

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 595#

FUNDING PRIVATE SCHOOLS IS ALWAYS A PRIVATE AND NEVER A PUBLIC GOOD

In recent weeks the reaction of the AEU and public school interest groups to the Victorian Government's favoured treatment of the Catholic Education system with generous grants for its expansion policy has led to the trotting out of the old specious private school arguments by the Head of the Catholic Education Office, Stephen Elder on Online Opinion at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=17222>. He claims that:

- Funding private schools is a public good
- “without a strong Catholic system many public schools would buckle under the strain of larger class sizes and
- increased teacher workloads would inevitably lead to a decrease in results.”

Billions of dollars of State Aid later, Stephen Elder is on very shaky ground indeed. Public school supporters answered conclusively with facts and figures from the MySchool website.

As always, DOGS point out that private schools can never deliver a public good and their duplication of public facilities is grossly uneconomic and socially divisive.

Only public schools are public in purpose and outcome. Private religious schools are private in both purpose and sectarian in outcome. Above all, only public schools are public in access, open to all children. Only public can and should be publicly owned, controlled, and accountable for public moneys. And both governments and private school parents are making a bad investment. See Christ Bonner on 60 Minutes:

<http://www.9jumpin.com.au/show/60minutes/extraminutes/4182246915001/>

DOGS also point out that if the **duplication of public school facilities** by private religious groups was assessed and unnecessary private schools taken over by the State (we pay for them already) we would have a first rate public system, save a great deal of public money – billions in fact – and go some way to balancing our national budget.

Other public school interest groups have taken up the cudgels and answered Stephen Elder on his facts and figures.

Bernie Shepherd argues that if Catholic schools were taken over this would save taxpayers money:

Response to claims made by Stephen Elder April 1 2015.pdf
<https://drive.google.com/a/adogs.info/file/d/0BxK25rJrOw-eRkVNbjBDS2xUUU0/view?pli=1>

In the quote, Mr Elder hypothesises some cataclysmic change of will or circumstances in which responsibility for Victorian Catholic schools passes from the Catholic authorities to "government". How this might come about in practical terms is unclear, but let's assume that he means that Catholic schools would be transferred entirely to the public purse (currently a complex mix of state and federal funding, which would need to be adjusted to allow for

Other responses, online were:

Maybe Mr Elder needs to check his facts before continuing to launch into print. His April 1st contribution contained a number of errors, some of which are addressed in my blog at <http://www.edmediawatch.com/>

Rather than representing a saving, the amount given by governments to run Victorian Catholic schools each year is over \$50 million dollars more than that given to similar government schools.

Now to his current article. I can't comment on his guerilla warfare with the AEU but once again he has used misleading information. Some Catholic schools do "sit shoulder to shoulder with government schools" in disadvantaged areas but they actually enrol kids who, even in those areas, are more advantaged. Anyone with the time can check this on My School.

But his biggest error is his claim that Victorian Catholic schools still operate on 10% less resources than government schools. If he is referring to recurrent funding (he doesn't say) this is not the case. My School shows that, when you compare groups of schools enrolling similar students - a far more honest comparison - Catholic schools operate on a net recurring income per student which is mostly higher than that available to government schools.

The reality is that the availability of school data on My School has started to change the debate. Mr Elder needs to catch up.

Posted by **bunyip**, Monday, 20 April 2015 10:57:28 AM

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