

MEDIA RELEASE

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WELCOME LABOR'S SOLAR SMART PROGRAM

More than one in five Catholic schools are already solar smart and others will be lining up to join Labor's Solar Schools program if the Opposition wins government.

"Catholic schools with solar panels achieve substantial cost savings, so money that was spent on power bills now goes into teaching," the Chair of Catholic Education, Greg Crafter, said.

"More than 350 Catholic schools have switched to solar panels, including all 29 schools in the Townsville diocese and all 29 schools in the Cairns diocese. They have reduced their annual power bills by \$500,000.

"The environmental impact for each diocese is equivalent to taking two family-sized cars off the road for each student, which equals 26,000 cars off the road.

"When the Townville project is fully operational (with battery storage) it will be equivalent to taking 80,000 cars off the road."

Labor leader Bill Shorten and Shadow Education Minister Tanya Plibersek made today's announcement at St Maria Goretti primary school in Redcliffe, Perth. Over 50 of Western Australia's 162 Catholic schools have solar panels, with students monitoring usage.

"Catholic Education supports Labor's project," Mr Crafter said. "There are 1750 Catholic schools across Australia and protecting our environment is an important issue for our 765,000 students, their teachers and families. We are the second largest schooling system and will be strong partners in rolling out this program if Labor is elected.

"Getting schools involved is smart. Our kids are environmental champions and this makes a real statement to students that we care beyond the classroom."

Most Catholic school solar projects were designed by Sydney-based Eco Community. Former Deputy Prime Minister and former Ambassador to the Holy See, Tim Fischer, is a patron of the company and arranged for Eco Community director Martin Oldfield to demonstrate the system to senior Vatican officials.

"From a boardroom in Rome, Vatican officials could watch in real-time the energy usage of a Catholic school in Charters Towers," Mr Oldfield said.

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