

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 457

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PRIVATE SCHOOL LOBBY RUNNING OUT OF ARGUMENTS

The sectarian school lobby are running out of arguments:

They are being forced to abandon

- The 'Needs' argument - whatever happened to those poor parish schools?
- The religious argument - whatever happened to all those devout parents in the scramble for educational privileges?
- The economic argument – billions of dollars with minimal accountability later.

That leaves the 'choice' argument. And this is wearing very thin.

Mr Dixon, the Victorian Minister for Education, an ex-principal and administrator from the Catholic system, has decreed that 'parent choice is non-negotiable.' (*Australian Financial Review* 17 January 2012.) But he fails to add that many Victorian parents no longer have the 'choice' of a neighbourhood State school in the developing areas. Witness the efforts of public school parents in the Doreen, Mernda, and Coburg areas – to name a few.

And Scott Prasser the professor of public policy at the Australian Catholic University in an article entitled *Private Schools a Public Good*, (*Australian* 22 December 2011) argues that 'choice' leads to greater private investment in education as 'parents aspire to a secure future for their children.' As he attempts to argue that 'private schools are a 'public good' he lauds the private schools because their

school parents, informed consumers all, choose to pay high fees for a private education.

The mind boggles.

Meanwhile, the Australian Scholarship Group has calculated the cost of a private education for a Victorian family with two children at almost \$1 million because private school expenses will rise up to 25 per cent over the next five years. A Catholic school education will cost \$400,000 and a public school \$140,000. (*Herald Sun* , Tuesday, 17 January 2012.)

Pity the poor parents!

DOGS wonder what has become of the obligation of governments to provide the choice of a free, secular and universal education for all Australian children.

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