

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT  
SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 803**

**PRESENTATION COLLEGE  
CLOSURE**

The closure of the Presentation College Windsor, which allegedly enrolled 700 girls in years 7-12 ,( the actual figure was 466) was given oxygen by the *Age* on 30 July 2019. This closure opens up issues of Church/State entanglement especially when \$1 million for renovations went AWOL.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-30/presentation-college-windsor-catholic-girls-school-to-close/11364188>

and

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/government-could-pursue-closing-catholic-school-over-1-million-grant-20190730-p52ca9.html>

Initially, shocked parents expected the government to ‘do something’.

Premier Daniel Andrews ruled out a providing a Government bail out and said it was a matter for the Catholic Education Office.

*"I'm not announcing that we're going to try to keep the school open. It is a private school,"* he said. He further indicated that he government would not seek to keep the school open but would support the students to be able to enrol in government schools.

Then there was the question whether the Andrews government should seek to claw back a \$1 million grant it gave to Presentation College Windsor for renovations two years ago, after the Catholic girls’ school announced plans to shut its doors next year.

The answer is – No, even though it WAS taxpayer’s money. *“The Victorian School Building Authority is following this matter up with the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria,”* the department’s spokesperson said. But the strange thing is that this grant does not appear on the MYSCHOOL website. This probably means that the money never left the Catholic Education Office. So what will happen to it? The Catholic Education Office is a law unto itself, has the money in hand and can do what it wishes with it.

The school site is owned by the Presentation Sisters of Victoria, part of an order of Catholic nuns. Any capital grants – and they have also been made by the Federal Government will be clear profit if and when the site is sold.

Note that this is taxpayers money enriching one particular branch of one particular church.

## **What does the MySchool website have to say about this school?**

There is nothing 'poor' or disadvantaged about this school. It has an ICSEA value well above the average of 1000. Its ICSEA value is 1089. Its student population mainly come from wealthy or comfortable homes. 44% are in the highest quartile -income bracket, 30% in the second quartile, 16% in the middle class quartile, and only 10% in the lowest quartile.

There are 44 teaching staff and 25 non-teaching staff.

In 2018 it cost \$17,769 to educate a student at this school. The total net income was \$9,346,608 of which \$3,818,818 is from the Federal Government and \$988,465 from the State government.

There is a special note on the website to the effect that

*'This school has a large proportion of Full fee paying overseas students that may overstate the schools fees, charges and parental contributions per student.'*

The angst of parents and students at Presentation jogged the memory of Megan Peniston-Bird . She had personal experience, as a student of the great Kennett public school closures of the early 1990s

### **Sad but not newsworthy**

Why this fuss about Presentation College Windsor closing? Where was the outrage over all the schools that were closed in the Kennett era? Didn't it upset those kids and their parents? My primary school, East Coburg, was sold for a church school. Fee-paying schools, for all their hype, are business ventures. This business has failed, which is disappointing for those affected but not newsworthy.

### **Megan Peniston-Bird, Hawthorn**

And then, David Zyngier pointed out the public cost of this private school .

### **Drop in enrolments**

It is indeed sad that students are being torn apart at Presentation College Windsor. But since 2011, over \$39million of public money has subsidised the school's recurrent student costs, in addition to more than \$2.5million of capital investment. During that period, fees rose from just under \$6000 to \$10,000 per annum.

These increases have served to narrow the enrolment of students to wealthier families, including many full-fee paying overseas students. Over the same time, the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (an indication of students' socio-educational backgrounds) rose from a low of 1058 to 1092. The school's median VCE performance of 30 out of 50 has not changed over that time. Many comparable ICSEA schools, public and private, outperform Presentation College. That may be an explanation for its enrolment decline.

### **Dr David Zyngier, school of education, Southern Cross University**

**DOGS NOTE THAT when the Catholic Education Office chants the mantra of 'parental choice' this is merely a smokescreen for power to dispose of billions of taxpayers' money as the clerical and lay hierarchy see fit.**

**The only answer to this problem of church state entanglement and corruption of the public interest is to keep public money and private enterprise completely apart.**

**State Aid should be for State schools only.**

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