



Media Release

Labor's local infrastructure plan puts all schools on equal footing

The NSW Opposition's plan to exempt not-for-profit, non-government schools from paying infrastructure contributions to local councils will free up millions of dollars each year to build and upgrade schools, Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) said today.

CECNSW acting Executive Director Ian Baker welcomed the policy announced today by Opposition Leader Luke Foley, saying such charges – known as Section 94 infrastructure contributions - can add around 10% to the cost of a new school.

"The Catholic Education Office in Parramatta had to pay almost \$5 million to fund local infrastructure works before the local council would approve its new school in Marsden Park, which is expected to cost over \$50 million when complete," Mr Baker said.

"It is looking at paying similar charges in an adjoining council area for its next school in Box Hill.

"These are unfair imposts levied on schools which are – like government schools – not for profit.

"Councils cannot levy such charges on government schools despite all schools having similar impacts on the local environment.

"In 2012, the Victorian Government stopped such charges from being levied on non-government schools."

Mr Baker said Section 94 charges are ultimately paid by parents who - in the case of Catholic schools – already fund around 85% of the costs of building and upgrading schools.

He said not all NSW councils levied Section 94 charges on non-government schools; Labor's proposal would therefore ensure that all schools are treated equally, regardless of location.

"Many councils recognise that levy income from schools is a tiny part of their overall revenue and that the ongoing benefits schools provide to the local community outweigh the cost of new drainage and intersections."

Mr Baker also welcomed the Opposition's plans to involve non-government school bodies such as CECNSW - and its successor, Catholic Schools NSW - at the start of the planning process for new suburbs and major rezonings.

"This is a very important move because it will enable non-government school bodies to work closely with government planners to ensure space, transport and other land use priorities are considered and addressed from the outset.

"Better planning will also enable government and non-government schools to share their resources and facilities with the local community. Gone are the days when schools were locked up and off limits to the community after 3pm. In a growing city, we need to make better use of common areas and facilities."

CECNSW represents the state's 591 Catholic schools, which educate some 258,000 students and employ 27,000 teaching and support staff.

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