

\$690 MILLION SPEND

Schools splurge, but cash stashed

\$500m in accounts

TIM WILLIAMS
EDUCATION REPORTER

MORE THAN 90 public schools would be gifted \$690 million for upgrades in a State Government pledge, but a report has questioned whether some schools are overfunded or not using resources for their intended purposes.

Labor's funding announcement yesterday followed an Auditor General's report that found public schools and preschools had half a billion dollars stashed in their accounts. The schools' figure of \$457.4 million was up 150 per cent since 2005.

The report suggested the Education Department should monitor schools with "excessive" amounts in reserve and the department has conceded it needs to improve oversight.

Parents yesterday welcomed Labor's new spending commitment but said a historical lack of money for upgrades was why schools had been forced to scrimp and save for years towards projects — and they don't even get to keep most of the interest earned.

Inconsistent financial advice from the department has also been blamed for confusion over how much schools should keep in reserve. One school held \$13 million, while 10 had more than \$3 million and 126 had more than \$1 million.

The director of parent group, the SA Association of State School Organisations David Knuckey, said schools "don't receive anywhere near enough money" for infrastructure. He said schools were independently audited every year, and dismissed any suggestion they were "robbing children today" to hoard for the future.

He said the accounts, collectively known as the SA Schools Investment Fund, were originally meant to help schools save for projects, until the Government decided to keep the interest earned from state funding for itself.

SA Secondary Principals Association president Peter Mader said both secondary and primary principals had

called on the department to make schools provide "greater clarity on the commitments behind the large balances".

"That would raise 'community confidence' that schools were doing the right thing by both current and future students, he said.

A SASPA analysis in 2015 found an enormous and growing divide between cash-rich and poor schools and blamed inadequate and unfair funding. It found schools that could were stockpiling money to guard against government cost-shifting.

"The department agreed "in principle" with the Auditor General.

"While it is important that schools maintain a high level of autonomy in relation to allocating their funds, we plan to strengthen existing policies with the aim of ensuring money is spent in the most effective and timely manner to get the best outcomes for students," a spokesman said.

"This year we removed a key financial uncertainty for schools by agreeing to centrally fund utility bills for all public schools and preschools."

The SA Primary Principals Association backed the need for scrutinising large accounts, but said very few of its members were in that position.

Premier Jay Weatherill described yesterday's \$690 million announcement as "the largest single investment in public education in the history of this state".

Asked if the money would ease pressure on overflowing eastern suburbs schools, Education Minister Susan Close said the goal was to make other schools "more attractive" so parents felt they had good options elsewhere.

She said the commitment was in part about "understanding what the maintenance backlog is" in public schools. Liberal education spokesman John Gardner said a Liberal Government would honour the upgrades, while criticising Labor for failing to shift Year 10 into high school.

