

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 587#

PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR SALE?

Many Public school parents are discovering that what they took for granted as children—a local public primary or secondary school — has either disappeared or is in the process of being sold off. So much for the rhetoric of ‘choice’ peddled by promoters of State Aid and privatisation of public education. The only ‘choice’ for many parents in Victoria is a fee-paying private school. After all, there is money to be made from insecure parents in search of a gold plated ticket to heaven and the good job.

In Victoria “Surplus” State schools are being sold off to meet a \$225 m target. Only half the proceeds are returned to the Education Department. See <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/schools-sold-to-meet-225-million-target-20150222-13168g.html>

And \$120m is promised by the Andrews Merlino government to the private sector for new schools!

These so-called surplus public ‘schools’ are public property which have been paid for, subsidised and maintained by generations of taxpayers and public school parents. They are held in trust for future generations and their sale defies demographic trends, the rising birthrate and the possibility of the choice of a free, secular and universal education for Victorian children. So much for responsible or even representative government.

The push to realise public school assets was revealed in freedom of information documents obtained by *Our Children Our Schools*, an alliance of public education community campaigns. They described the sale of schools as "short-sighted".

Around 75 schools are currently deemed surplus, and many of the vacant sites are the result of school mergers. Around \$131.6 million is expected to flow into state government coffers this financial year alone from the sale of education assets.

Current schools on the market include Norlane Primary School and the former Western Heights Secondary College, while the former Kealba Secondary College, former Calder Rise Primary School and former Keilor Park Primary School are among a handful of schools being prepared for sale. Our Children Our Schools spokeswoman Sonja Terpstra said she was concerned decisions about the future of schools were being driven by sales targets. *"If the impetus is to cash in assets rather than proper provisioning, something is quite wrong. The government will always be playing catch-up when provisioning for public schools if this is the case, and our kids are caught in the crossfire by being crammed into overcrowded schools and classrooms."*

It is later than Sonja Terpstra thinks. Public Money for Private Education means withdrawal of the choice of free education for ALL children.

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