

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 592#

When will Christian Churches avoid Hypocrisy and Promote Open Enrolment Policy and Universality – namely Public Education ?

In England a broadly based group of Church of England clerics and laity are troubled by the abuse of their Church schools' admissions policy in favour of advantaged families. They are prepared to say:

Ultimately the universality of the Church is being turned to the advantage of those who are already advantaged. We believe this issue presents a slow-burning crisis. We urge the Church to review and then amend its national guidance on pupil admissions, so that schools are guided towards having open admission arrangements. Church of England schools should look outwards, as an expression of the warmth and generosity of its mission to the whole community. Ensuring this would achieve a more positive standing for the Church in society and better serve local communities. See

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/apr/01/church-schools-admissions-policy-open-to-abuse>

English Anglicans are troubled that many oversubscribed Church schools reject non-churchgoing families, even though the families may live near to the school. A survey by the Sutton Trust in December 2013 showed that 6% of parents with a child at a state-funded school admitted to attending church services when they would have not otherwise so a child could go to a Church school. Considering that a quarter of pupil places in the state system are at faith schools and many faith schools do not reward Church attendance (many show preference to baptised or local children), the survey points to widespread abuse among those that do. Worryingly, among parents of socio-economic group A the level of false Church attendance rose to 10%.

The answer, of course, is to only provide public funding to schools which are open to all children, are public in purpose in outcome, and are owned and controlled by the public education Department, answerable to a democratically elected government.

Perhaps the Anglican church in Australia could sharpen their consciences this Easter tide and follow their English cousins. After all, they have rejected State Aid before – in the nineteenth century. They only yielded to temptation when they followed the Catholics into their spiritual wilderness in 1964 and took State Aid on Catholic system shirttails.

The following is a list of the Church of England members who are promoting an open enrolment policy for State funded schools in England.

Christina Baron *Lay member of General Synod*

Simon Barrow *Co-director of Ekklesia*

Jonathan Bartley *Co-director of Ekklesia*

Rev Richard Bentley

Rev Jeremy Chadd *Vicar of St Chad's, Sunderland*

Rev Canon Richard Franklin *Vicar of Holy Trinity, Weymouth*

Angela Harris *House of Lords*

Savitri Hensman *Writer on Christian social ethics and theology*

Theo Hobson *Theologian and commentator*

Rev Richard CB Jones *Associate minister, Borders Group of Parishes, Hereford Diocese*

Rev Richard Kirker

Rev Una Kroll

Rev Professor Christopher Rowland

Barry Sheerman MP *Lay canon, Wakefield Cathedral; House of Commons education select committee chair 1999-2010*

Professor Trevor Smith *House of Lords*

John Swallow *Former president of the National Association of Head Teachers*

Rev Stephen Terry *Rector of the parish of Aldrington in Hove; former chair of governors at a C of E state-funded school*

Rev Keith Trivasse *Associate priest, parish of Bury Roch Valley, Diocese of Manchester*

Professor Keith Ward *Regius professor of divinity emeritus, Oxford*

Rev Simon Wilson

Perhaps they take seriously the view of the C17 philosopher, Spinoza who said: '*A thing is called sacred and Divine when it is designed for promoting piety, and continues sacred so long as it is religiously used: if the users cease to be pious, the thing ceases to be sacred: if it be turned to base uses, that which was formerly sacred becomes unclean and profane.*' B Spinoza, (1670) *A Theologico-Political Treatise : A Political Treatise*(New York : Dover,1951, unabridged Elwes translation) 167.

LISTEN TO DOGS PROGRAM

ON 3CR

855 ON THE AM DIAL: 12.00 NOON SATURDAYS

For Podcast go to <http://www.3cr.org.au/podcasts/podcasts/list> and go to DOGS