**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

**PRESS RELEASE 541#**

**PYNE DISMANTLING AND PRIVATISING OUR PUBLIC EDUCATION SYTEMS**

Mr Pyne announced this morning the federal government will spend $70 million to help up to 1500 public schools become independent by 2017.

Read more: [http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/christopher-pyne-outlines-ambition-to-make-public-schools-independent-20140203-31x6k.html#ixzz2sJWqzTzA](http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/christopher-pyne-outlines-ambition-to-make-public-schools-independent-20140203-31x6k.html" \l "ixzz2sJWqzTzA)

This is a terrible idea. It is insidious, stupid and the opposite of enlightened self-interest.

For the following reasons:

In Australia we have three school systems.

1. The state school system. Takes all comers. Taxpayer funded. Educates the vast majority of disadvantaged, disabled, the brightest and the indigenous. Still educates a bit over 60% of the population. On the whole accountable, effective and efficient. Has a weakened central bureaucracy and while remaining accountable and efficient the levels of funding make politically weak, no voice in Canberra, state minsters (with possible exception of NSW and TAS) do not advocate for their state education systems.
2. The catholic system. Taxpayer funded. Parental contributions. Exempt from ALL antidiscrimination laws, Enrol whom they choose, sometimes the poor and needy, but as a matter of ‘charity’ rather than from inclusive values. This is a mater of anecdote and statistics. Unaccountable (average time between audits for Catholic school approx. 50 years). A large effective centralised catholic bureaucracy opaquely transfers government funding from school to school. Historically ineffective at educating all, and not interested anyways. Sectarian. Inefficient (and as their ‘existence’ is a result of religious belief, they are by and large tax exempt, and lower levels of direct government funding are offset in forgone taxes). Also there is a duplication of school places leading to inefficiencies. Politically VERY powerful. Almost untouchable.
3. The (in)Dependent system. Taxpayer funded. Unaccountable, these schools often possess vast assets procured over time. No financial data has been available since 2011 on the Myschool website. They are ineffective (and inefficient (see Catholic schools above). Added to this are not only exempt from anti-discrimination legislation but also actively discriminate by parental income. Politically VERY powerful

The ideology behind this latest move will INEVITABLY lead to the total dismemberment of the state school system. I am not exaggerating. All Schools will be funded by the government (as they are now), but private school will have unfair competitive advantages over a decentralised, fractured state system that is fighting to provide for their communities. The unfair advantages include:

* Unaccountable taxpayer funding for marketing, facilities etc.
* Centralised bureaucracies,
* Pick and choose enrolments,
* The ability to generate surpluses to run loss making schools in outer urban areas, stopping potential state schools from opening

. This will kill the state system, turn it into a ghetto system in many cases and make education ripe for private takeover. Education will inevitable become user pays, as the middle class mantra ‘if you send your kids to a state school, you don’t give a shit about your kids’ will self-fulfil. An education system that is free, secular and compulsory will become a distant memory of olden days time that gen X can romance about.

I am not interested in arguments about ‘for my kids’ etc. or ‘choice’ or ‘private schools save money’. These are arguments that are dismissed in many civilised countries, as less important as educating ALL the population to the highest possible standard - let alone arguments relating to the dangers of segregating children on the basis of religion, culture or income.

If you want to support the private system then such choices are valid – but pay for it yourself and leave the government to run an effective and well-supported state education system that takes all comers. What Pyne is doing is the opposite of enlightened self-interest, and lays the groundwork for deeply entrenched disadvantage. It is also the dismantling of THE PUBLIC education system.