

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT  
SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 839  
INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS FORCED TO OPEN?**

**JUST A MINUTE: WHAT IS INDEPENDENT ABOUT THESE PRIVATE  
SCHOOLS?**

**In what can only be described as [wedge politics](#), Education Minister Tehan, confronted with State Premiers refusing to open public schools, and, desperate in times of plague, has used the power of the purse to open so-called independent schools.**

[On April 28, 2020, Minister Tehan promised financial rewards](#) to restart classroom teaching within four weeks. He bought forward payment of \$13 billion in annual funding to demolish their resistance to face-to-face learning.

The first advance will be worth 12.5 per cent of next year's funding and will be paid in late May to schools that can show their boards have approved plans in place to resume classes by June 1. The second advance will be worth another 12.5 per cent and will be paid in early June to those schools that can show they have at least half their students in normal classes from June 1.

Unsurprisingly, no mention is made of any special federal funding for public schools which are struggling to provide proper sanitation and other equipment for teachers and children.

The federal government has allocated \$21.8 billion to school funding this year, with \$13.1 billion going to private schools and the remaining to state public schools. This means that almost two thirds of Federal funds (60%) go to the one third of Australian children in private schools and one third to the two thirds of children in public schools. Eighty per cent of disadvantaged Australian children attend public schools and ninety per cent of indigenous children are educated in the public sector.

The reaction from teachers and parents from the public sector has been, understandably, savage, with the Prime Minister's children, who attend a fundamentalist Christian school given some publicity by [the PM himself insisting that](#)

*he would send his kids back to school "in a heartbeat" this term as long as the school was offering proper classroom teaching.*

*“I mean, they were sitting in a room looking at a screen, that’s not teaching, that’s childminding,” he said.*

*“And schools aren’t for childminding. Schools are for teaching and they’re for learning.”*

But so-called independent schools should not be misled by Morrison’s ‘Daggy’Dad” image.

What nobody has yet commented upon is the iron fist in the velvet glove that has been exposed in Tehan’s exercise. Or, to mix the metaphor. Tehan appears to be holding out a carrot with his left hand, but behind his back is a much bigger fat, financial stick. He exposed the stick earlier when he threatened private schools with funding if they did not open their doors. Now, in full knowledge that without parent fees up front, some schools are on the edge, he is holding out a carrot.

But even this is not enough. Private schools are aware that parents are not going to risk the health of their children by sending them back to school – yet.

And State school parents know that the time to send their children back to school will be when Geelong Grammar Boarding facilities are open again. The health and well being of the heirs to billionaire fortunes will not be placed in any jeopardy.

Meanwhile, Independent schools, particularly those with a dodgy business plan are far from independent. Payment of teacher salaries are almost completely dependent upon Federal – and State funding. Their curricula, teacher registrations and external testing procedures are controlled by the government. The only thing which distinguishes them from public schools is their selection of children, their expensive facilities, and overfunding by governments.

In the brave new post virus world, these dependent schools should be open to all children, teachers and parents and be made free, secular and universal.

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