

Government entitled to private schools' moral support, Ryan says

The Government was entitled to expect the support of both the private and public education sectors in its attempt to achieve social equity, the Minister for Education, Senator Ryan, said on Saturday.

She was addressing a meeting of church-school representatives, organised by the Board of Education, Diocese of Sydney, at Danebank Church of England Girls' School at Hurstville. A copy of her speech was issued in Canberra.

Senator Ryan said there had been no united opposition to the Government's school-funding guidelines for 1984 and she was grateful for the "very sensitive, thoughtful and responsive support running right through the non-government sector".

Prominent among these were decisions to begin reducing recurrent funding to a small number of schools; to revise the conditions under which new non-government schools received funds; and to break the nexus between recurrent grants for non-government schools and average government-school recurrent costs.

The Government acknowledged that many parents exercised a choice in favour of private schooling.

"We accept responsibility to provide public funds to support such choices but the extent to which such a subsidy is

provided will be on the basis of need," she said.

The view that parents who chose non-government schooling for their children had a right or entitlement to government funding of that choice because they were taxpayers was a specious argument. Freedom of choice was not at issue; what was at issue was whether that choice should be publicly funded.

The 1984 guidelines would provide an extra \$5 million to category-three schools [those with the lowest level of

an extra \$5 million to category-three schools [those with the lowest level of recurrent resources].

"I believe the Government is entitled to expect the support of the entire education community, government and non-government, in trying to achieve greater social equity," Senator Ryan said.

Schools subject to funding cuts could reorganise their activities so that actual education standards would not be reduced.

The funding policy of the previous Government had promoted the advantages of a small number of schools at the expense of the majority of students in the majority of schools.

The old arrangements had automatically committed the Government to increasing funding of the non-government sector through the formula link with per-student government-school funding.