

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT  
SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 833  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC EXPOSES  
GROSS EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES**

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed

1. the gross inequalities in Australia's education systems.
2. The attitude of the government towards public school pupils and teachers.

**Gross inequalities in Australia's education systems.**

In the early stages, COVID-19 appeared in wealthy private schools since rich parents are more likely to have been exposed to the virus on overseas travel. Not surprisingly, they have been the first to close, and the public have been provided with stories of private school children in front of computers and private school teacher experts in computer learning software.

But what of public schools and disadvantaged children whose parents have neither computers or internet connections? Already they have fallen between the cracks as the private sector screams for more funding.

Morrison has attempted to paper over the chasm opening between rich and poor students by refusing to close public schools and/or pour public money into ensuring that ALL children have access to long distance and online learning.

Meanwhile, private schools, are using the situation for yet another 'special deal'.

We are told that some independent schools will be in an ['extremely difficult financial position by Easter unless the government step in with emergency funding, with teaching jobs being first in the firing line'](#) The 'special deal' required is for 97,000 teachers and support staff.

Why?

Parents out of work will not be able to afford school fees !

The obvious reaction is, that if private schools no longer have a guaranteed private income, and demand total taxpayer funding, the time has come to just take them over. Public subsidy, public school.

The greed of the private sector appears to know no bounds. These financial demands come hot on the heels of Morrison's additional funding for private schools of \$3.4 billion (now \$3.4 billion) promised by the Government is just another special deal plucked out of thin air.

This money, together with another \$1.2 billion 'Choice and Accountability special deal' are a mere top-up to the \$14 billion already pouring into the private sector.

[Research from Trevor Cobbold of Save Our Schools](#) has once again exposed the shoddy costing of the latest private school 'Needs'. We discover that the [report by the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee](#) on moving to a direct income measure of assessing the capacity to contribute of families in private schools contains a bombshell. It

unequivocally shows that the financial cost of the move to a direct income measure has never been properly calculated by the Government.

So, once again we have a ‘Needs’ policy based on a hypothetical model with little basis in reality.

## **2. The attitude of the Government Towards Public school Pupils and Teachers**

The Federal Government has insisted on keeping public schools open, against the wishes of many parents. There have been mixed messages about children and their reaction to COVID-19, but no concern was initially expressed of dangers for public school teachers.

Federal politicians have abandoned parliament until August, yet teachers, with minimal protection, are expected to keep schools running.

What is perhaps the most shocking revelation in this crisis situation is the cavalier attitude towards public school teachers by the Federal government. In the Morrison/Tehan world these essential workers appear to be little more than disposable servants.

Fortunately, the Australian Education Union has reacted:

DOGS refer readers to their response, most particularly their concern with unrealistic expectations that alternative (virtual) learning episodes will be provided for students in the event that schools close. Such expectations would be inequitable in their impact, particularly for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, as well as in regional and remote centres.

They are also unsustainable in an education system denied basic resources.

### **DOGS NOTE:**

The Morrison Government is dealing, not just with a greedy private system seeking more ‘special deals’. He is dealing, in a crisis pandemic situation with 2.5 million public school students together with their teachers, parents and grandparents expecting basic services. This represents a two thirds majority of the voting public.

COVID-19 does not respect borders, status, wealth or ‘special deals’.

Sixty years of ‘special deals’ with the private sector are coming home to roost.

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