

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

**Press Release 1000**

**JACINTA PRICE AND A 12 MILLION PRIVATE  
ABORIGINAL SCHOOL IN ALICE SPRINGS**

**Peter Dutton and Jacinta Price are dining out on the Voice Referendum result with demands for greater accountability for aboriginal funding, but perhaps those in glass houses should be wary of throwing stones.**

There are many many questions swirling around an independent aboriginal school in Alice Springs called Yipirinya and plans for a \$12 million boarding facility at the school.

Although Dutton, Price and Littleproud have been demanding \$12 m from the Government for the boarding facility, no mention has been made by any of them that Bess Price, the mother of Jacinta Price, who was a Country Liberal Party member of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly from 2012 to 2016 was appointed Assistant Principal of Yipirinya in 2022.

Bess Price has not been immune from scandal. According to Shane Dowling on October 22, 2023 writing on a website entitled '[Kangaroo Court of Australia](#)'

*In January 2017 Bess Price was accused of eroding "the public's trust in politicians". Nine reported:*

*The Northern Territory chief minister says former CLP Housing Minister Bess Price's new job with a company she awarded contracts to erodes the public's trust in politicians.*

*Four months after losing her seat at the NT election, ex-Country Liberals minister Ms Price is now employed by Zodiac Business Services, a private firm.*

*Her department awarded more than \$6 million in management contracts to Zodiac during 2014 and 2015, the NT News reports.*

*Labor leader Michael Gunner says taking the role was a mistake. “It appears the minister has breached that code of conduct and we all pay the price for that,” he said. “This goes to an erosion of trust in politicians in the Territory.”* ([Click here to read more](#))

*Bess Price getting a job with Zodiac Business Services is similar to the current \$12 million school funding scandal because Peter Dutton, Jacinta Price and David Littleproud etc would all know they have to declare the conflict of interest with Bess Price working at the school and pushing for the funding as it will also erode “the public’s trust in politicians” by failing to declare it, which they currently are.*

The conflicts of interest and questions surrounding the school are not new and in part reflect tensions between the Labour Party and Country Party representatives of Alice Springs. These are outlined in a report by Erwin Chlanda in the [Alice Springs News](#) of 28 April 2022

The Alice Springs report is innocuous enough, but it prompted a number of very damaging comments about the management of the school itself. Although the principal, Mr Morris was given the right of reply he did not do so.

Shane Dowling has reproduced the following comments on the Kangaroo Court website.

The most damaging comment in the comment section was by Paul Mcloughlin and the School’s Principal Gavin Morris was given an opportunity to respond to the allegations but refused to do so.

*The comment in full:*

***Paul Mcloughlin 29 April 2023 at 3:04 pm***

*It appears Mr Morris likes to play free and loose with the truth. It would be very interesting to put these questions to him.*

*Of the quoted 300 students how many are “real”?*

*In achieving 50% attendance are you telling us 150 attend each day on average?*

*Has your staffing increased threefold to well over 100 during your tenure?  
What are your current staffing levels?*

*How many of your new staff have the requisite clearances?*

*This one was put to him in a Sky News interview with Sharri last Thursday: “Is it true that some days you have more teachers turn up to school than students?”*

*Response (sitting up abruptly in chair): “I refute that, it may have been the case when I first started and there were only 25 to 30 children.”*

*A better question could be: “Have there been any days this year when student attendance exceeded staff attendance?”*

*Yipirinya, I’m told, receives \$41,000 per student. Government primary schools \$11,000 (some variable factors here).*

*At the risk of stating the obvious, this is why the numbers game is so critical: 300 students at Yip = \$12.3m.*

*One only has to google “[Gavin Morris NRL rugby referee](#)” to question his suitability to lead any school.*

*[ED – The Alice Springs News spoke to Dr Morris on Sunday about this comment and yesterday invited him by email to respond to it. We gave him a deadline of noon today, when we published Mr Mcloughlin’s reader’s comment. We’ve had no response from Dr Morris but will publish it should we receive one. Our intention had been for Mr Mcloughlin’s comment and any response from Dr Morris to appear at the same time.]*

*And another interesting comment:*

***Susan Sidler 30 April 2023 at 11:30 am***

*Yipirinya School should demonstrate accountability for the massive funding it already receives before more is provided.*

*At the heart of the problem of accountability is that Yipirinya is a family school.*

*It employs about 20 teachers and a staggering 55 non-teaching staff.*

*By comparison it employs more non-teaching staff than Yirara College which is a boarding school and in charge of students full time rather than just school hours.*

*Interesting to know what all these Yipirinya non-teaching staff do on a day to day basis?*

*Adding to the accountability question is that the school is not registered under ORIC [Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations] but under the old Corporations Act and so much less subject to scrutiny.*

*Who will be the main beneficiaries of the new initiative aimed at accommodating staff and students?*

*PS: Last year's NAPLAN data says attendance is 31% not 50%. ([Click here to read the full article and other comments](#))*

DOGS have done some research on the latest facts and figures from ACARA's MYSCHOOL website.

There is insufficient data for a calculation of the socio-education advantage of the children at this school. There is an enrolment of 273, 139 boys and 134 girls. These are all indigenous children. There are 20 members of the teaching staff, but 55 non-teaching staff.

The Commonwealth Government provides \$4.19 million, the Territory Government \$389,000, fees raise \$43,723 and private funding is \$388,000. It cost \$43,934 to educate a child at this school in 2021. AND 2.13 million has been spent on capital works in the last three years.

There is no data for NAPLAN results.

## **DOGS COMMENT**

This story, like so many involving our indigenous children and their educational future is a very sad and sorry one indeed.

But so many of the problems stem from the fact that this is a private enterprise with very limited public accountability. It is consequently open to corruption, 'jobs for the boys and girls' and 'gaming the system'.

There is nothing new or surprising about this problem. It is the main reason why the denominational, private or independent system was rejected in the nineteenth century. It is the main reason why it should be rejected in the twenty first century.

This is why DOGS promote public education which is

1. public in purpose
2. public in outcome
3. public in access
4. public in ownership
5. public in control

and

6. therefore the only one which is public in accountability

**LISTEN TO THE DOGS PROGRAM**  
**855 ON THE AM DIAL: 12.00 NOON SATURDAYS**  
**<http://www.3cr.org.au/dogs>**