



## Starving Catholic schools and slugging taxpayers Education State

Education Minister James Merlino's talk today of 'a significant increase in parents actively choosing to send their children to government schools' is an own goal – not something to boast about – Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd (CECV) Executive Director Stephen Elder says.

'It's fine for the state government to talk about booming state school enrolments, but they are denying parents' choice and crushing aspiration by starving Catholic schools of the support needed to meet demand,' Mr Elder said, 'placing bigger burdens on government schools and taxpayers in the process.'

'The Catholic sector already takes a huge load off the budget. We provide an education for more than 210,000 students, close to a quarter of the state's schoolchildren, in Victoria's second biggest school system.'

'If just 10% of our students were forced into the state sector due to inadequate facilities, Treasurer Tim Pallas would need to find an additional \$160 million every year.'

'In recurrent funding alone, every student in a Catholic school saves the taxpayer 75% of the average cost of educating a student in a government school. This amounts to some \$7,500 per student each year – or nearly \$100,000 over the 13 years of each student's school life.'

'The arbitrary capping of student numbers as a condition of a planning permit also prohibits schools to respond to demand from the local community. Local councils arbitrarily cap our total enrolment numbers.'

'We all know the challenges Melbourne's booming population is creating for essential services such as education. Catholic education playing our part in easing the pressure on government schools – and the taxpayer – by building schools of our own in key growth areas.'

'This year alone we opened five new schools across the greater Melbourne area, providing vital social capital as well as educational facilities in rapidly developing areas.'

'Our reward has been a massive snub from the Andrews Government. The Premier has been happy to hand over money in the lead up to November's poll, but there has been no program allocation stretching into the future in this month's state budget. Funding has been choked off.'

'Starving our system is bad for the 100,000 families across the state with children at a Catholic school, bad for the taxpayer and bad for the public purse.'

'Our research indicates Catholic school enrolments could grow by up to a third if greater government capital support to construct the facilities needed to meet demand was available.'

'It would let us build on an established track record of making public money go a long way, with Catholic school communities already raising 80% of every dollar they spend on capital works.'

'Starving our system has the opposite effect. If the Andrews Government thinks that this is the way to build the Education State, then it's time that they went back to school.'

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