

March 2015

### **An Open Letter to all Catholic School Parents in Diocese of Parramatta**

Dear Parents and Carers

On Friday last week, Rev Fr Peter Williams (Administrator of the Diocese of Parramatta), Rev Fr Chris De Souza (Priest Responsible for Education), Greg Whitby (Executive Director of Schools), and I met with MPs and candidates from both the Labor and Coalition parties. Our aim was to ensure that both sides of politics were aware of the key issues affecting Catholic schools and families particularly:

1. To ensure future legislation did not prevent our schools maintaining their Catholic identity and ethos
2. To ensure a commitment to ongoing funding of Catholic schools (the state government contributes about 25% of all government funding to Catholic schools)
3. To seek a commitment to a coherent educational policy (pre to post school)
4. To seek a commitment to an increase in capital works funding and a decrease in local council charges to support the growth of Catholic schooling in western Sydney.

**Are you concerned that there is no guaranteed government funding to build new schools or expand and improve existing schools in western Sydney?**

At present, neither the NSW Coalition or Labor parties has made a long term commitment to fund capital works programs for new and expanding Catholic schools in western Sydney.

#### **The Facts**

- Across NSW Catholic schools educate 21% of the state's students, yet receive just 2% of the capital funding currently provided by the NSW Government to schools for new projects. Expressed another way, Catholic schools receive \$30 per student in capital funding from the NSW Government while government schools receive \$524 per student.
- To keep up with demand, the Diocese of Parramatta will need at least \$19.3 million in 2015-17 to build new schools and learning spaces in the north west sector to respond to growth. The Diocese will need an additional \$7.1 million to upgrade schools in Holroyd and Blacktown.
- Local Council infrastructure charges are placing an unfair burden on Catholic schools, incurring substantial additional costs.
- Over the past three years, the metropolitan-based dioceses paid \$18.5 million in levies and bonds - almost cancelling out the entire capital funding provided by the NSW Government for all Catholic schools.



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### The Facts (continued)

- Local council infrastructure charges for developments at Westmead have been quoted at \$464,000. This is money that could have been invested in the schools themselves e.g. the cost of nearly five teachers.

**This issue goes beyond party lines - this is about equality and fairness and our rights as parents to be supported in our choice of Catholic schooling.**

In the meeting, one MP noted he hadn't received any indication from any parent in his electorate that they needed a new Catholic school or that their school would require expansion

Catholic school parents were INSTRUMENTAL in major changes to proposed cuts to NSW state funding a couple of years ago.

**DON'T LET YOUR VOICE AS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENT GO UNHEARD.**

### What can you do?

Contact your school principal about inviting local MPs and Candidates to your school prior to the election.

Even if you think that your school requires no assistance at this time, it is the collective voice of Catholic school parents that can make the difference, so write or contact your local MP and candidates.

If you want some assistance in what to say or write to your sitting MP or candidate or just want to stay in touch about proposed MP visits near you, please email: [prcparrapresident@gmail.com](mailto:prcparrapresident@gmail.com).

The election is just a few weeks away on 28 March 2015. Don't let the opportunity slip past!

I look forward to hearing from you.

*Kind Regards,*

*Selina Calleia  
President, PRC  
Parramatta Diocese*

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