

Media Release

Review into smart phones sensible and necessary say Catholic schools

Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) said today it supported the NSW Government's review into the use of smart phones and other devices by students while at school.

CSNSW Chief Executive Officer Dallas McNerney said the review into the use of devices during school hours and their impact on learning and student wellbeing was sensible and necessary given the massive growth in hand-held technology over the past decade.

"It's very timely to review the impact of smart phones and other devices on school students," Mr McNerney said.

"There are undoubted benefits to having technology at your fingertips, but the prevalence of smart phones and similar devices among students while in school has created distractions and threats that did not exist a decade or so ago.

"In many cases, they are regarded as an unnecessary diversion because of their social media, gamer and other functions.

"We are all too well aware of smart phones being the vehicles for cyberbullying and other undesirable or anti-social behaviour.

"As education leaders, it is our responsibility to understand how smart phones and other hand-held devices impact student learning and wellbeing, and to put in place any policies that are needed to help improve these situations."

Mr McNerney said each Catholic school currently determined its own policy on the use of devices during school hours.

"We support principal autonomy and therefore provide guidelines rather than set any blanket policy across all Catholic schools.

"Some Catholic schools have already restricted students from using mobile phones and similar devices during the school day and have asked parents to support their policy by avoiding contact with their children by phone while they're at school, except in emergencies.

"Other Catholic schools have embraced the technology and incorporated it into their teaching and learning strategies, while also establishing management requirements for personal use of phones."

Mr McNerney said smart phones and other devices were part of the 21st century and their use by students was well-entrenched.

"What we need to consider is whether it's beneficial to continue that use during school hours or restrict it, and how any restriction would work and be enforced.

"We fully support the government's review as an important vehicle for gathering the evidence all school sectors need to make informed decisions in the best interests of our students."

Catholic Schools NSW represents the state's 595 Catholic schools and their 255,000 students.

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