

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
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**Public Schools Serve the Public Good –
That's Why They Alone Deserve Taxpayer Support**

America is not as far down the track of Church State entanglement as is Australia, although the Trump Supreme Court may change all that. But as in Australia there are those who are concerned to preserve public schools and the public good.

In the following article Rob Boston from Virginia takes up the cause.

by [Rob Boston](#)

<https://www.au.org/blogs/public-schools-public-good>

It's weird, but I sometimes think church-state conflict follows me even when I'm off the clock – and it happened again last week when my wife and I were vacationing in Virginia Beach. One morning at breakfast, my naturally gregarious wife fell into conversation with the man sitting at the table next to us. He turned out to be a teacher at a private religious school in West Virginia. We began discussing education policy, and it wasn't long before he was expressing support for private school vouchers.

I didn't want to get into an argument as I was preparing to dig into my pancakes, but there was one thing he said that I felt I couldn't let go: He asserted that people who choose to send their children to private schools are forced to pay for public schools they don't use, and he opined that this is unfair.

To my mind, this is one of the worst arguments used by voucher boosters. They really ought to abandon it. A moment's thought demonstrates why they're wrong: Government services are designed to help *everyone*; they build a decent society for all of us. And as Americans, it's our civic duty to pitch in and help build a better society for our fellow citizens. You don't get a rebate for the services you don't use. It is selfish to suggest that you should.

Let's say you prefer to buy books online and build an in-home library. You're still expected to pay taxes to support your local public library. Maybe you have your own swimming pool. Good for you – but the public pool at the nearby recreation center will still get a chunk of your taxes. You may own a car and never ride a public bus, but you're still expected to pay taxes so those who do need buses have access to them.

Public education benefits everyone, whether you directly use it or not. In most parts of the country, public schools are funded by property taxes, and every homeowner pays – even those who have no children or whose children are grown. There's a simple reason for this:

It's in society's interest that our children be educated, and public schools are providing that for 90% of them (and remain available for the other 10% whose parents have decided to educate them elsewhere).

Public schools take on a daunting task: educating the vast majority of our children – no matter their race, economic status, sexual orientation or religion. By law, they serve all students, including those with special needs and who face language barriers. Public schools, which are accountable to the people through democratically elected boards, focus on secular education, not imparting religious doctrine. Private schools can say none of these things, and that's why public schools alone deserve public funding.

We all have a stake in public education, whether we have children attending public schools or not. We will all be better off if there are more educated Americans to work toward improving our nation. When public schools succeed, we all succeed. That goal is only made more difficult when public schools' funding is siphoned away through misguided voucher plans that serve a private, not a public, interest.

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