

secure funding

FOR AFFORDABLE AND QUALITY EDUCATION

Dear Parents

Catholic schools across Victoria have secured a major victory ahead of the 24 November state election.

In an unprecedented move both the Labor Government and the Liberal Nationals Opposition have pledged \$400 million in funding over the next four years to upgrade and build new Catholic and other non-government schools.

Catholic education will be the big winners from this bipartisan funding guarantee, with our schools set to receive as much as 80 per cent of the available money.

In addition, the Liberals and Nationals have said funds from the \$400 million

will go towards land purchases for school sites, a new and very welcome measure that will not only assist with the development of new schools but enable us to meet the demand for places in Catholic education that current resources can simply not accommodate.

This is not only a huge announcement for Catholic education and the largest capital funding commitment the major parties in this state have made to our schools. It is also a huge vote of confidence in the quality and strength of our schools and their contribution to the community.

With Victoria growing in a way unseen since Gold Rush days, the major parties have acknowledged the significance of our system in providing essential education services.

'We simply couldn't educate all of our kids across Victoria without our partnership with Catholic schools,' Premier Daniel Andrews has said. Opposition Leader Matthew Guy has spoken of the importance of strategically-directed education funding 'that makes sure parents have a range of education options and choice so their children get the best possible opportunities'.

Both Labor and the Liberal Nationals have said the \$400 million can also be used to support the removal of asbestos and other hazardous materials where they exist, ensuring all our schools provide safe and healthy environments for learning. They have also pledged to streamline planning regulations to let our schools expand and grow with community needs.

This capital works support for Catholic education is a massive increase on the \$120 million Labor and the Liberal Nationals committed to at the 2014 state election.

It is an acknowledgment of all the hard work you do to help our schools maintain the best facilities and the way you have publicly fought for their interests, and an unambiguous acknowledgment: Catholic education matters.

I thank you for your continued support.



Stephen Elder
Executive Director



Premier Daniel Andrews, Deputy Premier and Education Minister, James Merlino, and Member for Pascoe Vale, Lizzie Blandthorn, at Corpus Christi School, Glenroy for the ALP's funding announcement with Executive Director, Stephen Elder, school principal, Stephen Lucardie, and student leaders from the school.

Bipartisan guarantee: \$400 million for non-government schools over the four-year life of the next government

Silence from the Greens

While the major parties have made unprecedented funding guarantees for Catholic education, the same cannot be said of the Greens' education policy. Catholic education has written to the party with specific reference to the Greens' education policy at this State Election, but at the time of publication had not received an acknowledgment, let alone a direct response.

Material the Greens have distributed in the marginal Labor-held electorate of Richmond highlights the party's belief that the ALP's support for Catholic schools through the \$400 million capital fund is a 'failure'.

This is a major cause of concern for two reasons. First, the Greens appear reluctant to recognise the role Catholic education has played for over 150 years in delivering a high-quality, low-fee education that is as open and accessible as possible. Despite their social justice rhetoric, the Greens' education policy suggests they seem unwilling to support the work of Catholic schools in providing education to some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised members of our community, including asylum seekers and refugees.

Second, although the Greens hold only three seats in the Victorian Legislative Assembly, the chamber of the Parliament which decides who will form a government, many commentators expect that they will increase their numbers at this election. This means the Greens could play a significant role in determining which party forms government, and influence the education policy which passes into law.

Given the absence of engagement with the Catholic sector, and their now-stated education policy position, it is possible that the Greens could block the \$400 million funding that the major parties have committed to. This would be a hugely damaging blow to the plans for building and refurbishing of Catholic school facilities in Victoria.

Catholic education: the road to fair funding

Catholic education in Victoria has a long and proud history that dates back almost to the very beginnings of European settlement in the Port Phillip Bay area.

Following the establishment of our first schools in the 1840s, Melbourne's first bishop, Bishop James Goold, called for congregational orders from his homeland, Ireland for assistance. Many priests, nuns and brothers made the long journey south to help educate the children of the young colony and by 1858 there were over 100 schools in the diocese.

The introduction of the Victorian Education Act of 1872 had a significant impact on Catholic education, with government funds directed towards supporting the fledgling government school system at the expense of Catholic schools.

