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Media release

ALL SCHOOLS MUST BE SAFE, SUPPORTIVE PLACES FOR STUDENTS

The Catholic schools sector supports the NSW Government's initiatives to create safer, more supportive school communities across the state.

Catholic Education Commission NSW (CECNSW) said all school sectors – government, Catholic and independent – were involved in developing the new measures announced today by NSW Premier Mike Baird because no school is immune from the threat of extremist violence.

"All NSW schools educate a diverse multi-faith, multicultural student body and therefore have an important role to play in shaping a safe and harmonious society," acting Executive Director Ian Baker said.

"A key goal of school leadership is to create inclusive environments where young people feel valued and appreciated," Mr Baker said.

"Schools help to build community harmony by valuing cultural diversity and teaching students to understand and accept fellow students from all backgrounds.

"Nevertheless, the threat of hate-based violence exists in our society and - as we have seen recently - school communities are not immune.

"The prevalence of social media has made it easier for violent threats and message of hate to be spread to alienated, vulnerable young people.

"We must do all we can to identify emerging anti-social behaviour before it turns into a violent incident with tragic consequences.

"The initiatives announced today by the Premier will help schools to recognise potential threats and deal with them before they result in the loss of more innocent lives."

Since 2009, all NSW schools have been able to share information on violent students under Part 5A of the NSW Education Act, a measure strongly supported by CECNSW.

Catholic schools are also strong supporters of the Australian Government's National Safe School Framework, introduced originally by Education Minister Brendan Nelson.

"All NSW schools are united in their aim to develop safe and cohesive environments, especially Catholic schools which educate almost 254,000 culturally diverse students - including more than 60,000 students who are other than Catholic," Mr Baker said.