

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT

## SCHOOLS

Press Release 752

### WE PAY FOR THEM

### IS IT TIME TO TAKE OVER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

### RATHER THAN LEASE THEM?

Australia is experiencing a population boom, and the children who were in Labor wards five years ago together with those of newly arrived migrants are rolling up to public schools. Back to the 1960s Yes, not private schools, but public schools. You can fool some aspirational parents some of the time but you can't fool all parents all of the time. Public schools not only do a better job. They are much much cheaper.

When Jeff Kennett closed our public schools in the 1990s our politicians thought that they could privatise the public school system in the same way that they privatised electricity, transport, communications (Telstra) and other essential services.

They failed. And privatisations has failed. Dismally.

But now, we discover that the enrolment trend away from Catholic schools has led the Victorian government to confront their lack of basic public school infrastructure. Our schools have been closed and sold while private schools have been built. But the public schools are overflowing while Catholic schools are empty – closed. We read in *The Age* of 5 June 2018 that *the state government has begun renting classrooms off the Catholic sector.*

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/a-solution-to-the-enrolment-boom-state-students-in-catholic-schools-20180605-p4zjj5.html>

Why lease empty Catholic schools and pay yet even more of our taxes to a failed education system?

**DOGS BELIEVE THAT THE STATE GOVERNMENT SHOULD TAKE OVER THESE PROPERTIES. THE SUBSIDISATION OF THESE FAILED CATHOLIC SCHOOLS BY TAXPAYERS SHOULD BE DEDUCTED FROM ANY MARKET VALUE COMPENSATION PAID. IT MAY BE THAT THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE SHOULD BE PAYING BACK AS OPPOSED TO RECEIVING TAXPAYER FUNDS**

This is what the Age Education reporter, Henrietta Cook had to tell us:

*Victoria's student boom is placing such intense pressure on public schools that the state government has begun renting classrooms off the Catholic sector.*

*As Victoria grapples with a surge of enrolments in the inner city and growth corridors, the Victorian School Building Authority is in talks with Catholic Education Melbourne about leasing the recently closed Mother of God School in Ivanhoe East.*

*It hopes state school students at the neighbouring Ivanhoe East Primary, which is nearing capacity, can move into classrooms at the empty site.*

*"It makes sense to consider using this vacant site next door to help accommodate more students," a government spokesman said.*

*A similar deal was struck for Camberwell Primary School a few years ago, and the school is now leasing the closed Our Ladies of Victories School, which it uses as a junior campus.*

*It is not known how much it costs to lease these sites.*

*As Victoria's student population hurtles towards 1 million students in 2020, schools are looking at innovative ways of accommodating the boom.*

*Some have rolled out three-storey portables while others are staggering lunch and recess to ease congestion in the playground.*

*[Figures obtained by The Age](#) show that state schools will be hit the hardest by the boom, with state schools' share of enrolments expected to rise from 63.7 per cent in 2018 to 64.7 per cent in 2022. Over the same period, non-government schools' share of enrolments is expected to decrease from 36.3 to 35.3 per cent.*

*Catholic Education Commission of Victoria chief executive Stephen Elder said that as the second largest provider of schooling in the state, his organisation was "happy to work with the state government over school sites and facilities".*

*Ivanhoe East Primary School principal Justine Mackey said she suspected young families moving into the area, housing developments and high-density living had fuelled demand for enrolments.*

*“Perhaps it’s the real estate agent you need to speak to,” she joked.*

*The school’s reputation has also helped, she said.*

*“We have great results, great kids, great teachers, we have a fantastic community. In this area, it is all about the neighbourhood school.”*

*The school hopes leasing the neighbouring Mother of God School will alleviate the need to use portables in future years.*

*“It’s a beautiful school and it’s a shame to not have it utilised,” she said.*

*“We had a really positive relationship with the school. If we have access to the site it will allow us to enhance our learning programs and create a community learning hub.”*

*The Victorian School Building Authority is negotiating a lease for the recently closed Mother of God School in Ivanhoe. It hopes to use the Catholic school to accommodate students at the neighbouring Ivanhoe East Primary School, which is nearing capacity.*

*Photo: Justin McManus*

*The Mother of God school closed its doors last year due to dwindling enrolments, with the [Catholic sector warning that the closure](#) was a sign of things to come under the Gonski 2.0 funding model.*

*It said its smaller school had received financial support from the broader Catholic school system but this would be difficult to maintain under the new funding model.*

*Some students displaced by the closure now attend Ivanhoe East Primary. In a weird twist, they may soon end up studying back at their old school.*

*Sonja Terpstra, the spokeswoman for community group Reopen Our Schools, said leasing the former Catholic school was a welcome move but the*

*situation could have been avoided if three state schools in the Banyule Council area hadn't closed in 2011.*

*She said the council had purchased these schools off the Education Department, and then sold two of them, Bellfield Primary and Haig Street Primary, to developers.*

*"They have built more than 150 townhouses on those sites," she said.*

*"Those families will be looking for a school and they can't just keep on shipping in portables," she said. "Where will they go?"*

Education Editor at *The Age*

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