Gospel" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 134), and by doing so, help students to be good citizens in society and prepare them for their eternal life with God.

In assisting schools to pursue this aim, CSNSW is responsible for:

- Receiving and distributing government funding given to diocesan Catholic schools for their day-to-day operations and for capital works;
- Ensuring that Catholic schools and diocesan Catholic School Agencies (**CSAs**) adhere to compliance requirements;
- Providing expert policy advice and coordinating policy development;
- Reporting to the Bishops of NSW on the effectiveness of Catholic education in NSW;
- Fostering collaboration and efficiency in the use of resources in NSW Catholic schools; and
- Promoting and advocating for Catholic education in NSW.

Why was Catholic Schools NSW established?

In 2016, following a review of the then 'Catholic Education Commission New South Wales' (**CECNSW**), the Bishops agreed to establish a new governing body for NSW diocesan Catholic schools. This was based on an express desire of the Bishops for more appropriate, efficient and transparent administration of Catholic schools in NSW. The new body better supports Catholic schools to meet all their obligations and enhance the delivery of Catholic education in NSW. The responsibilities and functions of CECNSW have now been transferred to this new entity: CSNSW.

How was Catholic Schools NSW set up?

CSNSW is a company whose members are the eleven diocesan Bishops of NSW. Each Bishop has responsibility for the CSA in his diocese. Collectively these systems are recognised by governments as the NSW Catholic schools system.

CSNSW derives its authority and mandate from the Catholic Bishops of NSW. In particular, a company Constitution and 'Canonical Mandates' from the Bishops of NSW outline the functions and authority of CSNSW.

The functions and responsibilities of Catholic Schools NSW

Funding

CSNSW is the recipient of all government funding for the operation of NSW Catholic diocesan schools. Under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (Cth) CSNSW is responsible to the Australian and NSW governments for the distribution of funding to Catholic diocesan schools in accordance with legislation.

This requires CSNSW to:

- Allocate recurrent funding to diocesan Catholic schools in accordance with relevant legislation;
- Ensure that diocesan Catholic schools adhere to the not-for-profit guidelines; and
- Ensure that diocesan Catholic schools comply with all school grant legislative requirements.

CSNSW is also the recipient of government funds for targeted programs that are run in NSW Catholic schools. CSNSW ensures that the allocation of all these funds, their use and acquittal are in accordance with all related funding agreements and requirements.

CSNSW receives and allocates capital funding from governments, and is responsible for ensuring the distribution, management and use of these funds complies with government guidelines.

Compliance

CSNSW develops policies and procedures in relation to certain compliance, reporting and audit requirements that apply to all NSW Catholic schools. It also provides an advisory service on existing, new or changed statutory or regulatory obligations, documentation, such as template forms and policies, and provides some training opportunities for schools and Catholic school authorities.

CSNSW provides support on other civil statutory and regulatory obligations in relation to the following:

- Child protection
- Student attendance
- School and system registration
- Teacher accreditation
- Copyright and privacy
- Freedom of information
- Workplace health and safety, and
- Discrimination.

Policy

CSNSW provides expert policy advice and coordinates policy development for all NSW Catholic schools in a range of policy areas, including:

- Catholic Mission and Identity
- Curriculum
- Assessment and reporting
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education
- Students with disability
- Vocational Education and Training and career learning
- Early Learning, and
- Student well-being.

This means that CSNSW assists CSAs in the development of education policies, research materials, benchmarking and information sharing. This work enhances the quality of education in Catholic Schools and assists in maintaining Catholic identity in education.

CSNSW also offers a range of professional learning and/or training to support CSAs across a range of policy and program areas, as well as opportunities to network and share practice.

In order to achieve this objective and inform effective policy development, CSNSW has established an internal Chief Data Office (**CDO**). The CDO will manage data collection from all CSAs, and ensure that data is shared appropriately with external partners. Data collected by the CDO will be collected in consultation and collaboration with CSAs.

Efficiency and effectiveness

CSNSW reports to the Bishops on efficiency and effectiveness indicators relating to the provision of Catholic education. This requires CSNSW to collaborate with diocesan CSAs to develop reporting frameworks for reporting to members.

Efficiency and effectiveness also requires that CSNSW identify those services that can be productively and cost-effectively provided as a shared service across NSW Catholic schools.

While CSNSW's mandate from the Bishops only applies to Catholic systemic schools, CSNSW fosters and encourages greater cooperation and the efficient and effective use of resources among Congregational schools. As governments require the efficient delivery of education services, both CSNSW and Congregational schools must meet this requirement.

Advocacy and external relations

CSNSW publicly advocates for Catholic education in NSW and Australia. This includes promoting Catholic education as an effective and important education choice and collaborating in the development of education policy. In particular, this entails advocating for Catholic schools to:

- the state and federal governments, ministers, other Members of Parliament or Parliamentary Inquiries, and government bodies;
- public bodies, including education institutes or other industry bodies;
- the media, through both responsive and proactive commentary on current issues; and
- parents and the public.

CSNSW is also tasked by the Bishops of NSW with liaising with other key stakeholders in education, including special needs and indigenous education groups, the Council of Catholic Schools Parents, Association of Catholic School Principals, the Federation of Religious Institute and Public Juridic Persons Catholic School Authorities in NSW and ACT, the National Catholic Education Commission, and other state Catholic Education Commissions.