

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Press Release #1067

Educational Equality should Start with Equal Schools – Schools that are Free, Secular and Universal

The sad refrain of growing social inequality fuelled by educational disadvantage continues in both academic and mainstream media.

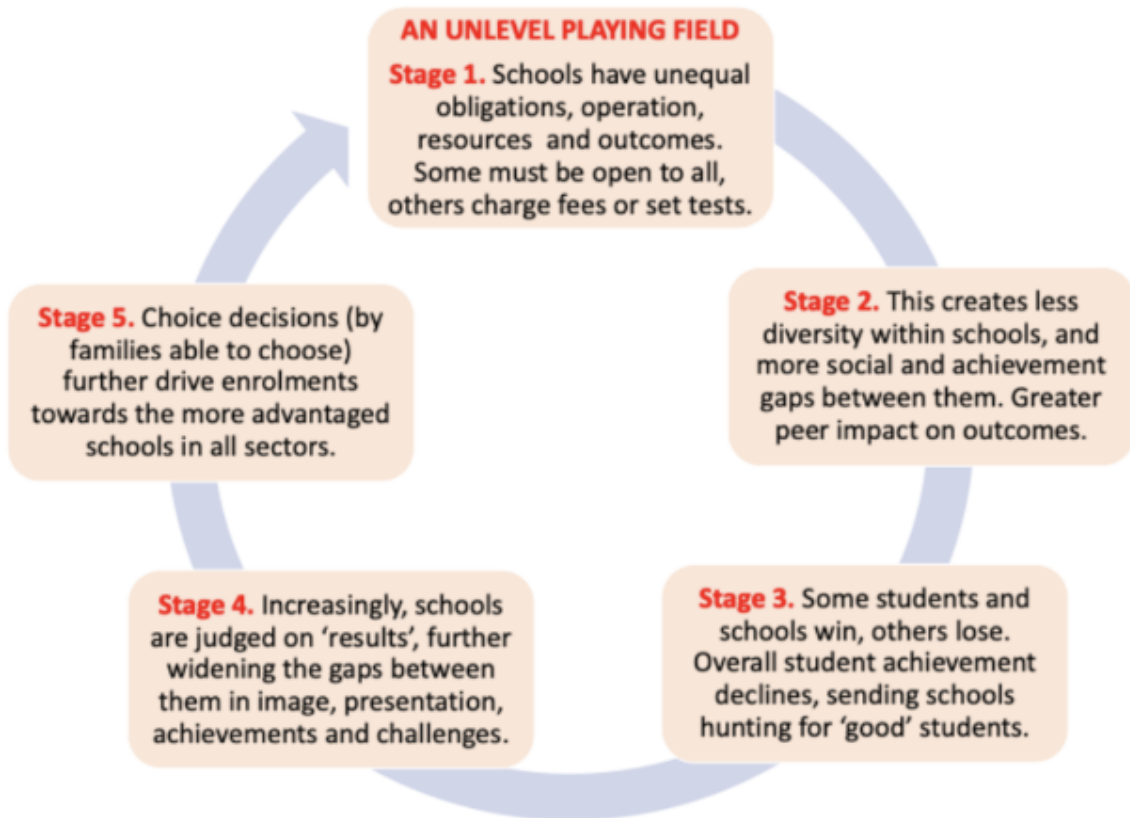
The most recent is [**Australia's school system is driving inequality – not fixing it**](#) by Chris Bonner in John Menadue's *Pearls and Irritations*, [**What does disadvantage look like in Australia? New research shows who's struggling most**](#) from *The Conversation* and Jane Caro's new Vantage Point essay [**Rich Kid Poor Kid: The battle for public education**](#)

Chris Bonner articulates the problems as follows and traces the current situation back to the 1970s.

“Collectively, our schools are characterised by unfairness, segregation, and growing achievement gaps, problems which impact other areas of social policy and contribute to multiplying costs. Schools should certainly be in the queue for policy attention.

Given the scale of existing problems, it seems odd to restate why action is needed. Individual schools aside, our evolving school framework has created the most wicked of social problems. Worse, it exists within a vicious circle, captive to an enormous regressive feedback loop. The casualties among young people, schools and communities, continue to mount. It is now possible to argue that schools are the nurseries for social inequality.

This is illustrated in the diagram below, which shows how the key drivers are found in the way the whole framework operates. Yes, schools have never been equal, but much of the current inequality, especially the unlevel playing field on which schools operate and compete, derives from both policy and negligence going back to the 1970s.



Our equity and fairness problems have changed as governments have come and gone, but what is described at each stage around the cycle is enduring – and will be familiar to those with even a passing interest in schools. After half a century, the problems depicted are now too big to ignore. “

DOGS POINT OF VIEW

DOGS would like to cut through the psycho social analysis - useful and important as it may be - to a very simple point.

If a nation wants **all** of its children to have an equal chance in the country's educational institutions then they would make those institutions equal.

Countries with successful educational systems like Finland know this.

The only way to do this is to make every publicly funded school free, open to all children regardless of their social or economic background or the religion of their parents, and with universal curriculum choices.

Since the 1960s, Australian education has been bedevilled with the public funding of schools which charge fees, discriminate against children, parents, teachers and employees on the basis of class, creed and gender, and refuse to follow agreed curricula.

DOGS predicted the current grossly unequal situation in 1964 when the first trickle of State Aid came into the private sector under the guise of library and science blocks. By the 1990s the millions had become billions and by the 2020s, Australian society is one of the most segregated in the world.

It is the old impossible problem – State Aid for private, religious schools, and separation of religion from the State. There is integrated diversity in a public system and there is segregated diversity in a private system.

Bite into the real problem and you will be vilified, called sectarian by the sectarians! So...those who want to be politically correct and 'nice' try and ignore it.

When will the Chris Bonners, Jane Caros and other academic commentators have the intestinal fortitude to bite the bullet and state the obvious ?

Listen to the DOGS program on 3CR

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12.00 NOON SATURDAYS

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