

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT  
SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 700#**

**CRUNCH TIME FOR GONSKI NEEDS BASED FUNDING**

The State Aid/Privatisation ‘Needs based’ experiment in Australian Education history is about to be exposed as a complete failure. The Commonwealth Federal Minister is confronted with an impossible problem as he seeks to keep the private sector happy while pretending to talk about ‘Needs’ policies. State schools have always been duded since State Aid resumed in 1969. And the 2017 COAG meetings will prove that point – once again.

Unfortunately, some public school supporters who are still wary of being called ‘sectarian’ or who have a foot in both camps for family or career purposes, are still romancing about the possibility of ‘Needs’ policies. DOGS have always called all the various Needs policies for what they are — thinly disguised voucher schemes that undermine public education funding. The only way forward for public education is the withdrawal of State Aid to the private sector

However, as all parties continue to sing from the ‘Needs’ policy song sheets, the vast number of Australian children in public schools- 65% and rising – are being badly short changed.

But in the next few months crunch time is catching up on all parties.

In a letter to state ministers on Monday 3 April, Senator Birmingham said: "The Turnbull government has consistently made clear that the Prime Minister and state and territory first ministers would finalise future school funding arrangements at COAG in the first half of this year.

But Acrimony over the future of school funding has deepened, with federal and state education ministers to meet later this week despite not having a proposal for a post-2017 funding model to discuss.

In a sign little progress is expected to be made on a new four-year school funding deal, Education Minister Simon Birmingham has written to his state counterparts to request an extra meeting with them in June. Yet, faced with the usual religious school lobbies on the

one hand and articulate, newly invigorated State school lobby groups demanding State schools

NSW Education Minister Rob Stokes is following the line taken by his predecessor, Piccoli. said he was still lobbying for the six-year Gonski agreements to be delivered in full.

"NSW has acted in reliance on the Commonwealth's commitment, and has a legitimate expectation that the federal government will honour their promise," he said. But Labor's Tanya Plibersek appears to be still taking the part of religious schools that are demanding 'certainty'. "Schools need more than a few months to plan for next year." she says. See <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/school-funding-blame-set-to-continue-as-postgonski-deal-delayed-20170404-gvdg38.html>

Meanwhile, the Fairfax media is giving oxygen to the *Save Our Schools* facts and figures exposing State schools disadvantage and the overfunding of private religious schools. They reveal that comparable schools in the private sector are now getting MORE State Aid than public schools! The economic argument is dead. See <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/the-inequity-is-worsening-a-tale-of-two-schools-and-a-school-funding-debate-20170404-gvdhuk.html>

Henrietta Cook of The Age illustrates the inequalities in funding of two secondary schools in Cranbourne as an example of what is actually happening.

*According to the latest data, the state school Cranbourne Secondary College received \$10,954 in state and federal funding per student while the Catholic school St Peter's College Cranbourne received \$12,765.*

*It's a scenario that plays out across Victoria, according to new analysis that has been released as [hostility over the future of school funding deepens](#).*

*The analysis, ( by Bernie Shepherd of Save Our Schools) which was commissioned by the Australian Education Union, found that mid-range Catholic and independent schools in Victoria received more federal and state government funding per student than similar state schools in 2015.*

*In the "Education State", a student at an independent school with the average socioeconomic make-up received an average of \$11,938 in government funding. This compared to \$11,064 for a student at a similar Catholic school, and just \$9547 for a student at a comparable state school....*

*The author of the analysis, retired principal and public education advocate Bernie Shepherd, said the situation was unfair because state schools had to enrol all students. Unlike non-government schools, they do not charge tuition fees.*

*"You have Catholic and independent schools operating under quite different sets of rules and regulations, receiving precisely the same or even more public funding," he said.*

*"The inequity is worsening. Students in government schools are being sidelined."*

*The analysis, which was based on My School data for every Australian school, also showed that between 2009 and 2015, combined state and federal funding rose by 38.7 per cent for independent schools, 35.6 per cent for Catholic schools and 17.6 per cent for public schools.*

*Nationally, the average independent school student received \$8743 of government funding, while those at Catholic schools received \$10,479 and public school students each received \$12,416.*

DOGS have been exposing these inequities since the 'bottom on the schoolyard schemes' of the Catholic Education Office in the 1960s.

These 'scams' whereby the Catholic Education Office did not even let disadvantaged funding 'trickle down' from the wealthy Catholic schools to the disadvantaged were finally exposed by the Victorian Auditor General in 2016. See <http://www.adogs.info/press/state-auditor-general-finally-blows-whistle-public-funding-private-schools> and <http://www.adogs.info/images/pr256.htm>

Yet

Catholic Education Melbourne executive director Stephen Elder had the gall to say:

*...the analysis did not compare "apples with apples" and was misleading. He said it did not take into account whether schools were primary or secondary schools (which cost more to run), or the growth in students with a disability attending Catholic schools.*

*He said the Catholic schools that receive more government money than similar state schools were disadvantaged. "The Victorian Catholic system has decided to allocate more funding to these schools because they have high needs."*

*He said more-advantaged Catholic schools received less funding than "similar" state schools.*

Before he opened his mouth, perhaps he should have remembered that he is dealing, not only with an ex Principal like Bernie Shepherd, but with Trevor Cobbold of Save Our Schools who is a financial analyst who worked at the Productivity Commission.

Meanwhile, Independent Schools Victoria chief executive Michelle Green said

*the analysis "over-simplifies discussion on funding for ideological purposes...*

and

*school funding was based on student need, socioeconomic status, disability, isolation, Indigenous students, school size, and English language proficiency.*

It is a pity that Michelle Greene did not elaborate on 'ideological purposes'. Independent schools have long since lost their religious soul, so one can only suppose that their 'ideology'

is one of pure self-interest. And if school funding was even remotely based on student need, then the public schools, which enrol the greatest percentage of disadvantaged children, much better resourced than the private sector.

The emperor has no clothes. The real education funding situation is reaching crunch time. The middle class in Australia is being hollowed out and those who thought they could 'buy' their way out of the public system realise that they have wasted their money, diminished their choices and cut off their nose to spite their face.

Meanwhile the choices for the majority of Australian children are diminishing.

It is not enough to bemoan the failure of Gonski and other failed 'Needs' policies. It is time to solve the root cause of the problem in the way that other countries like Finland have done.

State Aid should be for State schools only.

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