

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

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### GONSKI HAS MORE ON HIS MIND THAN A FEW BILLIONS OF EDUCATION FUNDING:

#### TRY THE \$70 BILLION FUTURE FUND

David Gonski has much bigger fish to fry than the Education Funding Review. He is now a Guardian of the Future Fund. This means he is unlikely to 'rock the boat' with anything that could unsettle sectarian interests.

#### **Gonski and The \$70 Billion Future Fund**

In an article in the *Financial Review*, entitled *Future Fund power grab* - published 22 December 2011 and updated 24 December 2011 - Pamela Williams, the Editor-at-large has the following insights into Gonski's appointment to the \$70 billion Future Fund. The Government is currently considering a new Chairman for a body which has been rent with dissension in the past year.

Here is Pamela Williams' pen picture of a man set up to make recommendations on the future funding of Australian education.

*The recent appointment of corporate adviser David Gonski to help smooth the path to the next chairman is read*

*by insiders as a way to give the fund's guardians at least a voice – if not any influence – over the selection.*

and

*Gonski was hired by the government to ensure the views of the board were reported back. After the mess of last March, both Swan and Wong are anxious to get the timing right and to select from a list of candidates both on and off the current board. Chairman of the Australian Securities Exchange and Coca-Cola Amatil, Gonski is arguably Australia's best-connected corporate adviser, with circles of influence so tight as to seem molecular. His ability to also smoothly negotiate the political currents is unsurpassed in the business world as has become obvious in his transition from trusted Liberal government adviser to trusted Labor government*

*adviser. A well-honed ability to say nothing on almost any subject he chooses has only enhanced his reputation as a steely but clam-like power broker, a reputation enjoyed throughout his long career....*

and

*The appointment of a new chairman is a critical decision for the government. As Australia's sovereign wealth fund, the Future Fund, is the largest and only pool of money held by the Commonwealth in financial assets. It played a pivotal role during the financial crisis in providing liquidity to*

*the banking system, and is a flag-bearer for Australia's international reputation in financial markets. Set up in 2006 by former treasurer Peter Costello, the fund had seven guardians including the chairman – all appointed by Costello. Eventually, Costello too was appointed by the Rudd government, becoming the first guardian he himself had not actually selected....*

*For his part, outgoing chairman David Murray is said to have far less influence with government than he previously had, as the clock runs down.*

DOGS have expected little support for public education from the Gonski Committee. It is stacked with graduates from the private sector wedded to a discredited free market ideology. It will be interesting to see whether Gonski is able to write a report demonstrating

*'a well-honed ability to say nothing on almost any subject he chooses'*

or

whether he will live up to his reputation as *'a steely but clam-like power broker'*.

DOGS wonder whether he is powerful enough to take on Tannock and the Bishops, or whether he will merely 'say nothing' on the subject of the glaring inequities in Australian education funding.

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