

## State \$8bn better off because of Catholic schools



Catholic Parents Association chief Peter Grace with, from left, Essence Abiah, Hamish Burnicle, Liam Burnicle and Pearl Agleam Bender at St James Catholic Primary in Glebe, Sydney. Picture: John Feder

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### EXCLUSIVE

By **JOHN FERGUSON**, VICTORIAN EDITOR

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Governments would have to find nearly \$8 billion in capital funding to house the overflow of students if the NSW Catholic school system was removed from Australia's education landscape.

An Ernst & Young study has quantified the impact — and benefit — of the 600 Catholic schools in NSW, which educate 250,000 students and effectively save the state and federal budgets billions.

The report shows that from 2018 to 2022, the recurrent savings to the government of having a Catholic system will reach a cumulative total of \$2.6bn.

The firm modelled the cost impact of governments having to provide infrastructure for schools if the Catholic sector was removed from the equation. It found nearly \$8bn would be needed to plug the hole left by the Catholic sector, excluding land value.

While the future of the Catholic sector was confirmed by Education Minister Dan Tehan, the report nonetheless underpins the importance of faith schools.

Catholic Schools NSW chief executive officer Dallas McNerney has stressed the importance of the faith-based, non-government sector. "Government funding ensures a non-state education option is affordable to most families," he said.

“Removing it from Catholic and other non-government schools would give parents little choice but to shift their children en masse to government schools, putting taxpayers on the hook for the entire cost of their education.”

Mr McInerney said Catholic parents were performing a twin role — educating their own children and contributing through taxes to the government sector.

“Catholic school families, who already contribute to public education through their taxes, cover the additional costs through school fees that would otherwise be worn by government,” he said.

“Every student attending a Catholic school represents a net saving for government.”