

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 847**

STATE AID AND AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL ENROLMENTS.

Since the Menzies and later Whitlam governments resuscitated the denominational system of education half a century ago, there have been interesting developments in enrolment trends.

Consider the following table:

AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL ENROLMENTS 1953-2019

DATE	PUBLIC		CATHOLIC		INDEPENDENT		TOTAL PRIVATE		TOTAL STUDENTS
	('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)	%	('000)
1953	1206	76.7	286	18.2	80	5.1	366	23.3	1572
1964	1797	76.1	463	19.6	98	4.3	565	23.9	2301
1974	2253	78.4	494	17.2	124	4.3	618	21.5	2872
1977		78.9		16.8		4.3		21.3	
1984	2261	74.9	567	18.8	190	6.3	757	25.1	3018
1994	2215	71.5	602	19.4	282	9.1	884	28.5	3099
2003	2255	67.9	661	19.9	403	12.1	1064	32.1	3319
2014	2406	65.1	748	20.2	540	14.6	1288	34.8	3694
2019	2594	65.7	770	19.5	584	14.8	1354	34.3	3948

ABS statistics

A perusal of this table indicates that in 1964 of 1, 572,000 school students Australian public schools enrolled 76.1%; Catholic schools 19.6% and non-Catholic private schools 4.3%.

In 2019, billions and billions of State Aid later, Australian public schools enrol 65.7%; Catholic schools 19.5% and non-Catholic private schools enrol 14.8%.

In other words, public schools and Catholic schools together, have lost 10.5% enrolment share to non-Catholic private schools. (public schools 9.6% and Catholic schools 0.1%) This means that, back in the day, when the Catholic sector turned political, and worked hard both within the Labour and Coalition parties to release taxpayers money for their schools, all they have achieved is an enrolment comparable with that of 1964. Their hard lobbying has benefitted their sectarian Protestant, evangelical and non-Christian rivals.

These schools call themselves independent and are include a bewildering variety of Protestant, Muslim, Scientology, Ananda Marga, Steiner, Montessori

and many other schools. The website of their major lobby group, the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ICSA) boasts about this simple fact on their website with a table from the ABS Schools Australia 2019 – pivot tables (publication no. 4221.0, Table 43a) They note that

When including independent Catholic schools, the Independent sector share increases to close to 1,080 schools and over 567,000 students, 16 percent of all school enrolments in Australia.

Meanwhile, in 2020 Melbourne, we are informed [by Madeleine Heffernan from The Age on 21 June 2020](#), that enrolments at Catholic primary schools have dived, particularly in Melbourne's eastern suburbs, as cost-conscious families and migrant communities choose government schools. In Melbourne's eastern suburbs, once Catholic heartland, enrolments have fallen more than 12 per cent over the same period, or an average 31 students per school.

Of the 26 Catholic primary schools in suburbs such as Kew, Hawthorn, Balwyn, Box Hill, Burwood, Vermont, Mount Waverley, Glen Waverley and Ashburton, less than a quarter increased their student numbers between 2014 and 2019.

Four lost between 40 and 60 per cent of their students, My School figures show, raising questions of viability.

In response, Catholic secondary school Emmaus College will from next year prioritise grade 6 students who attend a Catholic school over Catholic children attending a government or independent school.

DOGS note that as Australia enters a depression it will be the public schools and their teachers that will be expected to open their doors and/or online learning portals to the children of primary and secondary school age whose aspirational parents can no longer afford private school fees.

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