

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

**PRESS RELEASE 535#**

**28 November 2013**

## **PISA RESULTS : LOSING OUT IN THE INTERNATIONAL RACE**

### **TOP COUNTRIES DON'T PROMOTE MARKET IDEOLOGY IN EDUCATION**

The 2013 PISA results have been released and Australia's international standard has fallen even further. Australia saw a precipitous fall in its maths ranking, from 15th in 2009 to 19th in 2012

**The results were a disappointment for those countries that have embraced a market ideology with charter schools and 'independent' public schools.**

DOGS are not surprised. The English-speaking Western democracies have been misled by Adam Smith's bastards.

Adam Smith did not promote market competition for the education of a nation's children.

Any democracy with the common good in mind will make public education a public obligation and cost.

The democratic waters have been constantly muddied by sectarian and profit making interests.

Public funding should be made available for Public schools only. We can afford to have one top ranking public system. We cannot afford the leaking sieve providing billions every year to wealthy sectarian systems of education.

When will we learn?

Now, the PISA chickens are coming home to roost.

### **PISA RESULTS**

The results of the OECD's programme for international student assessment – a triennial exam for 15-year-olds known as Pisa – show that China's Shanghai region easily tops the rest of the world in maths, reading and science. Shanghai's lead was so clear that the results were the equivalent of its students having had three additional years of schooling, the OECD estimates. Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea made up the rest of the top five for maths, followed by the Chinese island of Macao. Finland was the highest placed European country, with a top-five performance in science, while Ireland was sixth-equal with

Taiwan in reading. In maths, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and the Netherlands were the only European entrants in the top 10.

Australia saw a precipitous fall in its maths ranking, from 15th in 2009 to 19th in 2012, as it was overtaken by Poland and the new entrant, Vietnam, which appears in the OECD tables for the first time. Australia's reading score was little changed but its performance in science slipped from 10th to 16th, tied with Macao

The US, saw its maths rank fall to 36th place overall, worse than its 2009 performance, which President Obama dubbed a "Sputnik moment" for American education. In reading, the US fell seven places, to 24th, and in science the country came in 28th, down five.

The UK's performance was virtually unchanged from its 2009 results, when its international rankings suffered with the addition of higher-placed new entrants such as Shanghai. It ranked 20th overall for science, 26th for maths and 23rd for reading – on a par with France and the US, and close to the OECD average for reading and maths.

Outside Asia, Brazil, Germany and Mexico have all shown consistent improvement, with Germany, Mexico and Turkey winning praise for improving the performance of their weakest performing students, many of whom were from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Andreas Schleicher, the OECD's deputy director for education and skills and co-ordinator of the Pisa programme, said that the OECD found no evidence from its international analysis that competition between private, state or charter-style schools – free schools, in the UK – had any impact on raising standards.

"You would expect that systems with greater choice would come out better because you expect competition to raise performance of the high performers and lower performers, and put out of the market schools and systems that do not succeed. But in fact, you don't see a correlation," Schleicher said.

"Competition alone is not a predictor for better outcomes. And the UK is a good example: a highly competitive school system but still only an average performer."

See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/03/east-asian-top-oecd-education-rankings>

Trevor Cobbold of Save our Schools Canberra has issued the following informative Press Releases.

### **Media Release: PISA Test Results Prove that Increased Funding Should be Allocated to Disadvantaged Students and Schools**

Friday December 6, 2013

The new PISA international test results highlight the need to implement a new school funding scheme to overcome disadvantage in education according to the public education advocacy group, Save Our Schools. SOS national convenor, Trevor Cobbold, said that the results show

that Australia has failed to make any inroad into reducing inequity in education and, if anything, inequity has increased.

“The Federal Education Minister, Christopher Pyne, has repeatedly claimed that Australia does not have an equity problem. The new PISA results conclusively debunk his claim. They demonstrate that low student results are strongly associated with disadvantaged backgrounds.

“Australia has a major equity problem, with huge achievement gaps between rich and poor, and very low results for Indigenous and remote area students:

- Low SES students are about two and a half years behind high SES students in reading, mathematics and science;
- Indigenous students are three or more years behind high SES students;
- Remote area students are two and a half to three years behind high SES students.

