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Picture: DEAN LEWINS

HOLY VISIT

JUSTIN VALLEJO SYDNEY

LIKE a rock star taking the stage, Pope Benedict XVI arrived to thousands of cheering pilgrims lining the streets for their first glimpse of the Holy Father on Australian soil.

With his signature red leather shoes, the Pope caused wide-

spread rejoicing across Sydney as he touched down yesterday to mark the beginning of World Youth Day week.

From all corners of the world they have come, divided by race, language and culture but united in the hope of seeing and hearing the Pope address hundreds of thousands of Catholic pilgrims.

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Schools shun PM's computer revolution

LUCY HOOD
EDUCATION REPORTER

PUBLIC high schools are shunning Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's \$1.2 billion digital education revolution because they cannot afford to run more computers.

In a move that threatens to

derail Labor's key election promise of an education revolution, between 20 and 40 South Australian secondary schools will not make an application to the National Secondary School Computer Fund.

The schools argue the benefits of new computers will be outweighed by the burden of running

them, such as installing extra power points, training teachers and paying for software, maintenance, power and the internet.

Schools already are struggling with lower Education Department allowances for electricity and many are reluctant to add to their power consumption.

An analysis by a top public

school found that for every \$1 spent on a new computer, it would cost at least another \$1 to run.

SA Association of State School Organisations director David Knuckey said many schools would not apply for new computers unless they were guaranteed more money for running costs.

"Schools are fearful of applying

because of the financial burden and until they get clarification, many simply can't take the risk," he said.

The fund, the pillar of Mr Rudd's education revolution, aims to give every Year 9 to 12 student access to a computer by achieving a computer-to-student ratio of 1:2 at every school.

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WIN FREE PETROL FOR A MONTH - TOKEN PAGE 2

Officials 'ignore' school violence

LUCY HOOD
EDUCATION REPORTER

THE Education Department and Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith have been accused of ignoring the escalating violence in Adelaide schools.

Despite a spate of recent incidents, a Freedom of Information request has revealed there has been no correspondence between the Education Department and SA Police either by post, fax or email, following a stabbing at Golden Grove High School on May 22 and a bashing at Salisbury High School on May 27.

Opposition education spokesman David Pisoni, who requested the information under FoI, said there

were no statistics available on violent incidents at SA schools in the last two years.

This is despite Jane Lomax-Smith's claims that "safety audits" were being encouraged at schools by safety program *School Watch*.

Mr Pisoni said the department had failed to ensure recent incidents wouldn't be repeated.

"The minister says incidents of violent school invasions are 'clearly police matters', yet there is no evidence the department is working with SA Police on strategies to ensure the safety of students and staff in our schools," he said.

The Education Department did hold crisis talks with SAPOL last month,

however it refused to reveal details of the meeting.

Education Department chief executive Chris Robinson said extra safety measures had been introduced following the meeting.

"While incidents in schools are documented centrally by the department, schools are encouraged to have a close relationship with their local police and involve them where required," he said.

Mr Pisoni said Dr Lomax-Smith "must insist" that her department is communicating effectively with others such as SAPOL and Families and Communities.

"Her softly, softly approach is unacceptable," he said.

Dr Lomax-Smith said: "The Education Department chief executive met police

and a series of school safety measures was announced two weeks ago."

But the two incidents have raised serious concern about the safety of students and teachers in schools.

In late May, three girls disguised in school uniforms allegedly bashed three female students at Salisbury High School over a netball dispute.

Days earlier, a Year 10 Golden Grove High School student allegedly stabbed another Year 10 student in the thigh over a minor football match altercation.

The latest incident occurred early last month when two boys allegedly attacked a teacher and a student at Para Hills High School after entering the school's grounds with several other youths.



ARREST: Girls are held by police over a Salisbury High School assault in May.

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PM's computer move shunned

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Last month, 64 SA schools received funding under round one of the scheme after being identified in an audit of having a computer-to-student ratio of 1:8 or worse.

In round two, which opens today, 182 SA schools can apply for funding, including 114 government schools, 39 independent schools, and 29 Catholic schools.

Banksia Park International High School chairman Rob Silva said school managers did not know where they would find the money to support the new computers.

"There are significant upfront and ongoing costs with installing new computers (and) if the State Government is not going to fund those additional costs, we would have to think very carefully before applying for new computers," he said.

The state's peak secondary school body has revealed the SA Education Department informed them it would not allow extra money left from each \$1000 computer grant to be used for running costs.

That contradicts federal Education Minister Julia Gillard's declaration last month that buying computers through bulk purchasing arrangements would allow for savings to be used to help cover running costs.

South Australian Secondary Principals Association president Jim Davies said in discussions with the department he was told any extra money could be spent only on hardware, such as keyboards and screens.

"The \$1000 will be required to pay for the computer and the change will be put aside for future hardware purchases such as keyboards or screens," he said. "We won't be able to use it for training and development or extra power points."

"There is no doubt the haste about trying to get computers in schools has put pressure on people in a number of ways."

An Education Department spokeswoman said: "The Federal Government's policy says that any savings achieved through purchasing efficiencies can be used by states or sectors for on-costs associated with the initiative."

Mr Davies said extra computers would mean increased energy bills for schools. He said that was a great concern because of the Education Department's decision to cut energy funding for schools to 2000-01 consumption levels and last year ask schools to cut energy costs by \$4.3 million in three years.

There is no doubt the haste about trying to get computers in schools has put pressure on people in a number of ways - JIM DAVIES



"How do we meet our energy bills with extra computers?" he said.

Ms Gillard did not directly address the schools' concerns, saying round two of the funding would close on October 9. "The Rudd Government will continue to work with all state and territory governments and all state independent and Catholic school systems to deliver the digital education revolution," she said.

At the Council of Australian Governments meeting last week, Mr Rudd agreed to pay states for the extra costs associated with the new computers and other election promises, following threats by NSW Treasurer Michael Costa they would refuse new computers unless extra funding was provided.

The agreement, however, is unlikely to allay schools' fears as details of the extra funding will not be negotiated until the end of the year.

State Opposition education

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Is the education revolution more spin than substance?

spokesman David Pisoni said schools "shouldn't hold their breath" for extra funding.

"First it was a computer for every student, then it was one for every Year 9 to 12 student and now it's one for every two secondary students," he said.

Education Minister Jane Lomax-Smith said: "This is a Federal Government initiative and we will be fighting to make sure SA gets more than its fair share of funds."

Association of Independent Schools of SA executive director Garry Le Duff said they had concerns about resourcing.

"What additional infrastructure do we need to maximise the use of these computers and will schools have the time to strategically plan how to build them into the (curriculum)?" he said.

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