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Dear Ladies and Gentlemen

RE: School Funding Honesty

The article last week, '[The education revolution that you'll keep paying for](#)', really was the straw that broke this camel's back.

While an opinion piece in The Sydney Morning Herald by an established columnist and academic, it is illustrative of **a problem that is repeated over the more than 30 years** I have been with the Christian school sector. I'm talking of a problem found in news coverage, opinion columns and even editorials across a range of publications during that time.

The problem is in this one sentence, published in the context of a Federal election campaign –

"It is good to remind voters the federal government [funds school education](#) this way: \$3,282 per government school student, \$9,694 per Independent school student and \$10,788 per Catholic school student."

While absolutely true, this is only half of the story, and **provides a totally misleading picture.**

The same source linked to in that sentence also provides the data that shows that state governments fund school education this way: \$12,238 per government school student, \$2,499 per Independent school student and \$2,828 per Catholic school student.

Some simple maths showing total per student funding by combining those two figures of –

- Government \$15,520,
- Catholic \$13,616,
- Independent \$12,194.

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The level of public funding of students being educated in non-government schools is certainly a matter for legitimate public debate. Christian schools do not shy away from that discussion, we are happy to make our case for the **significant contribution to 'the common good'** made by our schools and evidenced by comprehensive research published in 2020, <https://carduseducationsurvey.com.au/>.

That is not the problem that this article illustrates, and nor is the article itself the focus of our concern. Our distress lies with the **consistent and repeated publication of data of Commonwealth government school funding alone**.

The reporting of this data in isolation and without also reporting the applicable State/Territory Government funding creates a **false and misleading** impression of the levels of public support for non-government schools. This reporting feeds into divisive attempts to unwind the bi-partisan commitment over the last decade to needs-based and sector-blind funding.

As leaders of your respective key media organisations, we are calling on you to take steps to ensure that across all of your published material **Commonwealth government school funding will never be reported without inclusion of equivalent State/Territory government funding**.

This simple commitment, this straightforward step, will make an enormous difference and allow a **properly informed** debate on this issue.

Particularly during this Federal election period, your organisations play a significant role in our society functioning as an effective democracy. We implore you to put in place the necessary safeguards to ensure that this role is discharged well, that the **truth regarding school funding** is published, and that we can have an informed discussion as a society, not one fuelled by half truths.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Spencer', written in a cursive style.

Mark Spencer
Acting CEO