

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 586#

WHAT KIND OF A SOCIETY DO WE WANT?

A MARKET PLACE FOR DOG EATING DOG

OR

A DEMOCRATIC COMMUNITY

The current public/private debate appears to centre around economic and market ideological issues with facts flying hither and thither. Since the stark economic facts are now favouring the public education side of the debate- private schools are more and more expensive on the public purse for less and less returns- the private interests are forced back onto dogmatic market ideology.

Both ignore the simple question:

What kind of a society do we want our children to inherit?

Do we want one in which

- 1. the market rules; one which lauds the survival of the fittest: one in which My choice and My children take priority over Your choice and Your children – because I can PAY? One in which ‘values’ are reduced to hypocrisy and heart judgement without mercy? Then opt for a private, religious system.**
- 2. People can learn to live together, in community, in harmony, in a civic democracy, with respect for the conscience of every person and group and educational opportunities for every child. Only a strong public system can provide this.**

The first kind of society is that espoused by private schools and their champions, Tim Hawkes, the Headmaster of Kings School Parramatta, and Christopher Pyne, the federal Minister for Education.

The second is that promoted unambiguously by the DOGS. Other groups however, such as Save our Schools in Australia and Fiona Miller with her Local Schools Network in the UK are battling for the second, a harmonious democracy.

No. 1

For example, on his blog Tim Hawkes says at:

<http://www.timhawkes.com/are-non-government-schools-worth-it/>

The opinion that matters is that of the market place, and the market place is saying that the majority of Australians would send their children to a non-government school if they could afford it.....

and in response to the damning figures of Save our Schools (See below) :

Is the cost of sending a child to a non-government school worth it? You decide. In the end it is only your view that matters.

No. 2

There is hope for the survival and continuation of our harmonious democracy that generations of refugees from unfair and tyrannical societies have attempted to create in Australia. Fiona Miller, in the UK *Guardian* at

http://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/feb/10/good-local-schools-nicky-morgan?CMP=share_btn_tw

rejoices in the realisation by Nicky Morgan the UK Secretary of Education that what parents REALLY FUNDAMENTALLY WISH FOR in the UK – and Australia - (forget the hype of Tim Hawkes and his mates) is

a good local school. To witness this unassailable truth from the lips of a Conservative cabinet minister, indeed from the lips of a cabinet minister of any party, is satisfying.

Poll after poll reveals that this is a priority for the electorate. Yet the prevailing rhetoric of the past decade has been barely concealed disdain for the local offer, especially if it is a socially mixed community comprehensive school.

Instead, parents have been urged to subtly register a nagging doubt that if they aren't casting around for that greener educational grass, or engaged in a school choice "arms race" replete with private tuition, false addresses or bogus church attendance, they are somehow failing their children.

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/feb/09/33bn-going-to-private-schools-produces-no-better-results-it-could-fund-gonski>

And there is some evidence that this is what the majority of Australian parents also STILL want – after all 69% - and rising- of parents send their children to public schools IN SPITE of the diversion of billions and billions of dollars into private religious schools since 1964.

http://www.afr.com/p/national/education/end_to_year_flight_from_public_schools_IdAojEnvFkOcgNYjJdexiO

In 1969 DOGS protested against 'the schools with the pools. 'In 2015 we still have politicians like Dr. Kaye in the NSW legislature blowing the whistle on the education 'arms race'.

NSW private schools are diverting hundreds of millions of dollars in government funding into capital projects to build luxurious facilities including aquatic centres and performing arts centres instead of lowering fees, according to the Greens.

NSW Greens MP John Kaye said 62 elite schools had effectively diverted all of the \$85 million in state government funding they received to build "extravagant" facilities to attract wealthy students.

An analysis of My School data showed only a third of the \$270 million in combined public funds provided to the schools by the federal and state governments was spent on operations, Dr Kaye said.

Most (\$189 million) was spent on capital works or repaying debts for past capital works, he said.

Advertisement "This is public funds being used in an expensive and destructive arms race between exclusive private schools to lure in high net wealth families," Dr Kaye said.

"Schools like St Catherine's, MLC and SCEGGS Redlands are pouring all of the state funds that are supposed to support lower fees, into extravagant building projects," Dr Kaye said.

St Catherine's in Waverley has lodged a \$62 million development proposal with the NSW Government to build a professional grade lyric theatre, research centre and aquatic centre.

Dr Kaye said the school already had a pool, and generated \$26 million from fees and fundraising, but spent only \$23 million on operations. He argued the \$7.6 million a year spent on capital works and servicing debts for past building projects had been diverted from the school's \$4.5 million in government recurrent funding.

