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MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW to create 50 school Centres for Excellence

The NSW and Federal Governments will partner with universities to turn 50 schools in NSW into Centres for Excellence to develop high quality teaching and improve teacher training.

The Centres are an initiative under the *Smarter Schools National Partnerships*, a Rudd Government funding package worth \$720 million over five years for NSW.

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard said one of the most effective ways to improve student achievement and participation was through high quality teaching.

“We want to ensure our teachers receive the best training possible. The Centres for Excellence will be hubs where our next generation of teachers can observe high quality teaching first-hand and gain practical experience under close supervision.”

NSW Education Minister Verity Firth said Macarthur Girls High in Sydney’s West was one of the first schools to be chosen to become a Centre for Excellence.

“The concept is similar to a teaching hospital,” Ms Firth said.

“Each Centre for Excellence will be linked with a university teaching faculty and we will select schools in disadvantaged communities that are consistently achieving strong results – an indicator of high quality teaching.

“The chosen schools will receive start-up funding, staffing support and a teacher accredited as Highly Accomplished to lead the initiative in that school.

“The university partner will be able to send its teaching students to the school at all stages of their course, not just for the traditional internship.

“Existing permanent teachers at the school will also have their skills upgraded through interaction with academics.”

Centres for Excellence will be established in both primary and high schools across NSW and Connected Classroom technology will be used to extend the benefit to a further 200 schools, including those in remote areas.

NSW non-government schools will also benefit from the initiative.

Dr Brian Croke, Executive Director of the Catholic Education Commission, said Centres in the Catholic school sector will develop the known teaching strengths of chosen schools, for example in vocational education.

“The Catholic sector will also create centres across several schools focusing on delivery aspects like online learning,” Dr Croke said.

Dr Geoff Newcombe, Executive Director of the Association of Independent Schools said a virtual ‘Independent Schools Centre for Excellence’ would be created to facilitate the sharing of high quality teaching practice across targeted independent schools.

“We are very excited about the Centre for Excellence. Its virtual nature will provide us with unique opportunities and the ability to innovate, which have long been features of the independent school sector.”