

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 577#

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND THE VICTORIAN ELECTION

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH GETS INTO THE ACT

BUT ARE THEY JUST TRYING TO SUGGEST THE WINNER

WILL DEPEND ON THEIR VOTE?

Victorian voters have been bombarded with what appear to have been choices in the State election. But, at the last moment, Catholic school parents have been told to not vote for the Greens in inner Melbourne. Once again, the Catholic church tries to make itself important – crucial to the major parties. Smoke and mirrors, obfuscation, and sometimes downright corruption – has our democracy come to this?

In a letter sent to 5500 families in the electorates of Melbourne, Brunswick, Richmond and Prahran ahead of Saturday's state election, Catholic Education Office Melbourne executive director Stephen Elder said the Greens' education policy was likely to "adversely affect" Catholic schools. <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/victoria-state-election-2014/the-catholic-education-office-is-warning-parents-not-to-vote-for-the-greens-in-four-innercity-seats-the-party-hope-to-win-20141127-11vi5n.html>

The Age has this to say:

In a letter sent to 5500 families in the electorates of Melbourne, Brunswick, Richmond and Prahran ahead of Saturday's state election, Catholic Education Office Melbourne executive director Stephen Elder said the Greens' education policy was likely to "adversely affect" Catholic schools.

He said the Greens' policy did not distinguish between Catholic and other non-government schools, which could lead to fee increases and make it harder to accommodate disadvantaged students.

Has the Catholic hierarchy miscalculated. Do they think that they, like Murdoch, can continue to play God with our political system?

This is a public school election – public schools are on the ropes and public school parents are reacting. If the Catholic Education Office is trying to deny the Greens the Balance of Power, and seats in swinging inner Melbourne electorates, Public School Supporters should Note this carefully and get value for their votes.

For Public school supporters —and as a political class they are waking up in both the inner city and the developing areas —there are but few choices. First, let's look at the

Liberal and Labour Parties

At this stage they are more interested in the Catholic school vote – with \$120m up front for expansion plans. They can't see too far beyond the Catholic school vote. Even Jennifer Kanis, in Melbourne (who sends her children to public schools), is courting this vote. But the Libs are one degree worse. Their leaders have no personal experience of the system and have stacked the bureaucracy with their cronies. Meanwhile...

Neither the Labor or the Liberal Party have well defined educational policies, although the Labor, as opposed to the Liberal Party is prepared to recognise the need for maintenance and establishment of public schools through the State.

We know about the religious preferences of Mr Napthine and Education Minister Martin Dixon. But what of Daniel Andrews and James Merlino of the Labor Party?

Daniel Andrews

Andrews was educated at Galen Catholic College, Wangaratta. He moved to Melbourne in 1990 to attend Monash University. He was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1996 from Monash University. After graduating, Andrews became an electorate officer for federal Labor MP Alan Griffin. He worked at the party's head office from 1999 to 2002, initially as an organiser, and then as assistant state secretary. Andrews is married with three children. Their schooling is not mentioned. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel Andrews](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daniel_Andrews)

James Merlino

Merlino was educated at St Edmonds Public School 1978-1984 and Mt Lilydale College 1985-1990. He received a BA (Hons) 1996 (The University of Melbourne). He was a Part-time Bricklayer's Labourer 1990-95. Electorate Officer for Jan Wilson MP 1996-99. National Industrial Officer, Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association 1999-2002.

This is more interesting than most politicians. He has experience of the public primary, secondary and tertiary education systems of Victoria and is a graduate of the University of Hard Knocks.

<http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/members/details/1579-mr-james-merlino>

What of The Greens?

The Greens believe that

1. Education is a public good which is an essential investment in Australia's economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, well-being and social fulfilment. And
2. All people are entitled to free, secular, well-funded and high quality, life-long public education and training. And
3. Differences in education outcomes should not be the result of difference in wealth, income, power possessions or location. And

4. The State government should prioritise public education and has a primary responsibility to fund all levels of public education system with the exception of universities.

This is akin to the education policy of the Labour Party of the 1970s. But the Greens do support public funding across all sectors of education'- i.e. State Aid for private schools.

So, for public education supporters the Greens are better than the Lib-Labs- but only because they are less bad.

Minor Parties:

The Religious right parties cannot see past the educational 'choice' principle and their peculiar and particular 'right to discriminate' on the basis of religion.

The Socialist Alliance party are strong supporters of public education, but see educational rights in materialist 'class' terms. They do not appear to be aware of the importance of separation of religion and the state and favour 'Needs' based funding.

DOGS have not and never will change their position.

The basis of discrimination, gross and growing inequalities and national decline, is the public funding of private, religious schools and the diversion of those funds from the cornerstone of any public good – our public education systems.

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