

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 530#

### VICTORIAN STATE GOVERNMENT SHOULD EVALUATE ITS PERFORMANCE

### BEFORE IT FAILS DEDICATED PUBLIC SCHOOLTEACHERS.

**The Napthine government should evaluate its own performance, and in particular its failure to provide a quality public education for every child before it looks at ‘performance’ criteria for public school principals and teachers.**

They are imposing a ‘performance test’ upon schools that would fail up to 40% of teachers across the system. And if Principals cannot find the ‘failures’, then, presumably, they, too will ‘fail’ the test.

As Mr Sal, the President of the Secondary Principals Association said:

*‘Introducing an internationally discredited , dollar-driven and hurried process’ can only result in conflict and disharmony. ‘It will not lead to better performances or improve the teamwork that is essential in all schools. This poorly timed, resourced and sold process will undermine any credibility this government might have had around trust in schools or notions of school autonomy.’ (The Age, 21.10.2013)*

DOGS suggest that before it considers ‘performance’ tests on dedicated public school principals and teachers, Messrs Napthine and Dixon look closer to home at their own performance – or should we say, non-performance.

There appears to be an almost blanket refusal to build new public schools where they are needed. The Napthine/Dixon policy exposes existing schools to privatisation - code-named ‘autonomous schooling’- while encouraging and publicly funding sectarian institutions.

The results of this policy are evident in developing areas like Mernda where provision of even primary education is under threat. You can forget about secondary provision. The Napthine/Dixon government is back in the early nineteenth century.

### **The Mernda Situation:**

Mernda has primary and secondary schooling for wealthy Anglicans, Christians, and Roman Catholics. Next year it will also have schooling for a Moslem community which does not yet exist.

It also has a failed Uniting Church secondary school- Acacia- now Gilson College - which has been taken over by the Seventh Day Adventists.

It has only one public primary school which is insufficient for demand, and no public secondary school, in spite of community pleas for same.

Even the Whittlesea Council can see the desperate need for public schooling for struggling families with high mortgages in the area. At their 8 October meeting they placed the following request in their Minutes:

## **Primary school needed for Mernda South**

We are asking the State Government to commit funds for land purchase and planning for a primary school in Mernda South, to be delivered no later than 2016.

Mernda South is separated geographically from other parts of Mernda and Doreen and completely lacking any community infrastructure.

The provision of this fourth primary school for the Mernda/Doreen area will ensure access to education that will not cause undue pressure and strain on families, young people and educators in a key growth corridor of Melbourne's North.

### **Current situation**

- The current population of Mernda-Doreen is 19,548. The population is forecast to reach 39,841 by 2016 and 49,566 by 2021. In 10 years' time the population will reach 51,208.
- Results of the ABS Census of 2011 show that 58% of households in Mernda-Doreen are either couples or sole parents with children.
- Significant proportions of Mernda kids are considered developmentally vulnerable across the 5 domains of the Australian Early Development Index:
  - physical health and wellbeing (12.5%)
  - social competence (10%)
  - emotional maturity (17.5%)
  - language and cognitive skills (10%)
  - communication skills and general knowledge (17.5%)It is particularly important for these children that their and their family's engagement with education is a consistent and positive experience.
- Dependence on cars for transport in Mernda and Doreen is clearly illustrated by travel to work and car ownership data:

- 77% of residents rely on a private motor vehicle (either as driver or passenger) to travel to work, compared with 65% in Greater Melbourne.
- 56% of Mernda and Doreen households own 2 cars, 18% own 3 or more, compared with 36% and 15% in Greater Melbourne respectively.
- Residents of Whittlesea growth areas are experiencing greater levels of mortgage stress than other Victorians – 28.7% in Mernda, 26.4% in Doreen compared with 11% in Greater Melbourne.

### **Household forecasts**

There are already over 9,100 households in the Mernda Doreen area and it is forecast that this number will exceed 12,500 by 2016.

According to planning triggers used by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), this number of households currently warrants 3 government primary schools and indicates that a fourth primary school will need to be delivered by 2016.

### **Current schools**

- Laurimar Primary School: currently 965 students
- Mernda Primary School: currently 600 students
- Doreen South Primary School: under construction, to be completed end of 2013

### **Project cost**

Approximately, is \$10 million including planning and construction.

**LISTEN TO THE DOGS PROGRAM**

**3 CR : 855 ON THE AM DIAL**

**12 NOON SATURDAYS**

**ALSO ON PODCAST**

