

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 607#

A ROOF, AN EDUCATION-

OR NEITHER?

THE ONLY REAL WAY FORWARD FOR ANY FAMILY-

IS FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION

Australian parents, especially aspirational parents who believe the hype of private schools - are caught in an impossible situation. If they can't afford the fees of private schools – who only want those who can pay, pray, or perform, they run the risk of losing – everything!

They need to look carefully at the debt collecting policies of private religious schools before they submit their children to their tender care. Consider the following case study of Rachel Rodda, <http://www.mamamia.com.au/news/private-school-fees-melbourne/#6D4KSkoXCWYhdppb.99>

Rachel was an unfortunate single parent who didn't realise that you can't get any better than public education. She has learnt the hard way that private schools are about fluff and profit, without mercy or interest in her son, and parasitic upon the public system.

Private school students have no academic edge over public school students.

Here is the sad story of Rachel Rodd an 'aspirational' single mother on a low income. She was taken in and is now allegedly facing bankruptcy at the hands of her son's former school.

She claims the school never requested to see her financial documents — but said she was honest with them about not being able to pay the fees up front.

However, when Ms Rodda later removed her child from the school, Eltham College allegedly sought to bankrupt her, demanding she pay more than \$12,500 in fees.

According to *Fairfax Media*, the total sum requested by the private school includes unpaid fees, as well as an added fine of \$6,000 for withdrawing her child from school without sufficient notice.

Rachel Rodda is not alone.

Private schools are going to extreme measures to make sure they get paid.

While debt mediator Ben Paris told *Mamamia* he's never heard of this 'drop-out fee,' he said he commonly deals with clients facing bankruptcy, who can't afford their child's school fees.

“You have people making reasonable money, and they are spending a little bit more than they earn. Then something happens, [for example] someone has to change to a lower-earning job, and they don’t want to take their kids out of their school, but they can no longer afford it,” he explained to Mamamia.

“It’s like they say: Bankruptcy happens really slowly, then all of a sudden.”

Private schools are bankrupting parents in order to get paid.

According to *The Age*, Eltham College has filed lawsuits against 17 families for unpaid fees.

And it isn’t alone.

Last year, [Channel 7](#) conducted a similar investigation into NSW-based schools and found a number of private institutions legally seeking as little as \$6,000 or as much as \$28,000 from parents.

The Age also named Wesley College, Camberwell Grammar, Melbourne Girls Grammar and Geelong Grammar as serial offender

In the Rodda’s peculiar case, Mr Paris said he can’t understand the school’s motivation.

“Given she’s a low-income, single parent, [Eltham College’s] ability to actually get any money seems...,” Mr Paris trailed off before finishing: “Unless she has significant assets — and she might, I don’t know — they might spend four grand to get nothing.”

Eltham College would not comment as the matter is still before the court.

PERHAPS THE AUDITOR GENERAL SHOULD BE LOOKING AT ELTHAM COLLEGE AND ITS OWN DEBTS IF, ON THE PROMISE OF STATE AID, THIS SCHOOL HAS OVER LEVERAGED ITS ASSETS.

DOGS NOTE THAT RACHEL RODDA SHOULD ARGUE THAT IF PUBLIC MONEY IS USED BY ELTHAM COLLEGE IT SHOULD BE OPEN TO ALL WITHOUT FEAR OF BANKRUPTCY OR DISCRIMINATION.

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