

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 583#

PRIVATE SCHOOL COSTS SPIRALLING OUT OF CONTROL:

THEY ARE INEFFICIENT: WHY SUBSIDIZE THEM?

The outrageous costs of schooling for a Bunyip aristocracy are a constant source of articles for education reporters. The latest report on the rising costs at the nation's so-called 'elite' schools appeared in the *Weekend Australian* 24-25 January. Figures indicating that the basic cost of educating a child in these schools equalled more than the cost of an average suburban home means that these schools are pricing secondary educational opportunities out of the insecure middle class market. But then, private religious schools have rarely had educational opportunities for anything other than the wealthy or powerful as part of their objective.

Remarks reported from Tim Hawkes, the Headmaster of Kings Grammar School, and other corporate Heads reveal the private, corporate and selfish nature of these institutions. Hawkes is reported as saying,

...the clincher is that parents want nice schools and a new gym and shade cloth over the playgrounds. A lot of the cost is driven by a market that is prepared to pay for it. The biggest queues are for Rolls-Royces, and it's not much different for education.

Geoff Ryan, chief executive of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools likened schools to companies:

Some of these schools are like a business with a turnover of \$50m a year, and in the commercial sector the CEOs of a similarly sized business are probably earning as much - as private school headmasters- c \$350,000 or more.

We are further told that private school colleges often boast spacious, state-of-the-art facilities that public schools can only dream about. Geelong Grammar School – which recorded a \$10m consolidated net surplus in 2013 – has its own equestrian centre. The Scots College gym has a hi-tech hypoxic chamber to simulate altitude training while Brisbane Girls Grammar is set to open a \$17m five-storey research and innovative learning centre in March.

But figures produced by Trevor Cobbold of Save Our Schools indicate that parents in search of an education, as opposed to an entry into the so-called upper classes of Australian society - are throwing good money after bad. The public system offers a result which is no worse, and socially and nationally – much better. See: <http://www.saveourschools.com.au/choice-and-competition/what-do-parents-get-for-a-costly-private-school-education> ;

<http://www.saveourschools.com.au/funding/new-figures-show-that-government-funding-increases-favour-private-schools>

<http://www.saveourschools.com.au/media-releases/media-release-public-schools-are-the-equal-of-private-schools>

Why is the public system better?

The public system is the basis of our democracy and produces all-rounded citizens who are well educated in a national system. The private system has always been a parasitic system, dependent upon the public system. If it is built up at the expense of the public system – as Australia is now doing, then the nation, as a whole suffers.

Meanwhile, some educators who service the wealthy headmasters like Tim Hawkes are troubled. They approve of the Gonski ‘voucher’ system compromise.

‘I do not doubt one of the motives for many parents choosing non-government schooling is that they are attracted not only by the values of the school but the school community,’ he says. “What grieves me as an educator is the residualisation of some public schools, with those children who are not able to get into good quality schools left after everyone else goes to an independent state school or a private school.’

Perhaps it is time he – and others- returned to their position of Separation of Religion from the State and Withdrawal of State Aid from private, religious schools.

Kings School is loosely attached to the Anglican Church.

Perhaps Tim Hawkes is beset by the residualisation of his Christian principles.

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