

# **AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

## **PRESS RELEASE 509#**

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL INTEREST GROUPS LEFT OUT IN THE COLD ON FUNDING TALKS**

**Public school interest groups have been largely ignored by the government in talks about funding models for disadvantaged students.**

**The funding for the 77% of low income students is held hostage to talks being held by Gillard and Garrett with the private school lobby.**

**Unfortunately, the public school interest groups (with the notable exception of the New South Wales Teachers Federation and some representatives in the Australian Education Union) were dished out of relevance thirty years ago.**

DOGS note that public school representatives were ‘consulted’ and represented at the ALP ‘needs policy’ negotiating table in the 1970s and early 1980s. They let the public education side down rather badly.

Joan Kirner and her Parent Club friends for example, preferred political and academic careers and compromise to a strong anti-State Aid position. The State Aid bill soared ; the so-called needy became outrageously greedy; and public school share declined. Finally, teacher union representatives like Van Davy could take it no longer. In 1983/4 his dissenting report led to the beginning of the end of the Schools Commission compromise. Wealthy private schools and centralised Catholic bureaucracy have tried and generally succeeded in calling the political shots ever since.

DOGS detect a turning of the worm.

Even members of the Australian aspirational middle class, in both the inner and outer suburban areas of our cities, not to mention the country areas, are beginning to realise that public education is the way forward for both their children and bank balances.

Meanwhile,

- those who weep over the disadvantaged children in our public schools,
- those who are concerned about our national future and
- those who wish to have a seat at Gillard’s negotiating table

are still chasing the dream of a proper “ Needs” policy. Although DOGS believe the Needs Policy and Gonski’s voucher system are flawed, the work of Trevor Cobbold is valuable in exposing the growing inequities in our educational funding policy. He takes the lid of the stinking garbage bin.

But the way forward is to stop the rot that causes the stink – and go back to basics.

**Australia should separate religion from the State and  
Stop State Aid to sectarian schools.**

An account of Trevor Cobbold's view on the current situation is found at <http://www.saveourschools.com.au/media-releases/media-release-outrageous-that-rich-schools-decide-funding-for-the-disadvantaged>

## **Media Release: Outrageous that Rich Schools Decide Funding for the Disadvantaged**

Wednesday March 27, 2013

The public education advocacy group Save Our Schools today called for government schools to be included in negotiations over the funding loadings for disadvantaged students in the new school funding model. SOS National Convenor, Trevor Cobbold, said that the future funding for disadvantaged schools is being held hostage to negotiations with the richest schools in Australia.

“It is outrageous that the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA), representing the wealthiest schools in Australia, gets to negotiate the funding loadings for disadvantaged students while representatives of government schools are excluded from negotiations.

“Government schools enrol nearly 80% of all disadvantaged students. How can the interests of disadvantaged students be represented by the richest schools in the country? It's a joke.

“Private school organisations have been open in their demand that the disadvantage funding loadings should be kept low. Independent schools want to reduce the loadings for disadvantage and increase the level of the base payments to schools because this will better serve them. They fear that higher loadings for disadvantaged students will funnel more money into government schools.

“Independent Schools Victoria even says that there should be no funding loadings for low income students.

“Independent private schools are blatantly pursuing their own self-interest at the expense of disadvantaged schools. Yet, the Gillard Government refuses to include government school organisations in the negotiations.”

Mr. Cobbold was commenting on a report in the Australian Financial Review that the details of funding levels for disadvantaged students are being worked out in negotiations between ISCA and the Federal Government.

“It is government schools that should have the primary say in the negotiations over the funding loadings for disadvantaged students, not Independent schools.

“Census data shows that 77% of low income students attend government schools and only 9% attend Independent schools. Over half the students enrolled in Independent schools are from high income families.

“Just look at the schools represented by the leaders of ISCA. Its chairman is Mr. John Ralston who is a Board member at Wenona School, one of the most exclusive schools in Sydney. Last year, the Year 12 fees at Wenona were \$26,760. Ninety-four per cent of its students are from the top socio-economic status quartile. Mr. Ralston is also chairman of the NSW Association of Independent Schools.

“The chairman of Independent Schools Victoria is Mr. Jeremy Kirkwood who is chairman of the Geelong Grammar School board. Geelong Grammar is the most expensive school in Australia with Year 12 fees this year of \$32,400.

Mr. Cobbold called for the inclusion of government school organisations in the negotiations over the funding loadings.

“The negotiation process over the new school funding model has been stacked against government schools from the outset. The Gillard Government stands condemned for its slavish favouritism of private schools in this process.

“We have already seen the results of the secret negotiations with Independent school organisations. According to the Financial Review, the Prime Minister has agreed to add another 120 Independent schools to the special funding deal for 180 schools granted by the Howard Government which provides millions in over-funding.

“Research shows that the funding loadings for disadvantaged students need to be high to make a difference to school outcomes. Representatives of government schools should immediately be included in the negotiations to make the formal case for higher funding loadings. It should not be left to secret negotiations with private schools.”

**THE DOGS RADIO PROGRAM**

**3CR**

**855 ON THE AM DIAL**

**12.00 NOON SATURDAYS**