

PUBLIC EDUCATION
DEFINITION, PROMOTION
WHY PUBLIC EDUCATION IS SUPERIOR TO PRIVATE
EDUCATION
COMMITMENT TO THE IDEAL OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

THE FEATURES OF A SCHOOL OR SCHOOL SYSTEM WHICH CAN CORRECTLY BE CALLED "PUBLIC"

The school or school system, to be a public one must be :

- Public in purpose,
- Public in benefit
- Public in access (for pupils, teachers and administrators and citizens)
- Public in control
- Public in ownership
- Public in accountability
- Public in provision (No public/private partnerships or private finance initiatives)
- Public in funding

These are all essential characteristics of the free, secular, compulsory and universal system of education which we have inherited from our nineteenth century forebears. If any of these characteristics are compromised, then the public system itself is compromised.

Why is it so important to reiterate these essentials at this time in our Australian history?

Because our public systems are under threat, not only from an aggressive, well funded private system - but also from persons who claim to support public education yet who are willing to compromise some of these essential underpinnings of a strong public system.

Attempts at including Private Schools in the Public System or even Defining Private Schools as Public Schools

Since the DOGS were founded in the 1960s in Australia and elsewhere there has been a number of proposals to redefine public education to include private schools within the system. This has paralleled attempts to redefine and privatise public education in this country.

With the exception of the ACT experience, attempts to integrate private schools within the public system have emanated from persons connected with the Schools Commission, and certain persons connected with so-called public education pressure groups in Victoria.

In the mid 1970s, there was an attack on the above concept of public education from certain representatives of State school parents and teachers on or connected with the Schools Commission.

A number of papers were produced, for example, the 1978 *"Some Aspects of School Finance in Australia"* Schools Commission discussion paper and the 1983 *"Schools in the ACT"* (Radford Report). The "integration" concept was defeated in the early 1980s in the Australian Teachers Federation by a vote at an annual Conference held in Adelaide. New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania with some assistance from one or two of the Territory bodies defeated the "integration" push which emanated from Victoria. DOGS note that in October 1978 Father Martin, one of the Roman Catholic representatives on the Schools Commission, opposed Chapter One of the discussion paper "almost totally."

In spite of the defeat in the early 1980s, persons who have been connected with the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA) and the Technical Teachers Union of Victoria (TTUV) have continued to push the integration of public and private in school education during the 1980s and 1990s. One of the latest attempts is the article in "Going Public" in 1998 where Professor Simon Marginson wrote an article " Putting the "Public" back into Public Education". In 2001 in a Magazine "Professional Voice", Volume 1, Issue 1, a professional journal of the Australian Education Union, Victorian branch, Gerry Tickell promotes the inclusion of the private within the public system in an article entitled "Letting the privates in."

For the last three decades DOGS have proclaimed that the concept of the integration of the private into the public would be the death knell of public education. Public schools could survive full State Aid to private schools. But they cannot survive the integration and take over of the public into the private system. Public Education cannot be unequally yoked with the aggressive private system.

The integration of the public within the private system must be opposed by anybody interested in the value and importance of the public system for both the individual and the state.

One lesson the DOGS have learnt is that Church schools are a cancer in the body politic. To include them within the public system would be to introduce that cancer into the public system. I could only lead to its eventual destruction.

In 2004, as the public/private debates escalate, DOGS remind our 3CR listeners every week, and repeat in this definition on paper that:

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM IS:

- PUBLIC IN PURPOSE**
- PUBLIC IN OUTCOME**
- PUBLIC IN ACCESS FOR STUDENTS, TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND CLEANERS**
- PUBLIC IN OWNERSHIP**
- PUBLIC IN CONTROL**
- PUBLIC IN PROVISION (NO PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS OR PRIVATE FINANCE INITIATIVES)**
- PUBLIC IN ACCOUNTABILITY.**

Since Private Church schools are none of the above, only genuinely public schools should be

- PUBLIC IN FUNDING.**