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MEDIA RELEASE

Changes to school planning restrictions welcomed by independent schools

Independent schools in New South Wales welcomed the announcement, as reported in The Daily Telegraph today, that Premier Rees is proposing to recast planning laws to ensure that schools are not stymied by long and unnecessary delays in approval of upgrades to existing buildings and the development of new school buildings.

The Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW, Dr Geoff Newcombe, said: "Exemptions from council approval of the proposed development of gyms and halls in schools will assist schools to make necessary updates to the facilities they offer their students and school community.

"In recent times some councils have, for ideological reasons, tried to block the reasonable expansion of independent schools by excluding educational use in a residential zone, irrespective of the suitability of the site. This has prevented schools from undertaking essential development and upgrading of existing buildings and facilities as well as expansion to cater for enrolment demand."

"Making these changes will give independent schools the certainty that they want and need in the planning process so they can effectively plan for future needs, knowing that the plans won't unnecessarily be stalled by councils", Dr Newcombe said.

He went on to say: "Schools are located in communities, they serve communities and as such schools should continue to be located in residential areas, regardless of the type of school. This means that educational use should not be excluded in a residential area as long as reasonable guidelines, such as appropriate traffic management, are followed."

Dr Newcombe said that action by the NSW Government in this area would be very well received by hundreds of independent schools around NSW.

"The Association of Independent Schools of NSW strongly supports the Premier's intention to free up these restrictions to reasonable development."

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