

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 810**

**WILL AUSTRALIA FOLLOW THE UK
IF JEREMY CORBYN'S LABOR GOVERNMENT IS ELECTED?**

“Labour will pledge to abolish private schools if it wins the next election”

and

‘Universities told to ensure that no more than seven per cent of their students were privately educated’

Australian politicians have an unfortunate habit of allowing the UK or the USA to set a precedent, and then, somewhat slavishly, following it. They have done this – historically – even when it has been abandoned in the ‘motherlands’.

This has not always been a bad thing. For example, the Irish national system which sought to extend elementary education to an impoverished Irish peasantry was opposed by the Catholic church and abandoned by 1900 in that tragic country. Yet it has survived the opposition of the church in Australia – so far - and flourished to become our current public system.

But we have also inherited the bulwark of both the meritocratic and class system of the UK — namely the selective grammar and private high fee schools for the elite. Schools like Eton are labelled ‘private’ or ‘greater public’ schools, while parish schools are labelled ‘maintained’ schools and required to enrol local children. ⁱ

The poorer private sector in the UK are labelled ‘Maintained’ rather than ‘private schools, for the simple reason that they are, in fact, maintained with public money. Australia has not yet adopted this ‘maintained’ nomenclature for our so called ‘independent’ low fee schools.

But, in the same fashion as some Australian citizens are outraged by the public funding and behaviour of Australia’s wealthy, high fee church schools, so in England, the tide is turning against this ‘private’ sector in the Labor Party. Recent events prompt Australian educators to wonder if our Labor Party or even the Greens, would have the temerity to follow their lead.

UK LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE PROPOSALS :

For at the party's recent annual Conference, Labour has vowed to abolish private schools if it wins the next election. The annual conference voted for a proposal to "integrate" them into the state sector and demand that universities enrol no more than 7% of their graduates.

In a major policy shift, a motion approved by delegates at the gathering in Brighton said a government led by Jeremy Corbyn would "challenge the elite privilege of private schools" and claimed that "the ongoing existence of private schools is incompatible with Labour's pledge to promote social justice".

It said the party would include in its next manifesto "a commitment to integrate all private schools into the state sector".

Finance policy chief John McDonnell said a detailed proposal was still being written.

Only approximately seven per cent of British pupils are educated at private schools - Johnson went to the elite Eton school - but critics say they dominate places at top universities and are far overly-represented in senior roles in politics, law, media and business.

Two-thirds of Johnson's cabinet of senior ministers attended private school and David Cameron, who was prime minister from 2010-2016, also went to Eton.

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn also spent some years of his education at a private school, and several members of his team of senior lawmakers sent their children to fee-paying schools.

"Now the discussions will take place exactly how that will work. You can see this developing over time," McDonnell said. "What we're saying is 'let's have one education service for everybody. Let's end these grotesque levels of inequality within our educational system'."

This would include scrapping independent schools' charitable status and "all other public subsidies and tax privileges".

Controversially, the party will also force universities to ensure that only 7 per cent of students they admit went to private schools – the same proportion as in the general population. And private schools' property, land and other assets will be seized and "redistributed democratically and fairly across the country's educational institutions".

DOGS ARE WATCHING THIS SPACE WITH INTEREST.

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