“High proportions of low SES, Indigenous and remote area students are performing at the lowest levels compared to high SES students:

- One-third of low SES students not achieving the international mathematics benchmark and nearly one-quarter are not achieving the reading and science benchmarks compared with 5-8% of high SES students;
- Just over half of all Indigenous students are not achieving the mathematics benchmark and nearly 40% are not achieving the reading and science benchmarks;
- 30-39% of remote area students are not achieving benchmarks.

“The largest falls in mathematics since 2003 have been for low SES, Indigenous and remote area students. They have all lost about half a year’s learning or more.”

Mr. Cobbold said that the large achievement gaps and the decline in Australia’s reading and mathematics results demonstrate the failure of the Howard Government’s SES funding model which was continued under the Rudd and Gillard Governments.

“School funding over the past decade or more has not been directed to the areas of greatest need. Total government (Federal/state) funding for Independent private schools increased by 82% between 2001-02 and 2008-09 and for Catholic schools by 64% compared to 48% for government schools. Yet, it is government schools that enrol the vast majority of disadvantaged students – around 80%.

“Clearly, funding increases have not gone to the areas of greatest need over the past decade or more. Yet, until recently forced by public outrage to agree to a new funding model, the Prime Minister claimed that the SES model was ‘not broken’ and only needed ‘fine-tuning’ despite the finding of the Gonski report that it was decidedly broken and unfair. Until forced to back down, Pyne wanted to use the SES model as the ‘starting point’ for another model.

“The funding priority for the Coalition is to support private schools – as the Prime Minister says, ‘it is in our DNA’. It has been a disastrous failure. Billions have been wasted by being diverted to those least in need at the expense of those most in need. Moreover, the new test results show that the results for Catholic and Independent school have fallen by more than in government schools. It is clear that increased funding for private schools does not address Australia’s problems.

Mr. Cobbold said that the new PISA results show that future funding increases should be directed to disadvantaged students and schools rather than continue to be wasted on those least in need.

“It is incumbent on the Coalition Government to ensure that the new funding model is fully implemented and that Federal and state/territory government funding is actually directed at students and schools most in need. This is the key to reducing inequity and improving Australia’s overall results.

“The OECD’s own report on PISA states that:

bq. ...the highest-performing school systems are those that allocate educational resources more equitably among advantaged and disadvantaged schools. [Vol. 4: 4]

“The Government should require state and territory governments to allocate funding according to the basic principles of the Gonski model. It is too important for the future of Australia’s students and, indeed, its economy, to allow governments free rein in how they use funds.

“After all, Abbott and Pyne were part of the Howard Government ministry which required schools to erect flagpoles as a condition of Federal funding. Surely, requiring that funds be allocated to those most in need is a little more important.”

<http://www.saveourschools.com.au/media-releases/media-release-pisa-test-results-prove-that-increased-funding-should-be-allocated-to-disadvantaged-students-and-schools>

## **Australia's 2012 PISA Results**

Thursday December 5, 2013

<http://www.saveourschools.com.au/national-issues/australias-2012-pisa-results>

*This is a summary of the main results for Australia from the 2012 Programme for Interational Student Assessment. Charts of results are available below.*

**1. Australia continues to have high average results, but there have been significant declines in reading and mathematics** [Chart 1]. The large part of the decline in reading occurred between 2000 and 2006; since then the average score has been stable. There has been a very significant decline in the average mathematics score since 2003 which is equivalent to about half a school year. There was a small decline in science between 2006 and 2012, all of which occurred between 2009 and 2012. There was a very small decline in reading between 2009 and 2012.

**2. Australia has slipped down the international league table in reading and mathematics** but there was only minor drop in the case of science. In 2009, Australia was outperformed by 6 countries in reading, 12 countries in mathematics and 6 countries in science. In 2012, Australia was outperformed by 9 countries in reading, 16 countries in mathematics and 7 countries in science.

**3. Australia's advantage over the average results for the OECD has narrowed in each subject** [Chart 2]. Australia was over half a school year ahead of the OECD in reading, mathematics and science in 2000, 2003 and 2006, respectively. The advantage in reading and mathematics narrowed to less than half a school year in 2012.

**4. Large declines in reading and mathematics occurred in all states and territories, except Victoria** [Chart 4]. There were very large declines in mathematics in Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, ACT and Northern Territory.

