

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 590#

STATE AID DEBATE ALIVE AND WELL IN VICTORIA

Wishful thinking is not reality for the Victorian Minister of Public Education.

. "I don't buy into this private school versus public school dynamic. I just don't buy into it at all, " he told the Sunday Age.

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/andrews-just-cant-walk-on-by-on-education-20150314-1437d7.html>

But Education Minister Merlino and Premier Daniel Andrews are confronted with a public education lobby that is very annoyed at his pandering to the private system, betraying the principles of the Gonski funding reforms . They are outraged that the government's first major legislative act on education passed Parliament last month, enshrining in law a guarantee for private schools to get at least 25 per cent of the funding the state gives to public schools.

This 25 per cent link is determined by the cost and level of need in the government system – which has 82 % of disadvantaged students – rather than need in Catholic or independent schools. The Catholic sector has less than 12% and the ‘Independent’ sector a mere 6%.

For every dollar a Victorian public school gets from the state, the private system gets 25 cents, regardless of how many disadvantaged students they have. And this, according to critics, is completely out of step with the Gonski reforms Labor has championed for years. Andrews and Merlino believe that before any money can flow through to public schools, the privileged in the private sector have to be ‘**paid off**’ . Are we dealing with a DLP rather than an ALP in government?

On the other, ‘privileged’ education side, Merlino is confronted by a dismayed private school lobby. They are annoyed by legislation requiring them to provide the Education Minister with detailed reports on how their funding is used. They are complaining not only about accountability to the State and federal governments but supervision by the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission which the Senate has not yet allowed Mr Abbott to abolish. Perhaps ‘He who pays the piper finally wants to call the tune’. See <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/andrews-push-to-make-private-schools-more-accountable-for-finance-20150314-143siq.html>

So much for the Labor Party managing to bury the State Aid debate with bogus ‘Needs’ policies.

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