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WHAT YOUR SCHOOL WILL GET

SCHOOL	AMOUNT	SCHOOL	AMOUNT
Aberfoyle Park High School	\$10m	Modbury High School	\$7m
Adelaide Secondary School of English	\$5m	Moonta Area School	\$4m
Aldinga Beach B-7 School	\$5m	Mount Barker High School	\$6m
Ardtornish Primary School	\$5m	Mount Barker Primary School	\$7.5m
Australian Science & Mathematics School	\$3m	Mount Compass Area School	\$5m
Balaklava High School	\$4m	Mount Gambier High School	\$6m
Banksia Park International High School	\$9m	Murray Bridge High School	\$20m
Belair Primary School	\$5m	Murray Bridge North School	\$5m
Black Forest Primary School	\$5m	Naracoorte High School	\$5m
Blackwood High School	\$7m	Norwood Morialta High School	\$30m
Brighton Primary School	\$5m	Nuriootpa Primary School	\$7.5m
Ceduna Area School	\$4m	Ocean View P-12 College	\$5m
Charles Campbell College	\$11m	Para Hills High School	\$5m
Christies Beach High School	\$8m	Parafield Gardens High School	\$10m
Clare High School	\$5m	Parafield Gardens R-7 School	\$6m
Craigmore High School	\$10m	Paralowie School	\$12m
Cummis Area School	\$4m	Pasadena	\$10m
East Marden Primary School	\$7.5	Playford International College	\$3m
Elizabeth North Primary School	\$5m	Plympton International College	\$3m
Elizabeth Vale Primary School	\$7.5m	Port Lincoln High / Special School	\$15m
Findon High School	\$10m	Reidy Park Primary School	\$5m
Fregon Anangu School	\$15.7m	Renmark High School	\$5m
Gawler and District College B-12	\$10m	Yennella East College	\$10m
Glenelg Primary School	\$7m	Roxby Downs Area School	\$7m
Glossop High School	\$6m	Salisbury High School	\$10m
Golden Grove High School	\$10m	Seaford Secondary College	\$8m
Golden Grove Primary School	\$6m	Seaton High School	\$20m
Grange Primary School	\$6m	Seaview High School	\$5m
Grant High School	\$7m	Settlers Farm Campus R-7	\$5m
Greenwith Primary School	\$5m	Stradbroke School	\$7m
Hallett Cove School	\$10m	The Heights School	\$10m
Hamilton Secondary College	\$9m	Trinity Gardens Primary School	\$6m
Heathfield High School	\$7m	Underdale High School	\$20m
Henley High School	\$10m	Unley High School	\$20m
Highgate School	\$5m	Urrbrae Agricultural High School	\$10m
John Pirie Secondary School	\$10m	Valley View	\$10m
Kadina Memorial School	\$3m	Victor Harbor R-7 School	\$5m
Kapunda High School	\$10m	Warradale Primary School	\$7.5m
Kingston Community School	\$4m	West Lakes Shore School R-7	\$5m
Le Fevre High School	\$2m	Westbourne Park Primary School	\$5m
Loxton High School	\$5m	Willunga High School	\$2m
Magill School	\$7m	Wirreanda Secondary School	\$9m
Mannum Community College	\$2m	Woodcroft Primary School	\$6m
Mawson Lakes School	\$6m	Woodend Primary School	\$5m
Mitcham Girls High School	\$5m	Woodville High School	\$10m
Mitcham Primary School	\$5m		

BACK TO SCHOOL: Premier Jay Weatherill and Education Minister Susan Close speak with students at Fulham North Primary School in Henley Beach last week.

Picture: AAP
Image/Matt Loxton

HOW THE OTHER HALF LIVE

PRIVATE SCHOOL PLANS

Seymour College

Up to \$30 million on junior school rebuild, state-of-the-art secondary school upgrade for Years 10-12, library refurbishment and major landscaping for outdoor learning.

St Francis de Sales College

\$27 million for total rebuild of junior school and community sports centre.

Pembroke School

\$25 million on a science, art and technology building.

Pedare Christian College

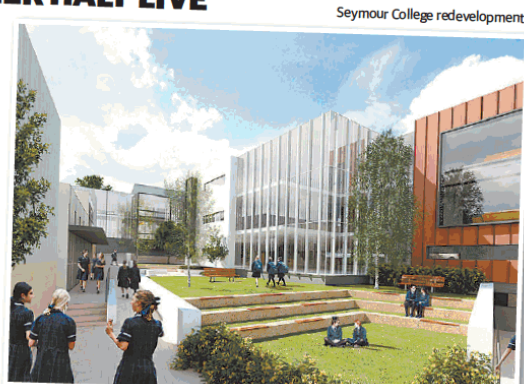
\$17 million to merge its junior and senior campuses.

Prince Alfred College

\$10 million for a five-storey, 150-room boarding house and a pedestrian bridge over The Parade West.

St Peter's Girls

\$9 million redevelopment of middle school, library, science labs and gym



Seymour College redevelopment

Sacred Heart College and Marymount College

\$15 million merger plans include two new buildings, one for 18 co-ed classrooms, the other a chapel and assembly/performance space.

Christian Brothers College

Multi-million project for a three-storey building for science, technology, art and music.