With the arrival of Daniel Mannix in 1912 the Catholic sector continued to grow, with a renewed focus on government support for Catholic schools.

The long boom and population growth of the 1950s and '60s put enormous strains on our schools. In 1963, the Menzies Liberal government provided financial aide to the non-government

sector for the first time in nearly 90 years. This was followed by support from the Victorian government led by Henry Bolte in 1967 and at the 1969 federal election, support for Catholic schools became a bipartisan policy when embraced by the Australian Labor Party, led by Gough Whitlam.

While immigration from Vietnam and other Asian countries and, more recently, Africa, has continued to change the face of Catholic education in Victoria, the mission of providing a quality, accessible, faith and values-based education, which stretches back to Bishop Goold, has not only made us the second largest school system in the state by far, responsible for almost one in four students, but continues to spur our schools forward.

State politicians have recognised the role of Catholic education and responded to your lobbying efforts. The \$400 million capital works package promised this year (risen from \$120 million in 2014) adds to the legislated funding commitment from 2014 that annual funding for each child in Victorian Catholic schools will equal 25% of the cost of an education in a government school, later legislated by the successful Labor Government.



Why capital funding matters

The capital funding commitments by the Labor and Liberal-National Parties are of huge significance not just to Catholic schools, but to Victoria.

Over the next four years our schools will receive the lion's share of \$400 million for new and upgraded facilities.

This will not only assist our school communities and you as parents by providing the buildings, learning spaces and other infrastructure required to guarantee that Catholic schools can meet ever-evolving curriculum needs and the demands of a twenty-first century education system.

It will also cement Catholic education's role as the second most significant school system in the state.

This year alone we opened five new schools across the greater Melbourne region, from Torquay to Cowes on Phillip Island, providing vital community hubs as well as education facilities in rapidly developing areas.



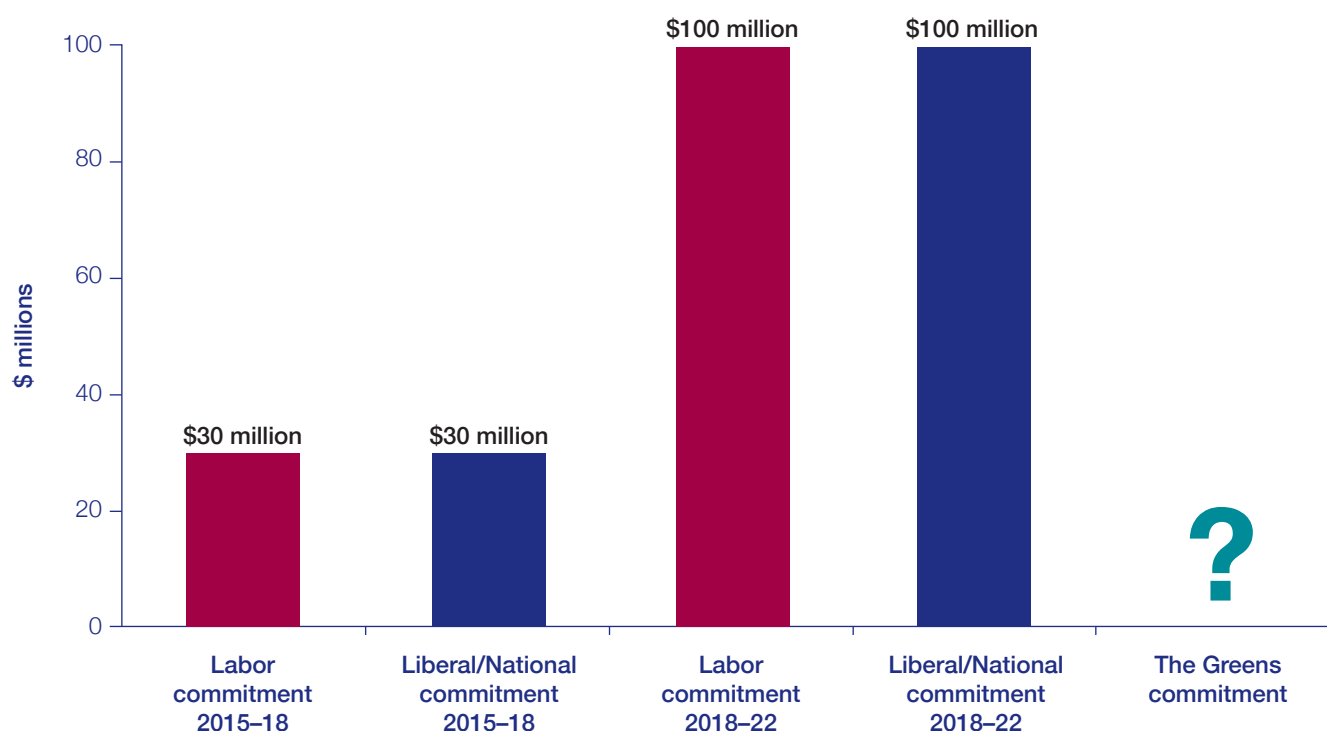
Liberal Leader Matthew Guy visiting St Louis de Montfort's School, Aspendale to announce the Liberal Nationals capital funding commitment, with Shadow Minister for Education, Tim Smith, Shadow Minister for Planning, David Davis, Liberal candidates for Mordialloc and Carrum, Geoff Gledhill and Donna Bauer, with student leaders from the school.

