

## Public School Infrastructure Ignored

Following P&C Federation's Annual General Meeting, we call on the Federal Government to implement a capital grants program for public schools immediately.

Currently, if non-government schools do not have enough capital resources, they can request Federal government funding for school infrastructure via the Capital Grants Program. However, the Federal Government offers no such program for capital works in government schools.

By any measure, the bulk of infrastructure needs in New South Wales schools are in the government school sector. The most recent figures show a maintenance backlog in New South Wales government schools of \$570 million, and in its 2017-18 budget, the State Government pledged \$747 million over four years to address this, including \$160 million in this year's budget. In contrast, it was revealed this year that just seven elite non-government schools have together allocated a comparable amount (\$365 million) for new facilities and redevelopments in their schools.

P&C Federation President Susie Boyd commented "This shows how big the gap is between the have and have-not schools, and by offering capital grants only to non-government schools, the Federal Government is only increasing these gaps. Even setting aside grants, in 2016, the Federal Government spent 128% more on capital expenditure in non-government schools than in government schools, which shows a skewed priority."

The massive projected growth in school enrolments underscores the need for equitable infrastructure expenditure in schools. Already, over a third of government schools in New South Wales are operating at or over capacity, and with a growth of at least 164,000 students forecast in government schools by 2031, this will become more of a challenge that the Federal Government needs to step up to.

"More and more of our schools are bursting at the seams from the surge in students, and well over half of new enrolments in the next decade are expected in public schools", said Ms Boyd. "We constantly hear that the State Government is facing funding shortfalls from all this growth and is doubling the number of demountable buildings in schools to make room for these new students. Yet the Federal Government who controls the population growth still favours non-government schools, even though those schools are not scrambling as much to accommodate all new students."

"Offering capital grants to government schools would be a simple step for the Federal Government to ease the stress on government school infrastructure. For some schools, a Federal Government grant could make all the difference in accommodating more students in healthy learning environments. We call on the Federal Government to immediately make capital grants available to government schools at minimally the same rate as for non-government schools."

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