**5. Catholic schools had the largest declines of any school sector in reading, mathematics and science between 2009 and 2012** [Chart 6]. Government schools had the lowest average decline across reading, mathematics and science. All sectors experienced significant declines in mathematics. The decline in reading in government schools was marginal and similar to that in Independent schools. The decline in mathematics in government schools was larger than in Independent schools, but smaller in the case of science. These trends are consistent with a recent study by the Melbourne Institute for Applied Economic and Social Research which showed that falling results in private schools largely contributed to the decline in reading and mathematics results between 2000 and 2009.

**6. There were significant declines in the percentage of students at the most advanced levels in private schools between 2009 and 2012, but little change in government schools** [Table 3]. The percentage at the advanced reading levels fell from 14 to 11% in Catholic schools compared to no decline in government schools, while the percentage for Independent schools dropped from 22 to 20%. The declines in the percentage at the most advanced mathematics levels were also larger in Catholic and Independent schools than in government schools: from 17% to 14% in Catholic schools and from 25 to 23% in Independent schools compared to a very small decline in government schools from 14 to 13%. There was also a larger decline in the percentage of Independent schools at the most advanced science levels from 25 to 21% compared to very small declines in government and Catholic schools.

**7. Average results in reading, mathematics and science are similar across Government, Catholic and Independent schools after allowing for differences in student and school socio-economic status.**

**8. Average results declined by similar amounts at all levels of achievement in mathematics between 2003 and 2012.** Scores at the 10th and 25th percentiles declined by 17 and 23 points respectively, while the decline for the 75th and 90th percentiles was 21 and 14 points respectively. There was no change in scores at different achievement levels in science between 2006 and 2012. There were significant declines in reading at the top levels between 2003 and 2006 but little change between 2006 and 2012. There was little change in scores at the bottom levels between 2000 and 2012.

**9. A significant proportion of all students are below the international proficiency benchmarks** [Chart 7]. Fourteen per cent of students are below the reading proficiency benchmark, 20% are below the mathematics benchmark, and 13% are below the science benchmark. There has been a significant increase in the proportion below the mathematics benchmark since 2003, from 14 to 20%. There was a small increase in the percentage below the reading benchmark, but this increase occurred between 2000 and 2006 [Table 1].

**10. The average mathematics results for the lowest SES quartile declined by about half a school year since 2006 with smaller declines for the other quartiles [Chart 9].** There was little change in the average reading results across all SES quartiles and small declines in science in the lowest quartiles and the highest quartile [Charts 10 & 11].

**11. Average reading results for remote area students declined by about half a school year since 2006 and average mathematics results for remote area and Indigenous students declined by over half a school year [Charts 9-11].**

**12. There are large inequalities in school outcomes in Australia:**

a. The range of scores between the highest and lowest achieving students is high by international standards [Chart 12];

**b. There are very large achievement gaps between low SES, Indigenous and remote area students and high SES students [Chart 13]:**

i. Low SES students are about two and a half years behind high SES students in reading, mathematics and science;

ii. Indigenous students are three or more years behind high SES students;

iii. Remote area students are two and a half to three years behind high SES students.

**c. High proportions of low SES, Indigenous and remote area students are performing at the lowest levels [Chart 14]:**

i. 23% of low SES students not achieving the reading and science proficiency benchmarks and 33% are not achieving the mathematics benchmark compared with 5-8% of high SES students;

ii. 51% of Indigenous students are not achieving the mathematics benchmark and 37 and 39% are not achieving the reading and science benchmarks, respectively;

iii. 30-39% of remote area students are not achieving benchmarks.

**d. Very low proportions of low SES, Indigenous and remote area students are performing at the highest levels [Chart 15]:**

i. 4-5% of low SES students are achieving at the most advanced levels compared to 23-27% of high SES students;

ii. Only 2% or less of Indigenous students and 5-6% of remote area students are achieving at the most advanced levels.

**13. Inequities in school outcomes have not decreased since 2006 and have increased in several instances:**

a. The achievement gap between low SES and high SES students increased in mathematics and remained much the same in reading and science [Chart 13];

b. The gaps between Indigenous and high SES students and between remote area and high SES students increased in reading and mathematics [Chart 13];

c. There were large increases in the percentage of low SES, Indigenous and remote area students below the mathematics benchmark [Chart 16].

Trevor Cobbold

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