The Labor and Liberal-National Parties have recognised the significance of our schools and the contribution they make to building communities.

We will now be better equipped to meet the demand for schools in the growth corridors of Greater Melbourne and in ever-growing regional centres. We will also be better able to support schools in established suburbs and parts of

the inner city where the number of families seeking a Catholic education continues to increase.

In short, the capital funding commitments will underpin the growth of a new, expanded and stronger Catholic school system able to maintain its timeless gospel values and traditions of quality, openness and inclusion into the future.

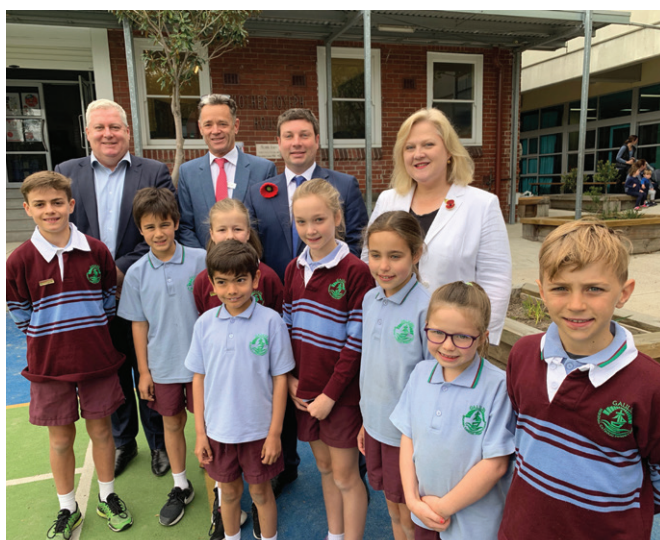




Deputy Premier James Merlino visits Mercy College, Coburg with Labor Member for Pascoe Vale, Lizzie Blandthorn.



School leaders from St Patrick's School, Stawell meeting Deputy Premier James Merlino during his visit to the school.



Shadow Minister for Education, Tim Smith, visiting Galilee Regional Catholic Primary School, South Melbourne with Albert Park candidate Andrew Bond and Upper House Member Margaret Fitzherbert.



Liberal Shadow Education Minister, Tim Smith, with Liberal candidate for Narre Warren South, Susan Serey and school leaders from St Kevin's School, Hampton Park.

Authorised by Stephen Elder, CECV Executive Director, 228 Victoria Parade, East Melbourne VIC 3002

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For further information contact the Director of Catholic Education in your diocese:

Archdiocese of Melbourne
execdirector@cem.edu.au
(03) 9267 0228

Diocese of Ballarat
director@ceoballarat.catholic.edu.au
(03) 5337 7135

Diocese of Sale
director@ceosale.catholic.edu.au
(03) 5622 6600

Diocese of Sandhurst
director@ceosand.catholic.edu.au
(03) 5443 2377