

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

## **PRESS RELEASE 513#**

**BILL SCALES, GONSKI**

**AND**

**PUSSY FOOTING AROUND THE STATE AID ISSUE**

**On 22 April 2013, The Chancellor of the Swinburne University of Technology and member of the Gonski panel, Bill Scales, discussed the reforms proposed by the Gonski panel with Emma Alberici on the ABC.**

DOGS note the things this successful public figure was prepared to say - and those he avoided.

1. He was prepared to say that the Howard Government's Funding system was broken;
2. He was prepared to say that the private sector is not accountable;
3. He was prepared to say that the funding system is divisive;
4. He was prepared to use the ' Falling Behind the International Jones' argument;
5. He was prepared to reveal educational disadvantage suffered by Australian children;

**BUT**

6. He was not prepared to question the provision of funding to wealthy schools or inequalities which are the inevitable result of State Aid to religious schools.

**Only the DOGS are prepared to talk about that !**

Here is what Bill Scales was prepared to say:

### **1. The Funding System is Broken**

*I think what the panel did, the Gonski panel, chaired by David of course, showed quite clearly why it ( the Funding system) was broken. And let me give you a couple of good reasons. The first is that the funding that's provided by the Federal Government to private and independent schools is actually based on the cost base of government schools. Now, why that isn't appropriate is because the cost base of government schools is so much higher than the cost base of independent and private schools, primarily Catholic, that is, schools. So, for that reason alone, the current system of funding of private and independent schools is clearly broken.*

### **2. The Private Sector is Not Accountable**

*The second reason is that the current process for funding private and independent schools has no element of quality or performance about it. Now, in today's environment, that's simply not acceptable. I think all of us in the community would expect that public funding should have an element of both quality and performance associated with it.*

### **3. The Funding System is Divisive**

*But there's a third element, I think, and that is the current funding where the Commonwealth funds private and independent schools and the states primarily fund government schools is quite divisive. And in the report, we explained why that was divisive.*

### **4. Australia is Falling Behind the International Jones**

*I think we need to take a broader perspective on this. We can't just take a perspective from Australia. The fact is the rest of the world is changing far more rapidly than we are. And the rest of the world is improving its education performance far more rapidly than we are. What the Gonski Report showed clearly was that since the year 2000, Australia has slipped in terms of its performance with regard to many of our international competitors, if I can put it that way. Now, at the same time, what's also clear is that Australia spends less in GDP per cent terms than many of those countries that are doing well. So what's happening around us is other people are getting better, other people are improving their educational performance, but we're not.*

### **5. Disadvantage Suffered by Children**

**When the interviewer Emma Alberici asked whether he was comfortable with the fact that the amount taken out of universities to fund the Gonski reforms was the same as the additional money for private schools, he pussyfooted around the issue as follows:**

*Look, Emma, I don't want to get into the politics of that for obvious reasons. But the only thing I will say about this is that one of the fundamental principles around the Gonski Review is that we should be funding schools based on need. And we found plenty of need. And we certainly found need around the education of children from low socio-economic backgrounds, from children from Aboriginal backgrounds, from children from backgrounds who might've been more recent refugees.*

### **6. Pussyfooting Around the Real Issue – State Aid has caused Inequalities.**

*EMMA ALBERICI: Well, as you mentioned, this whole exercise was supposed to be about delivering money to schools based on need. Did the panel members seriously believe during this long process, did you form the conclusion that wealthy schools that already receive some \$7 or \$8 billion from the Government should get more?*

*BILL SCALES: Well the panel actually didn't come to a view on that. The panel accepted that the Government had already decided, as they described it, that no school would lose \$1. And we accepted that as being the Government's view. And what we said at the panel was that if that's what the Government wants to do, then we provided them with the means by which that can be done effectively and efficiently.*

*EMMA ALBERICI: But did that seem to compromise your integrity in terms of what you were originally tasked to do?*

*BILL SCALES: Well that was the realpolitik of it, Emma. The Government was quite clearly making that clear. We felt that we had an obligation to give the Government the very best advice we could and that's what we did.*

*EMMA ALBERICI: But you didn't make any mention of whether you thought these wealthy private schools deserved to get more money as part of this process?*

*BILL SCALES: No, what we said was if that's what the Government was determined to do, then we put down for them a blueprint through which that could be done efficiently and effectively.*

<http://www.abc.net.au/lateline/content/2013/s3742876.htm>

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