

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 546#

ONLY THE PUBLIC SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION PROVIDE EQUITY:

ALL PUBLIC SCHOOLS ARE GOOD SCHOOLS

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Thanks to selfish religious minorities and market ideology, Australia has become, not the land of the ‘fair go’ or even a meritocracy — but a land which is more socially stratified than the UK, Canada , or New Zealand, – let alone Finland.

Data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development ([OECD](http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/48852584.pdf)) <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/48852584.pdf> show that the proportion of kids who go to a socially mixed or average school is lower in Australia than in most other comparable countries. Our schools are more socially stratified than in Canada, New Zealand or even the UK. See <http://theconversation.com/australian-schools-engines-of-inequality-23979>

In the nineteenth century Australia and the US believed in and created public school systems that guaranteed all children, no matter their origins, access to a publicly funded education. They understood that you can only educate all of the children all of the time in publicly funded public schools. They had the wisdom – and guts – to stop State Aid to private church schools and separate religion from the State.

But religious minorities and plutocrats are now creating education systems that are socially stratified and full of inequalities. There is much evidence to suggest that our schools, rather than promoting equity, are effectively serving as engines of inequality. This is true of schools in [other countries](#) that have embraced [choice](#) and [competition](#) to organise education.

Social stratification in the Australian education system is [sharper than in most countries](#). Students from wealthy, privileged backgrounds [tend to go](#) to high-fee, independent high schools. Kids from low-income, disadvantaged backgrounds [tend to go](#) to government high schools.

DOGS CAN ONLY SAY: What else did public policy makers, academics and educators expect when they gave in to the lobbying of the powerful Catholic Church for State Aid, the greedy Protestant churches that swung on their public funding coattails, and the insecure middle classes in 1969?

Laura Perry and Christopher Lubienski in The Conversation of 3 March, 2014, had this to say:

Rather than create a system in which schools compete with each other for students and funds, Canada (and to an even larger extent, Finland) has tried to ensure that all schools are good schools.

Ensuring that all schools are good schools requires equitable distribution of resources, funds and students from a range of social backgrounds. It requires minimising the number of residualised, high-poverty schools and the number of super-funded, socially elite schools.

As shown by Canada and Finland, this can be accomplished by creating a strong public education system in which all students, regardless of where they live or how much money their parents earn, are guaranteed access to high-quality academic education.

This is all good, 21st century rhetoric. But it is meaningless unless academics and policy makers like this are prepared to confront the real problem:

- **morally bankrupt religious leaders,**
- **market ideologues, and**
- **members of the insecure middle class.**