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Telegraph is wrong - no plans to sell large quantities of school land

Minister for Education and Training Verity Firth said the Daily Telegraph's front page story today is wrong.

Ms Firth said there was no plan by the NSW Government to sell off large quantities of school land.

"The article today refers to a draft internal department document which I have never seen," Ms Firth said.

"As I made it clear when this story appeared for the first time in April, no proposal of this sort has come to me.

"School communities can take comfort in the fact I would never agree to a proposal like this.

"There is no pressure from Treasury to sell large quantities of school land.

"This is blatant scaremongering initiated by Opposition Education spokesman Adrian Piccoli who has deliberately misrepresented information obtained under Freedom of Information."

Ms Firth said Government policy is that the Department only sells land where it is deemed it is not needed for educational use; and no school land can be sold without extensive community consultation.

"When land is sold, the decision is not made based on the size of the school, but on whether or not the school needs the land for its educational purposes," said Ms Firth.

The Department of Education is one of the largest landholders in the country with over \$28 billion of assets.

Each and every year, the Department buys and sells land. In the 2007/8 financial year, the Department sold 23 sites totalling \$24.7 million and purchased \$31 million of land including sites for new schools in Rouse Hill, Tullimbar and Elderslie.

Over the past eight years, the Department has spent \$154 million buying land for new schools and expansions to schools and TAFE facilities.

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