**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT**

**SCHOOLS**

**PRESS RELEASE 459**

**9 February 2012**

**IF WEALTHY PRIVATE SCHOOLS SAVE**

**TAXPAYERS MONEY – THEN WHY NOT GIVE STATE AID BACK TO THE**

**POOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS?**

The so-called Independent school lobby are peddling the argument that parents paying high fees at these schools are saving the taxpayer money. ( ABC Four Corners week commencing 6 February 2012 ) Billions of dollars and extraordinary duplication of facilities later, the mind boggles at their effrontery.

Taxpayers now cover their recurrent costs for teacher salaries, extensive capital grants, and taxation exemptions. It would be much cheaper to take them over and provide one high quality public system for all children.

However, if they are so desirous of saving the government money, they might, in their Christian charity consider giving their surplus to poor struggling public schools that cater for all comers, including the poor and disabled.

# Eleven exclusive schools in Queensland for example will receive 57 million dollars in Federal Government funding in 2012 at the same time as they are raising their fees: St. Peter’s Lutheran College with 85% of its enrolments from the highest SES quartile will receive $12 million. It will also get a further $4 million from the Queensland Government. Anglican Church Grammar with nearly 80% of its enrolments from the highest SES quartile will get $6.2 million from the Federal Government and $3 million from the state government. Brisbane Girl’s Grammar with 85% of its enrolments from the highest SES quartile will get $3.8 million from the Federal Government and over $2 million from the state.( Fighting for Equity in Education ( *Fee Increases Outstrip Cost Increases in Elite Private Schools* in Queensland Save Our Schools, Trevor Cobbold, Thursday January 19, 2012).

In Victoria, although fees at 10 top schools have soared by an average of 91 per cent in the past decade, compared with inflation of 37 per cent, there has been no question of returning the State Aid increased by the Howard/Kemp government in order to reduce such fees.

Architect of the funding system, Howard government education minister David Kemp, told parliament in 2000 that higher taxpayer contributions would ''push down the pressure on school fees, making all schools much more accessible''.

Of 10 schools analysed in 2011 by Natalie Craig in the *Age* January 16, 2011, Haileybury had the largest increase in government funding since the Howard SES model was introduced. This scheme takes account of the ''socio-economic status'' of a school community, rather than the school's resources or capacity to raise money.

Haileybury’s taxpayer contributions have more than quadrupled in a decade from $1009 to $4638 per student. During the same period, year 12 fees jumped 91 per cent, from $12,075 in 2001 to $23,055 this year. The school has said that because it draws on students in less wealthy areas, especially at its Berwick and Keysborough campuses, it is entitled to more government funding under the SES model.

Michelle Green, head of Independent Schools Victoria, peddled the ‘saving the taxpayers money’’ argument. She said

*private school parents saved taxpayers money by bearing the brunt of rising education costs stemming from higher teacher wages …''I think that [parents] should be recognised and applauded for that, rather than somehow be made to feel that they are part of an elitist group.''* …

But Trevor Cobbold, former productivity commissioner and head of lobby Save Our Schools, said that

*''Elite private school fees are increasing faster than salary costs, which comprise about 80 per cent or more of school costs,'' he said. ''Together with massive increases in federal funding, this enables them to increase education quality through lower class sizes, more education resources such as use of technology, and new facilities.''*

He said: ''Wesley College and numbers of other schools have also indicated that when they receive the funding entitlement … they will be reducing their fees.''

Wesley's fees have instead increased by 99 per cent since 2001, from $11,330 to $22,560.

Wesley parent Simon Smith has been fighting for the school to be more accountable for its spending. He said there was no evidence to show it was being used to improve access for poorer students. ''And even if it did keep fees down to $21,000 instead of $22,000 a year - that's meaningless to poorer families,'' he said.

.[http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/our-richest-schools-raise-fees-by-91-20110115-19s1g.html#ixzz1lsEbJd7l](http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/our-richest-schools-raise-fees-by-91-20110115-19s1g.html%22%20%5Cl%20%22ixzz1lsEbJd7l)

DOGS suggest that if WEALTHY dependent on government private schools are serious about saving taxpayers money, they should give public money back to public schools. THEIR GREED HAS CONSUMED THEIR INDEPENDENCE. IT SHOULD NOT CONSUME OUR CASH-STRAPPED PUBLIC SYSTEM.

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