CATHOLIC EDUCATION WELCOMES NEW FOCUS ON SCHOOLS PLANNING

Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) today commended the NSW Government and Opposition for recognising that non-government schools are a vital part of the state’s education infrastructure by including them in Sydney’s long-term planning for the first time.

This week, NSW Planning Minister Pru Goward released the Government’s Plan for Growing Sydney which specifically lists engagement with CECNSW and the Association of Independent Schools NSW (AISNSW) in the identification and planning of new schools.

CECNSW acting Executive Director Ian Baker said there were more than 900 non-government schools in NSW, educating around 400,000 students.

“Non-government schools teach one in three NSW students and are therefore an invaluable part of the education system in this state,” Mr Baker said.

“At a secondary school level, one in two students attend a non-government school -- so the sector is firmly established and needs to be recognised and consulted by NSW Government planners.

“We are pleased that the Government’s Plan for Growing Sydney includes direct references to meeting the land use needs of both the government and non-government school sectors.

“It also states that the Department of Planning and Environment will also work with the Department of Education and Communities and the non-government schools sector to deliver planning controls that can accommodate appropriate and timely developments at non-government school sites.”

Mr Baker said the Government’s planning blueprint also pledged to:
- review the planning process for school facilities
- identify opportunities for new and expanded school facilities in subregional plans; and
- work with the non-government schools sector to facilitate delivery of school facilities.

Mr Baker also welcomed this week’s speech by Opposition Planning spokesman Luke Foley to the Committee for Sydney, calling for the proposed Greater Sydney Commission to be charged with delivering new schools and places for the 300,000 additional students expected in Sydney by 2031 -- one-third of whom will be seeking enrolment in non-government schools, Mr Baker noted.

“We especially welcome Mr Foley’s call for more to be done at the local planning level; over the past three years, Catholic school authorities seeking to expand or build new schools were required to pay $18.5 million in infrastructure levies and charges -- costs that Government schools are not required to pay.

“Every school in NSW is non-profit and a valuable piece of NSW’s education infrastructure; it is only fair that they all be treated similarly by the NSW planning system,” Mr Baker said.

Media contact: Jim Hanna  9287 1556 | 0414 828 629