

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 496#

PRIVITISATION IN EDUCATION:

FAILED EXPERIMENT AND SNAP SCHOOL CLOSURES

December 1 2012

Since the 1960s Australia has enthusiastically embraced the privatisation of education agenda. Although this was precipitated and indeed demanded by powerful religious lobbies, it has been fanned by the New Right Free Market ideology.

Gonski has pulled the lid off the garbage tin of discrimination against the many in favour of the few in the current situation – the result of forty years of a failed experiment.

In the new suburbs of our cities State Governments are failing to build new public secondary schools.

But recent closures of private schools indicate the vagaries confronting parents and students in the education market place.

Here are a few recent examples of private school bankruptcies.

ST Anthony's Coptic Orthodox College in Frankston North has joined a growing list of Melbourne independent schools that have been forced to close in 2012 because of financial stress.

28 November 2012:

The school's board announced on Tuesday that it will close its doors for good next month because they don't have the money to go on in 2013. The school, established in 1995, has more than 200 students from prep to year 12. Parents who have not paid fees will still be pursued.

Mowbray College enters into voluntary administration after announcing

\$18m debt

30 May 30, 2012

HUNDREDS of students were locked out of a major private college in Melbourne's west after it announced debts of more than \$18 million. The future of up to 1000 students and more than 220 staff at Mowbray College in Melton was under threat after the board went into voluntary administration.

Unpaid fees caused problems.

The Taree Steiner School's Closure

May 21, 2012

According to the *Manning River Times*, the Manning River Steiner School closed its doors without notice, and a liquidator was appointed. Parents of children attending the school in Wynter Street, Taree reacted angrily, particularly at the way Friday's closure was handled.

Parents were informed they could return to the school yesterday to collect their children's belongings.

Acacia College Mernda

October 18 2012

Acacia College in Melbourne's north which had 540 students from prep to year 9 and more than \$40 million in debt closed. Parents of 500 children were very angry.

28 November 2012

The Uniting Church sold the Acacia College site in Mernda to Adventist Schools Victoria which will operate the campus as part of its existing Gilson College, from term 1, 2013.

Adventist Schools Victoria, which operates seven schools in Victoria, plans to provide between 225 to 245 places for students from prep to year seven.

It has also confirmed it will make up to 30 places available for former Acacia College students who would be entering Year 7 and above, at its Nunawading Christian College.

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/seventh-day-adventists-buy-debtridden-acacia-college-20121128-2adzm.html#ixzz2DsxAkHLd>

But

Mernda Parents are Demanding a Public Secondary School which is open to all and Safe from the Vagaries of Church Finances and the Market. Here is an Open Letter from the 'Doreen and Mernda Secondary School Alliance' From: **Muldoon** <muldoonl8@bigpond.com>

Date: Thu, Nov 29, 2012 at 8:03 AM

Subject: Here's a story for you

To: Muldoon <muldoonl8@bigpond.com> Dear Journalists and Editors,

At a meeting on the 28th of November, members of the Doreen Residents Action Group and Mernda and District Residents Association met and agreed to form an alliance to lobby the State Government and opposition to commit to building a public secondary college within the 3754 postcode area. This alliance of our community groups will be known as the 'Doreen and Mernda Secondary School Alliance'.

With yesterday's sale of Acacia College to Gilson College, the opportunity for the State Government to purchase the site for a state secondary school has evaporated. With Gilson College only offering to accept approximately 225 students, this leaves the current year 7,8 and 9 students of Acacia College without a Secondary College option in Mernda for 2013.

As such, the Alliance is calling on the State Government to commit to building a state secondary school within the 3754 postcode area in the 2013 budget, which will accept enrolments by 2016.

We also call on the state opposition to commit to immediately building a state secondary school in the 3754 area should be elected at the 2014 state election.

Based on the 2011 census results for Doreen, Mernda and Yarrambat, there will be 1816 children of secondary school age by the year 2015. Considering the Department of Education and Early Childhood and Development quote that a minimum of 1100 students are required for a secondary school to be viable, then it is more than obvious that the statistics speak for themselves.

It is time that the community of 3754 is listened to on this issue and we call on the Minister for Education Martin Dixon to meet with the Alliance as soon as possible to address this important issue immediately.

For further information and comment, please call Lisa Muldoon on 0417354151. If unavailable, please email your questions to muldoonl8@bigpond.com I will reply as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely,

Lisa Muldoon

The English Experience

Australian parents should learn from the English experience of the vagaries of the educational market being exploited by religious groups. Australia so often follows the English experience. But as early as 2010 English parents felt the economic squeeze and fail to find money for school fees, are finding that the educational opportunities for their children which they took for granted, are disappearing into the free market black hole. As Kate Loveys wrote in The Daily Mail of 16 November 2010,

At least 50 private schools have folded and dozens more are struggling as the economic squeeze drives away cash-strapped parents...

Some 38 schools have closed and 12 have been forced to merge in just three years, according to a dossier compiled by teachers' leaders.

And many more are on a 'knife-edge', the survey of members of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers revealed.

Independent school closures: Casualties include 300-year-old St David's School in Ashford, Surrey, a girls' school whose patron was the Queen

Pupil numbers are down in up to a quarter of independent schools this academic year, the poll of 1,365 teachers shows.

A swathe of expensive private schools could be vulnerable to closure as parents hunt for more competitive alternatives.

Stronger and cheaper schools are attracting pupils from costlier schools without a secure pupil base, it is claimed.

The survey shows that 16 independent schools have shut down or merged already this year, following 20 closures or mergers in 2009...

Dr Mary Bousted, ATL's general secretary, said the survey of members laid bare independent schools' mixed fortunes.

The divide between 'strong private schools which are competitive and the weaker ones is getting ever stronger', she said.

'Regrettably I don't think we have come to the end of the closures as we know a number of schools are on a knife-edge.'

'These closures have a devastating impact on pupils and staff – we know of several ATL members who have been made redundant at least twice when their schools closed.'

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1329709/50-private-schools-fold-struggle-parents-feel-economic-squeeze.html#ixzz2DVpWkDRA>

The market place is not the place for the educational opportunities of a nation's children. It is the place where only the privileged obtain opportunities and the majority suffer.

Only a public system of education which is free, secular and universal can educate the nation's children. Australia learnt this lesson in the nineteenth century. The time to remember it is long overdue.

THE DOGS RADIO PROGRAM

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855 ON THE AM DIAL

12.00 NOON SATURDAYS