

Whoever is New Premier, Plenty of Issues to Tackle

Upon New South Wales Premier Mike Baird's retirement from politics, P&C Federation would like to acknowledge his services to school communities in the State, particularly his admirable commitment to implementing the Gonski reforms for school funding.

P&C Federation President Susie Boyd commented "Given that most of Mr Baird's party colleagues at the Federal level oppose the Gonski proposals, his Government's determination to implement them in New South Wales is commendable. These proposals represent the most viable means of eroding socio-economic gaps in education outcomes, and we are grateful for Mr Baird's willingness to transcend party lines and deliver what the available evidence shows is best for our state's schools."

P&C Federation also commends Mr Baird's government for increasing funding to public education. However, the incoming Premier will need to do more to address the urgent issues of maintenance and the overcrowding in school classrooms.

"The last State Budget did take steps to address infrastructure in our schools and to provide 1100 additional classrooms, but it's doubtful this will be sufficient to meet the expected increase in enrolments in coming years" Ms Boyd said. The population of school aged children in NSW is projected to grow by 267,000 by the year 2031, for which an additional 6,250 classrooms will be needed. Most of these new students (65%, or 173,000 students) are expected to enrol in public education.

Ms Boyd added "This is the most urgent issue currently facing school communities in New South Wales. Considering that the State Government reports that our budget is in surplus and almost debt free, there should be substantial scope to address this immediately. Overcrowded classrooms are among the worst environments to teach children, and seeing as these schools are fostering our country's future leaders, this is an obviously high priority."

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Media Contact:

President Susie Boyd

0418 163 665

susie.boyd@pandc.org.au

FEDERATION OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Locked Bag 40, GRANVILLE NSW 2142

Telephone: 1300 885 982

Website: www.pandc.org.au

Fax: 1800 655 866

ABN: 37 439 975 796