

## Media Release

### Back to school for Australia's biggest non-government school system

Two new Catholic schools will open their classrooms this week, bringing the number of NSW Catholic schools to 593 and the number of students to some 260,000.

Catholic Schools NSW Chief Executive Officer Dallas McInerney said one in five NSW school students attended a Catholic school, saving taxpayers some \$1.3 billion annually in recurrent and capital costs.

“Without Catholic schools, most of those 260,000 students would be enrolled in government schools where taxpayers would need to fund 100% of the cost of educating each child,” Mr McInerney said.

“Because our parents contribute to the cost of their children’s education through school fees, every child in a Catholic school on average saves taxpayers some \$3,700 per year in recurrent costs.

“Our parents – the backbone of every Catholic school community – also fund 88% of capital costs in NSW Catholic schools, saving taxpayers a further \$300 million each year.”

Mr McInerney said Santa Sophia College in Sydney’s booming northwest is a new ‘pre-school to post-school’ that will initially operate from a temporary site on the Schofields campus of St John Paul II College with 28 Year 7 students.

“It will soon move to a permanent site in Box Hill and accommodate up to 2000 students,” he said.

St Bede’s Catholic College is a new secondary co-educational school in the Maitland suburb of Chisholm, with an initial intake of 108 students.

“St Bede’s will open this Friday (2 February) to 108 students. It is being built over four stages and will eventually cater for up to 1200 students over the next six years,” Mr McInerney said.

“Each school will cost more than \$35 million when completed, funded substantially through loans and diocesan funds. St Bede’s has qualified for public funding to meet around 10% of its construction cost.”

Mr McInerney said both schools are part of the 547-strong NSW Catholic ‘systemic’ schools network – those owned and operated by a diocesan schools authority, which is the largest non-government school system in Australia.

A further 46 NSW Catholic schools are owned and operated by religious institutes such as Edmund Rice Education Australia, the Sisters of Mercy or the Maronite Eparchy.

CSNSW, a company established by the state’s Bishops, has taken over the role previously held by Catholic Education Commission NSW as the representative body of the state’s Catholic schools.

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