

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 480

### SCHOOL AUTONOMY IS A CATCH CRY FOR THE 'MARKET REIGNS SUPREME' IDEOLOGY

12 July 2012

#### **School Autonomy and the Market Ideology.**

On the issue of School Autonomy the Federal Government has left hard evidence behind and placed itself in thrall to right wing educational think-tanks promoted by the private sector. Although the Federal Minister for School Education, Peter Garrett, *The Australian* July 5, claims that self-management and local autonomy will improve student performance, (<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/opinion/schools-power-to-run-affairs-a-matter-of-trust/story-e6frgd0x-1226417211233>) Trevor Cobbold of the Save Our Schools group points out that Garrett's Statement is 'faith-based' and there is no conclusive evidence to prove his contention. (<http://www.saveourschools.com.au/choice-and-competition/another-faith-based-statement-by-garrett-on-school-autonomy>)

#### **State Aid to Private Schools has caused Gross Inequities**

Promoters of religious and private education are largely responsible for the damning inequities in the educational opportunities of Australian children. Common sense, research findings, and taxpayer observation of their facilities and resources underline the obvious. Even the Gonski Report revealed shocking inequities in our current situation and recommended funding increases favouring the public sector.

But private 'faith' school lobbyists and academic apologists are attempting to divert attention from the obvious failure of their State Aid policies of the last half century to mount further attacks upon our public education systems with their stock in trade – ideology. But this time they leave God out of the equation. Now - the market reigns supreme somewhere up in the ether, and public schools must be re-created in the image of schools for the wealthy – autonomous institutions with God Principals. If this fails, they should be made into the plaything of entrepreneurs.

Consider the following comment from the *Spectator* (Australia) 23 June 2012 p. 3. In an article entitled *Wanted: Revolutionaries*, the Australian reporter writes:

*In the UK attempts are being made to bridge the gap between rich and poor by the introduction of so-called 'free i.e. autonomous schools': 'Free schools are emerging at a pitiful rate. It's no use*

*haranguing Eton, St Paul's and Rugby to open multiple branches in Liverpool and Glasgow. They are charities- rapid and potentially risky expansion is not in their nature. Only entrepreneurs do this, and entrepreneurs operate best as profit-seeking businesses. Once a solution becomes obvious, there's no excuse for waiting.*

So there you have it. Education of Australian children should be placed in the hands of entrepreneurs, operating best as profit-seeking businesses.

It is doubtful whether entrepreneurs operating schools as profit making businesses would be interested in schools for children whose parents cant pay hefty fees.

### **School Autonomy has Failed in Victoria- Educators reject the Job.**

Meanwhile, not too many teachers or administrators want to take up the offer of playing God on insufficient funding with disadvantaged pupils, in public schools. In Victoria they don't even want to apply for Principal jobs in the solid middle class suburbs. Victorian public schools have been hit by a chronic principal shortage. Jewel Topsfield of *The Age* July 9 2012, p. 1 writes:

*VICTORIAN government schools are struggling to attract principals, with 60-hour weeks, "helicopter parents", lack of support and insufficient pay deterring people from applying for leadership roles. And it is not only far flung rural schools that cannot attract principals and staff. The rot has now reached the prestigious state schools in eastern Melbourne.*

*Principals have warned of a crisis, pointing to the recent failure to fill the top jobs at three prestigious primary schools in Melbourne's eastern suburbs.*

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/schools-hit-by-principal-shortage-20120708-21pmv.html#ixzz20McUvPoz> .

### **Markets have Moral Limits**

Michael Sandel, a professor of politics at Harvard is a famous public intellectual in America. In his latest book, *What Money Can't Buy*, He points out that:

*The most fateful change that unfolded in the last three decades was not an increase in greed. It was the expansion of markets, and of market values, into spheres of life where they don't belong.*

*It has led to a two major consequences: one is processes leading to unfairness; and the other is that the thing being marketised is corrupted and degraded. See*

*[http://afr.com/p/lifestyle/review/betting\\_on\\_the\\_misfortune\\_of\\_others](http://afr.com/p/lifestyle/review/betting_on_the_misfortune_of_others) **BoRHHPYuGzG4ww7VuF80gI***

This is nowhere more evident than in the field of education in Australia and the UK – but not Finland.

The education of a nation's children is a communal, national good, not a commodity which should be marketed, degraded and corrupted.

This is why DOGS maintain their support for a public education which is public in purpose, outcome, access, ownership, control, funding and provision. Centralised administrators of public education have managed, until recent attacks upon their integrity, to spread the resources and benefits of public education to children in city and country areas, to rich and poor alike. It was our inheritance from the wise men of the nineteenth century.

It is a moral question whether our generation let public education fall into the hands of entrepreneurs involved in profiteering at our children's expense.

***THE DOGS RADIO PROGRAM***

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