

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

**Press Release 1003**

**NEW RORRIS REPORT REVEALS GROSS  
PUBLIC FUNDING FAVOURITISM FOR PRIVATE  
SCHOOLS**

History may not repeat itself, but it surely rhymes.

In the nineteenth century the public system which espoused the belief that all children should receive an education had to battle against uneven taxpayer funding odds given to the private, denominational sector. The religious sector's basic ideology is the division of children on the basis of class, creed and colour. The public system on got off the ground when public funding of the private sector was withdrawn in the final decades of the nineteenth century.

But, thanks to the Catholic church and its political wing, the Democratic Laour Party –which split the Labor Party and kept it out of power for many decades - State Aid for private religious schools returned in the 1960s. It was first introduced by Menzies as a few million dollars in capital grants for science and libraries, then as a trickle of easily calculated per capita grants. Now it amounts to twenty billion for both capital and running costs, not to mention many more billions in taxation exemptions for the exclusive private sector.

Australian education is now at a tipping point, rolling back into the gross social, educational and political inequities of the nineteenth century. For where else will the newly minted billionaire oligarchs and the aspirational middle classes send their children but a favoured, over resourced, entitled private school?

Meanwhile, public schools are underfunded by between \$6.2 billion and \$6.5 billion per annum

When over a half of the Albanese cabinet and more than two thirds of the Coalition opposition attended private schools, what does that tell the rest of the population about our democracy?

Facts and figures illustrating this gross inequity have been surfacing in the mainstream media for some months. Even the Murdoch Melbourne *Herald Sun* ran an article on November 17 2023 entitled ‘*Outdated and outclassed-state students’ funding divide laid bare*’. But a recent Report, commissioned by the Australian Education Union has spelt out the latest startling statistics. The Rorris Report, on the AEU website at

<https://www.aeufederal.org.au/news-media/news/2023/how-school-funding-fails-public-schools-report>

is summarised as follows:

- Public schools will remain underfunded by between \$6.2 billion and \$6.5 billion a year unless the Commonwealth and state and territory governments significantly lift their investment in new funding agreements due next year.
- Private schools will be overfunded by almost \$3 billion in the next five years. At an aggregate level, private schools receive more than their public funding entitlement in every state and territory except the NT.
- The richest schools in the nation are among the ones that will be the most overfunded by the federal government in the next five years, including Haileybury in Melbourne (\$19.1 million), Trinity Grammar in Sydney (\$14 million), Ivanhoe Grammar in Melbourne (\$11.5 million), Newington College in Sydney (\$11.2 million), Brisbane Grammar (\$11 million), Loreto Kirribilli in Sydney (\$10 million), Hale School in Perth (\$9.3 million), and Pembroke School in South Australia (\$8.8 million).

The report calls for all public schools to be funded by 2028 to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), which is the minimum level governments agreed more than a decade ago was required to meet the needs of students.

“Public school systems have been working from a position of extreme underfunding for more than two decades. What is urgently needed is a commitment from governments to end the funding crisis and move Australian public schools to the point where they have the resources needed so they can

realistically deliver on the goals for schooling as expected by the Australian community,” the report concludes.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said the report exposed the shocking inequity of school funding, with only 1.3% of public schools resourced to the SRS compared to 98% of private schools.

“If governments can afford to overfund private schools by hundreds of millions each year, they can afford to fund every public school to their own minimum standard,” she said.

“Full funding of public schools is the only way to ensure every child gets every opportunity to succeed. That investment will give teachers more time and support to meet the diverse and complex needs of their students. It will also give them the confidence that they can make a real difference without burning out with unsustainable workloads.

“Public school principals and teachers are doing an amazing job, but they are being asked to do too much with too little. The Albanese Government must honour its commitment to full funding and sign bilateral agreements with state and territory governments next year that put an end to the underfunding of public schools by 2028.

“Only public schools in the ACT are resourced at 100% of the SRS and only the NSW Government has pledged to fully fund public schools within the next five year bilateral agreement with the Albanese Government.

“The Rorris report makes clear there are few countries in the developed world that have a more inequitable distribution of resources to schools than Australia.

“Closing the resources gap is an essential part of closing the achievement gaps between children from different backgrounds, and it is public schools who educate the vast majority of children with higher needs.

“Full funding will help attract and retain teachers at a time of a critical shortage. It will also have huge benefits for the nation, with a recent report concluding that the economic payoff of fully funding public schools would be two to four times the annual cost.”

## **DOGS POSITION**

The DOGS position is and always has been quite clear. Taxpayers and citizens cannot and should not have any dealings with a sector which has gamed the system so skilfully since the 1960s. The private school sector have systematically made a mockery of any attempts to introduce funding policies based upon genuine needs. They have proved again and again that they cannot be appeased politically unless the public Treasury is available for every growing demands. They regard our

public schools as ‘waste basket’ institutions useful for their ‘rejected’ students only.

The denominational system never was, never could be, a system for a democratic society. We pay for these schools. They should be taken over and become public institutions. Those who resist can remain as genuinely independent institutions.

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