

## MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday June 5, 2019

### **Western Sydney schools plug into solar power**

Almost one quarter of all catholic schools in Sydney's west are switching to free solar power and energy efficient LED lighting, under a program tipped to save the schools up to \$1M a year in energy costs.

The major energy efficiency program was announced on World Environment Day, Wednesday, June 5 at Gilroy College at Castle Hill, with students, staff and families celebrating the commissioning of its 92-kilowatt solar PV system.

The program will be rolled out by energy services business Verdia and involves the installation of 4,286 solar panels and 16,942 LED lights across 19 Catholic primary and high schools throughout Western Sydney. The new LED lighting will provide better lighting levels in classrooms and an improved learning environment for students.

Catholic Education Diocese Parramatta Executive Director Greg Whitby said the program would be a working demonstration to students and the school community about the sustainable generation of power.

"Our energy bills have increased by about 30 percent over the past three years and that's money we would rather invest in the education of our students," Mr Whitby said.

"This program will cut our electricity bills by almost 35 per cent. That's a great saving for our whole school community.

"It's a practical demonstration of renewable energy in action for our students as well, so we're very hopeful it will help us develop greater interest and passion in core STEM subjects."

#### **Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta energy efficiency program**

- 4,286 solar panels are being installed across 19 primary and high schools in Western Sydney, generating 1,244,045 kilowatt hours of electricity each year
- The solar panels would completely fill Parramatta's Bankwest Stadium one and half times over
- 16,942 LED lights are being installed – each using about half the amount of energy as an older style bulb and saving 1,567,747 kilowatt hours of electricity each year
- The program is expected to reduce carbon emissions at the schools by 2,306 tonnes each year – the same as taking 1,285 cars of the road and save the schools up to \$1M per year in energy and maintenance costs;
- It's estimated the investment will have a payback period of just over six years.

Verdia CEO Paul Peters said the solar PV systems installed across the 19 schools would produce enough electricity to power about 525 typical homes.

"It will be like having a 1.3-megawatt solar power generator plugged into the schools," Mr Peters said.

“The solar PV systems will produce emissions free energy on site – cutting their grid-fed supply by about one quarter.”

“Each LED light uses about half the energy of the older style lights and they last about five times longer. So, you don’t replace them as often and they draw down much less energy from the grid.

Ten schools have just completed the installation of their solar PV systems and LED lights, with the remaining schools due to complete their installation before the start of the 2020 school year.

Once the program is complete it means almost one quarter of all Catholic schools across Western Sydney will be powered by solar energy. The results of this program will be carefully monitored before being considered for the remaining 60 schools throughout the region.

### **Commercial sized rooftop solar installations in Australia**

The transformation of energy use in the education sector is part of an estimated 68 megawatts of behind-the-meter solar PV being developed and installed by Verdia across Australia. This includes the retail property, manufacturing, agribusiness, infrastructure and aged care sectors.

According to the [Clean Energy Australia Report 2019](#), the number of commercial sized rooftop solar PV installations grew by 45 percent across Australia in 2018, with Victoria, Queensland and NSW leading the way across the country. Further increases were expected for 2019.

The report also highlighted an 80 percent growth in medium scale solar PV installations between 100 kilowatts and five megawatts in 2018 across Australia, adding 102 megawatts of solar energy generating capacity.

### **Case study: Gilroy Catholic College Castle Hill**

Gilroy Catholic College Castle Hill places a strong focus on technology and a focus on early awareness and learning in core STEM subjects.

The 1,265 students at the school will now have a working example of electrical engineering in action after the installation and connection of a 92kW / 329 panel solar PV installation across its roof space.

An additional 777 energy efficient LED lights have also been installed in the school, cutting energy use and maintenance costs.

All up the energy efficient upgrade is expected to reduce the school’s energy use by up to 33 percent and cut its annual energy costs by about \$31,000.

The fit out will also help reduce the school’s annual carbon emissions by about 120 tonnes.

According to the [Australian Photovoltaic Institute](#), almost 17 per cent of homes in Castle Hill and surrounding suburbs have installed solar panels. The school’s system is one of the largest in the region.

**For media interviews and news grabs contact Verdia CEO Paul Peters 0418 837 655**

**For other inquiries contact: Genevra Howard 0499 883 238**

**Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta Solar and LED lighting program**

<b>Phase 1 complete</b>				
<b>School</b>	<b>Suburb</b>	<b>kilowatt size</b>	<b>Solar panels</b>	<b>LED Lights</b>
Holy Spirit Primary School	St Clair	49	175	411
Chisholm Catholic Primary School	South Windsor	52	185	566
Caroline Chisholm College	Glenmore Park	92	328	1,048
Xavier Catholic College	Llandilo	100	357	1,122
Cerdon College	Merrylands	87	310	1,137
John XXIII College	Stanhope Gardens	76	271	569
St. Patrick's Marist College	Dundas	63	224	897
St. Michael's Primary School	Baulkham Hills	71	304	304
St. Paul's Catholic College	Greystaynes	75	267	1,135
Gilroy Catholic College	Castle Hill	92	329	777
<b>Phase 2 in progress</b>				
Patrician Brothers	Blacktown	100	266	737
St Michaels	Blacktown	82	218	413
Emmaus College	Kemps Creek	100	266	1905
Holy Family	Luddenham	30	80	418
St Columba's	Springwood	90	240	1662
St Thomas Aquinas	Springwood	45	120	490
Bede Polding	South Windsor	90	240	1507
St Paul Apostle	Winston Hills	40	106	791
Marian College	Kenthurst	-	-	1053
<b>Total</b>		<b>1.3 MW (megawatts)</b>	<b>4,286</b>	<b>16,942</b>

### **About Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta**

Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta provides quality learning and teaching in a faith-centred environment in its 80 schools and four early learning centres in western Sydney.

Catholic schooling is a work of love, for the full human development of students, grounded in the person of Jesus Christ and at the service of society. All staff share in the evangelising mission of the Church as they endeavour to accomplish a synthesis of faith, life and culture in their communities.

Our strategic intent is to provide quality Catholic schooling by strengthening the professional lives of staff, to improve the learning outcomes for each student within a Catholic faith community.

### **About Verdia**

Verdia is an energy services company that is working with large property, commercial, industrial, government and infrastructure clients to implement renewable energy and energy efficiency projects to build business value, reduce costs and achieve environmental targets.

As the client's Development and Delivery Partner, we design, develop and deliver programs and projects that can include rooftop and captive, ground mounted solar, Corporate PPAs, energy storage and Virtual Power Plans and LED lighting programs.

Our value is in helping customers overcome the barriers faced when implementing multi-site programs or complex projects, to accelerate benefits and reduce risks.