

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 526#

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PRIVATE SCHOOLS OR GLOBAL INVESTMENT COMPANIES? : SHOULD TAXPAYERS SUBSIDISE

PRIVATE SCHOOL PROFITEERING AND REAL ESTATE SPECIULATION?

Citizens, taxpayers, and even private school parents are concerned at the blatant profiteering behaviour and lack of accountability in the private education sector.

A number of glaring instances of real estate development have recently gained media coverage. They indicate the top of a largely unexplored pot of private funding for religious schools.

It should be noted that these glimpses into the private funding pot only occur when there is a falling out amongst the profiteers themselves. Sometimes, as in these cases, neighbouring residents object to real estate development.

Two such 'glimpses' deal with

- Wesley College, Mount Waverley, Melbourne
- Scots College, Knox College and others in Sydney.

DOGS note that the veil drawn over that holy of holies — the global investment of the Catholic Church—is very rarely, if ever, drawn back.

Melbourne,

Wesley College Mount Waverley

Last December, the school, which has an annual income of more than \$70 million, was accused by Monash councillor Geoff Lake of "adopting the approach of a hard-nosed, profit-obsessed developer" over plans to build 84 apartments on the Glen Waverley campus.

The Victorian College for the Deaf also opposes Wesley's plans to buy Crown land on St Kilda Road currently occupied by the deaf college's primary school and vegetable garden. And a group called Wesley Parents and Former Students for Governance Reform, convened by parent Dr Simon Smith, has launched the website makewesleyaccountable.com. The group

of about 75 Wesley families says the school's governance falls short of what the community expects for a large business that charges such high fees.

The Council rejected the proposal and Wesley did not take the matter to VCAT but decided to sell the land instead. "Wesley paid about \$400,000 for this piece of land back in the mid '90s when they acquired it from VicRoads - they are now seeking to develop it for upwards of \$30 million," Cr Lake said. "Here is a private school that has basically been given a gift by the Victorian taxpayer and they are now wanting to turn that gift into significant profit." jtopsfield@theage.com.au Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/parents-neighbours-wage-war-against-wesley-20111206-1oh9n.html#ixzz2fHzJ4TYh>

In Sydney a number of elite private schools expanding their grounds into the city's most prestigious neighbourhoods has drawn in local governments and angered residents.

The Sydney Morning Herald reports that Scots College wants approval for a further increase in the size of its business studies centre on Victoria Road. It is opposed by the Concerned Scots Neighbours group, which has accused the school of concealing its growth in enrolments to push through building projects.

The resident group's spokesman Paul Blanket says it will consider legal action against Scots if the council does not address the school's compliance issues. *"What we're now seeing is a lot of these institutions move from what they were - local schools - to be almost global businesses," he said.*

The MySchool website says the school has 1783 students, but Mr Blanket says it may be as high as 1920. Both figures are in breach of a cap of 1120 students for its Victoria Road senior campus and 500 for its Mansion Road junior school.

Helen Proctor from Sydney University's faculty of education and social work says newer private schools are the source of the real growth in student numbers, but elite schools operate on a regime of building and expansion.

"It's like a sort of arms race where if Knox gets a new fabulous business studies centre then its competitor up the road, Barker, will go, 'I'll raise you one business studies centre and we'll have an incredible arts complex'," Dr Proctor said. "It's very much fuelled by government funding" because this frees up funds that would otherwise be used for tuition.

Knox Grammar has also taken issue with Ku-ring-gai Council's proposed rezoning and heritage conservation area. It says it will limit its ability to use surrounding properties for "educational use", and work to the detriment of the "distinctive and dominant character" of its school.

Ravenswood's principal Vicki Steer says the school is concerned its right to redevelop properties worth millions of dollars may not be adequately protected if consideration is not made in new planning laws.

Neighbours of another north shore school, Roseville College, were alarmed by two purchases totalling almost \$7.4 million on Bancroft Avenue. The school says it has taken "significant

measures" to preserve the heritage qualities of one purchase, and is not seeking to expand student numbers. But it has not ruled out buying more properties.

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/residents-irate-as-private-schools-buy-up-neighbourhood-20130914-2trj3.html#ixzz2fDRobwHp>

Some of the comments on the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 13 September 2013 Report are of interest:

- And these insidious institutions are receiving billions of dollars of tax payer money to operate. It is a national disgrace that these parasitic establishments are getting one cent of public money when the majority of our children go without the basics in our government schools. To the Christian religious variety we can also add hypocrisy as they preach charity and practice avarice.
- I agree. It's an extraordinary imbalance in favour of the wealthy sector of our society. If people with money want to send their children to private schools for a "better education" (my caveat being that this so called better education obviously excludes exposure to the greater society & therefore the ability to interact with those "less fortunate" . . . Tony Abbott & his Riverview mates are a case in point) that's fine, but I don't want to pay for it. I am very happy for my tax payer dollars to go to schools that need improving & particularly those that have special needs but subsidising kids cadet parades & exchange programmes to Paris to improve French language skills really gives me the S@#\$% apologies, I was better educated than that really annoys me!
- Another case of greed not need....get ready for more from the new government
- I only wish the other GPS and CAS schools could be more like The Kings School. By that I mean own the whole suburb. That way you can keep the riff raff from getting too close.

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