"Public education could spend the same money [\$62.5 million] to purchase land and build high schools for at least 2000 students," he said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/private-schools-divert-government-funds-to-luxury-pools-greens-20150131-132p6n.html>

The economic arguments against State Aid – it is just too expensive for both parents and governments- are revving up, thanks to SAVE OUR SCHOOLS. Consider the following at:

<http://www.saveourschools.com.au/funding/massive-increases-in-govt-funding-for-private-schools>

New figures show that private schools were massively favoured over public schools by government funding increases between 2008-09 and 2012-13. Funding for private schools, adjusted for inflation, increased by a staggering eight times more than for public schools.

The huge disparity shows that governments give greater priority to funding more privileged sections of the community than improving the learning outcomes of disadvantaged students, the overwhelming majority of whom attend public schools. The disparity is even larger than that revealed by the latest Report on Government Services, which shows that funding for private schools increased by four times that for public schools.

Total government recurrent funding per student in private schools, adjusted for inflation, increased by 15.5 per cent between 2008-09 and 2012-13 compared to only two per cent for public schools (see Chart 1 below). Funding increases for private schools far outstripped those for public schools in every state and territory.

Private schools in NSW and Victoria got massive increases while real funding for public schools fell. Funding for private schools in Victoria increased by 18.5 per cent per student compared to a decline in public school funding of two per cent while in NSW the increased funding for private schools was 12.5 per cent compared to a decline of nearly one per cent for public schools. In Western Australia, private school funding increased by 18.8 per cent compared to an increase of 1.2 per cent for public schools.

The funding increase for Queensland private schools was double that for public schools and more than double in Tasmania. In the ACT and the Northern Territory the increases for private schools was over three times that for public schools. The increase for private schools in South Australia was over 50 per cent higher than for public schools.

Across Australia the dollar increase for private schools was nearly five times that for public schools. The average increase for private schools was \$1181 per student compared to only \$247 for public schools (Chart 2).

There were massive disparities in NSW, Victoria and Western Australia. In NSW, private schools received an increase of \$970 per student while funding for public schools fell by \$108 per student. In Victoria, the disparity was even bigger – an increase of \$1299 for private schools compared to a decrease of \$234 in public schools. In Western Australia, private school funding increased by \$1532 per student compared to \$177 for public schools.

The funding increases for private schools in Tasmania, the ACT and the Northern Territory also far exceeded those for public schools. Only in South Australia did public schools gain a larger increase than private schools, although the percentage increase was much lower than that for private schools.

These new government funding figures are derived from the latest Report on Government Services (ROGS) published by the Productivity Commission. The ROGS figures have been adjusted by SOS to exclude items included in public school funding that are not included in private school funding.

The ROGS figures over-estimate funding for public schools because they include book-entry items (user cost of capital and depreciation) that are not included in government funding figures for private schools. The above figures exclude these items from public school

funding. However, they do include payroll tax and school transport which are also not included in the private school funding figures.

These book-entry items do not affect student outcomes and for this reason they are excluded from other figures on school funding compiled by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

The massive ongoing disparity in funding increases for public and private schools is a national disgrace and scandal. The learning needs of disadvantaged students are being ignored by the priority given to funding more privileged sections of the community.

Unacceptably large percentages of low socio-economic status (SES), Indigenous and remote area students do not achieve national standards in literacy and numeracy. For example, the results from the OECD's PISA results show that one-third of low SES 15 year-old students not achieving the international mathematics benchmark and nearly one-quarter are not achieving the reading and science benchmarks compared with 5-8 per cent of high SES students. Just over half of all Indigenous students are not achieving the mathematics benchmark and nearly 40 per cent are not achieving the reading and science benchmarks.

There are huge achievement gaps between rich and poor. For example, low SES students are about two and a half years behind high SES students in reading, mathematics and science while Indigenous students are three or more years behind high SES students. ;

The vast majority of disadvantaged students attend public schools. Over 80 per cent of low SES and Indigenous students are enrolled in public schools. Yet, these students are denied the funding increases granted to their more privileged peers in private schools. Disadvantaged students are being discriminated against by government funding policies. Not only is it a scandalous injustice, but it sustains lower workforce skills and reduces potential economic growth.

The Gonski funding plan promised to make a difference, but it has been completely sabotaged by the refusal of the Federal Government to fund the final two years of the six year plan when large increases would have flowed to public schools. Many state governments are failing to fulfil their commitment to funding public schools. Parents, teachers, school organisations, community groups and the business community must demand that governments fully implement the Gonski plan.

Trevor Cobbold

[Charts on Government Funding Increases for Public and Private Schools 2008-09 to 2012-13.pdf](#)

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