

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 519#

### HOW THE RELIGIOUS STATE OPERATES WITHIN THE AUSTRALIAN SECULAR STATE

10 July 2013

The new Federal Education Minister is Bill Shorten.

What is his Educational Background?

*Bill Shorten was born in Melbourne, where his father was a waterside worker and union official. His mother was a lawyer and university academic. He was educated at Xavier College and Monash University, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws. Wikipedia*

So Bill Shorten, like Abbott and Pyne will be able to use his old boy Jesuit networks to get around the snags surrounding the Gonski reforms. The State Aid auction is on again.

Bill Shorten and Kevin Rudd are entering into the usual Catholic backroom deals. The majority suffer to appease the minority.

Already the Catholic system has gained the ability to move money around within their school system and the Gonski idea of education funding following a disadvantaged student wherever they attend school will not be adhered to in the Catholic system. They will also receive about \$3 billion extra over the next six years. ( *AFR* 4 July 2013) This means that any hope of a transparent, equitable system based on individual need has gone-ski.

The Catholic Church has become an imperium in imperio – a State within a State – holding governments to ransom.

#### **The Catholic Church and the Needs Policy**

DOGS have followed the Catholic ‘management’ of ‘Needs’ policies of all government since the Whitlam Government’s Karmel Committee fiasco in 1973. Perhaps the most extraordinary was the deal they struck with Howard’s SES system.

For the Catholic Church ‘the poor will always be with us’ but they can be the responsibility of the public system.

In 2013, forty years after the State Aid floodgates opened, the 'needs' of the institution known as the Catholic church must be met before any funding can flow to disadvantaged children in the public sector.

What is surprising is that journalists are finally prepared to remark upon it. Consider the article by Tim Dodd in the *Australian Financial Review* of Monday 8 July 2013.

He notes that the Catholic system provides a lesson to governments on how to run an efficient education system on \$8000 a student in public subsidy. He leaves out the indirect and capital grants that are also taxpayer funded but notes that *'you also need to bear in mind that, unlike public schools, Catholic schools do not have to accept all children who apply, which does make a difference to school performance.'*

How has the Catholic church system got to its favoured position, with at least 77% public funding, when other religious schools allegedly only receive 45% of their income from governments? he asks.

The way the Catholic school system has got to the influential position it has today is a study in successful political manoeuvring.

*Until 1970, no non-government schools received recurrent funding in Australia. But the tap was opened fully when the Whitlam government introduced needs-based funding. Since then, the Catholic church has negotiated skilfully, notably in a deal with the Howard government in 2004.*

*The growth in government funding for Catholic schools over the past four decades has enabled them to move away from a non-professional teaching staff mainly composed of nuns and brothers to the professional system they have today.*

*Now, as federal Labor negotiates its Better Schools plan (formerly known as Gonski) the Catholics are an objectless. **They are not going public, as are the groups representing other independent schools.** But they are quietly negotiating, as they always have, with a keen eye for political opportunity.*

Once the Church is involved, you can forget about

- Accountability, honesty and openness
- Genuine Christian concern for the disadvantaged in the community unless there is money in it
- Democratic procedures.

Once the church, the State within a State is involved, you can forget about 'reforms' to public funding in Australia. You are only looking at 'deforms'. You are looking at 'deals' done behind closed doors in the corridors of power