

Governments must step up on funding school infrastructure

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Over the next 10 to 12 years public school enrolments will grow by 23 per cent, demanding a major commitment to expenditure on school infrastructure and a thoroughly informed and well-planned program of public works.

To adequately meet public school infrastructure needs across the state, the NSW Government must ensure that school rebuilding programs and new school developments are fully funded, appropriately staffed and operational in a timely manner.

For many years, successive state governments have failed to adequately address the maintenance backlog of an ageing school infrastructure. Failure of the State Government to immediately address this backlog will continue to affect school communities and teaching and learning programs.



Of equal concern is the systemically inconsistent and ad hoc approach to school infrastructure projects.

Federation is aware that the Department's approach has varied across projects with regard to accommodating the professional views of teachers, considering subject-specific and specialist teaching requirements, identifying and respecting staffing allocation issues, transition arrangements and the general amenity needs of staff and students.

In this context, Federation recognises the efforts of members to address local concerns. However, a centralised process with the direct involvement of Federation is ultimately the best means by which to ensure that all future infrastructure projects are able to address all needs.

Federation welcomes the recent commitment by the Department to work with the union to revise existing policies and establish clear protocols and guidelines for school infrastructure projects.

Federation Organisers will support members in affected schools to implement the new protocols and guidelines as soon they are developed and agreed to by Federation and the Department.

Prior to such an agreement being reached, Federation will continue to engage with and organise members to hold the Department to account when it initiates infrastructure projects, to ensure that the views of the teaching profession are heard.

The NSW figures reflect the Federal Government's projection of growth in public school enrolments.

Federal Government figures project significant growth in public school enrolments over the next decade at a rate much greater than the public system's current share.

At present, 65.6 per cent of all students attend public schools. The Federal Government predicts that 78.5 per cent of the additional 367,000 student enrolments will attend public schools.

Despite these projections, the Federal Government is committing an extra \$300 million to private school infrastructure.

Federation condemns the Federal Government for directing precious government resources to non-government schools while providing no infrastructure funding to public schools.

The national Fair Funding Now campaign remains a critical platform to highlight this infrastructure inequity and the means to put pressure on all federal politicians to develop policy that will deliver adequate infrastructure funding for public schools.

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