

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 505#

IS USER-PAYS SECTARIAN EDUCATION THE WAY OF THE FUTURE FOR AUSTRALIA?

Will our world class public education system be kicked into the dustbin of history by fearful politicians and religious bureaucrats?

Consider the following recent developments:

- Even if the Gillard Government survives and gets sufficient finance - they do not have the intestinal fortitude to call the bluff of the sectarian lobby
- Abbott himself says sectarian education is in the Coalition's DNA!
- The Commonwealth Government is the central taxing authority
- The Treasury cupboard is bare and the surplus a receding dream
- The mining tax is an embarrassing fizzle
- The public education system and is being starved out of existence

At the same time

- The public education is being privatised, 'autonomised' and corporatized out of existence.
- Only new private schools are being built – duplicating their own facilities – in developing areas.
- The AEU says that failure to act on Gonski would see state schools receive \$693 million less in real terms in 2015-6 than they did in 2011-12 and Commonwealth funding for sectarian schools would increase in real terms by more than \$1.3 billion. This takes into account only Commonwealth direct grants, not taxation exemptions and other State subsidies. The Catholic system is demanding money for buying land and building new schools.

BUT

Do Australians really WANT their children's educational future to be the plaything of multinational corporations alongside sectarian – Roman Catholic, Evangelical Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh , Callathumpian - religious bureaucrats? Polls suggest otherwise.

The sectarian 'denominational' system failed in previous centuries. Why make the same mistake again?

Why engage in national suicide, damning so many of our next generation?

Why fall further behind sensible democratic countries like Finland, Germany, and our Asian neighbours?

THE TIME TO FIGHT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION IS - NOW

The following Media reports indicate public concern for the current state of education in Australia.

FEBRUARY 2013

- Schools results tell the story too well: the funding model has failed Ken Boston in *The Australian*, Feb 16. Only ruined by a meandering piece of nonsense by Kevin Donnelly on the same page.
- 'New schools on hold due to funding uncertainty' *The Age* Feb 16 - Stephen Elder's little contribution to undermining Gonski.
- 'Schools caught cheating on NAPLAN' *The Age* Feb 17. And more on inspired policy from Labor: 'Just 14 recruits in push for teachers' Feb 14 *The Age*.
- 'Public schools' charity case' Dean Ashenden flags cautions on philanthropic funding.
- Adam Smith in *The Conversation* (Feb 7) suggests 'Schools will come second to politics in 2013'
- A refreshing read from Leila Morsy in the *SMH* (Feb 7) on corporate sponsorship of schools: 'The business of learning is not just a numbers game'
- 'Voters back more funding for public education' - report in the Fairfax press on a commissioned survey. Someone needs to pay attention: 'Low socio-economic schools pay high price for cuts' *The Age* Feb 3.

JANUARY 2013

- The school year starts with renewed threats to equity and public education: 'State school sell-off to build more private schools' (*The Age* Jan 27), 'Newman government open to for-profit schools' (*Bris Times*, Jan 28), 'Schools set to suffer as budget cuts hit hard' (*The Age* Jan 30)
- 'Private fees mount as education costs soar' *SMH* Jan 24
- Trevor Cobbold shows how 'Competition and choice fail to produce better student results'
- And yet another underwhelming report into autonomous schools, this time on academies in England. Estelle Morris comments in *Ed Guardian*. Trevor Cobbold draws the parallels with our plans in Australia (Jan 31)
- *The Age* (Jan 21) reports on the money consequences of not implementing Gonski
- 'Young adults still fare badly in earning and learning' *SMH*, Jan 25and it seems that students value school, although some more than others.
- There is a common thread running through these articles: 'For-profit schools to cash in' *Sunday Tele*, Jan 20, 'Schools cut loose in IPS shake-up' *DT*, Jan 19, 'Neo-liberals' economic policy just a get-rich-quicker fraud' George Monbiot in the *SMH* Jan 21
- *The Age* (Jan 21) editorialises on the need for quality teachers
- David Marr comments on Gillard's anti-discrimination Bill. Josephine Tovet (Jan 25) report on how 'Gay teachers in Catholic schools hide sexuality'
- A real link between guns and schools? Read John Hirst's article in *The Age* (Jan 2)

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