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ICAC inquiry: Union members demand full transparency on school funding

The union representing teachers and support staff in non-government schools in NSW and the ACT is deeply concerned by revelations that public funding for Catholic schools may have been wrongfully spent on Liberal party matters including branch stacking.

The NSW Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC) is investigating allegations that Catholic Schools NSW made illegal political donations to the NSW Liberal party at the behest of its chief executive Dallas McNerney, who has stood aside from his role.

Independent Education Union of Australia NSW/ACT Branch Secretary Carol Matthews said union members support full transparency and accountability in the use of public funding by non-government schools.

“IEU members would be deeply concerned if any public funding for non-government schools has been diverted from its intended purpose,” she said. “This is because teachers and school staff face ongoing workload pressures and resourcing constraints.”

The ICAC has heard evidence that up to [\\$265,000 in Catholic Schools NSW funding](#) may have been diverted to a conservative Liberal factional group known as the Reformers via two consultancy arrangements.

It has also heard evidence that members of the Reformers employed by Catholic Schools NSW recruited and renewed members to the Liberal party during work time.

Matthews said public funding for non-government schools should be used to improve student academic outcomes and enhance the learning experience for students.

“Responsible school expenditure includes professional learning for school staff, development of curriculum materials, support for students with disabilities, and adequate pay and working conditions for staff who deliver quality education,” she said.

The NSW government closely scrutinises expenditure at the individual school level and at the school proprietor level to ensure funding is used solely for the operation of each school.

“However, similar scrutiny is not applied to organisations such as Catholic Schools NSW that receive funding on behalf of Catholic diocesan schools,” Matthews said.

“Regardless of the findings of ICAC in this matter, there should be greater scrutiny of bodies such as Catholic Schools NSW, which receive public funding on behalf of non-government schools.”

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The IEUA NSW/ACT Branch represents over 32,000 teachers, principals and support staff in Catholic and independent schools, early childhood centres and post-secondary colleges.

Authorised by Carol Matthews, IEUA NSW/ACT Branch Secretary