

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 626#

THE HARPER REPORT, THE GST AND PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

DOGS urge supporters of Public Education to join the dots in recent talk fests on :

- ‘Taxation Reform’ and the final report of the Harper Review
- Extension of the GST
- removal of ‘inefficient’ State taxes
- Free Trade Agreements and
- the replacement of confrontational Abbott with smooth-talking ‘consultative’ Turnbull

They all point to forced privatisation and profiteering of our public facilities at public expense.

The Harper Review

The Competition Policy Review otherwise known as the Harper Review’s [Final Report](#) was released on 31 March 2015. The Report’s recommendations are broadly accepted by the Turnbull government and promoted by Treasurer Scott Morrison.

The Recommendations are found at

<http://www.australiancompetitionlaw.org/reports/pdf/harper2015finalrecs.pdf>

There is no place for a public education system, (or any public human service) established for all children for the common good of a Common wealth in the Harper Review mindset. Education is merely a market ‘service’. For example:

Draft Recommendation 2 - Human Services

Each Australian government should adopt choice and competition principles in the domain of human services.

Guiding principles should include:

- User choice should be placed at the heart of service delivery.
- Governments should retain a stewardship function, separating the interests of policy (including funding), regulation and service delivery.

- Governments commissioning human services should do so carefully, with a clear focus on outcomes.
- A diversity of providers should be encouraged, while taking care not to crowd out community and volunteer services.
- Innovation in service provision should be stimulated, while ensuring minimum standards of quality and access in human service

The Harper Review and Extension of the GST

. On October 3, fresh from a tax ‘reform’ meeting in Canberra, Treasurer Scott Morrison indicated that the Harper Review was on the agenda, and given the government is now prepared to put all tax concessions on the table, then it is only fair that the government also looks at all spending, including welfare, to ensure that it too is "fit for purpose".

The Evidence for this?

Hike in GST linked to ‘Competition’ and ‘Privatisation’ of Public Education

The man *The Australian* calls the ‘ former competition tsar’ Allan Fels, has urged Malcolm Turnbull to link competition reform to any overhaul of the GST to ensure states meet new performance benchmarks in return for larger revenues.

Professor Fels said an overhaul of the GST could help ease the political pain of realising the recommendations of the sweeping Harper review of competition policy. Under the plan, states would be required to pass new hurdles in economic and social management to receive their share of a larger GST take. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/gst-revenues-could-spur-competition-says-allan-fels/story-e6frg6n6-1227593835895>

It gets worse. DOGS quote the *Australian* report:

The second factor is that the commonwealth does not want to hand over GST revenue to the states without guarantees of much better state performance in economic and social management.” Such an approach is made more practical by the elevation of competition policy to the Treasury portfolio under Scott Morrison, who has embraced the need to lift productivity by tackling competition policy.

Professor Fels, a former head of the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission, said the introduction of “greater choice and competition into health and education” would bring considerable benefits to the economy and society. He warned that opening up the public education and health systems to greater competition could prove more politically difficult than the flirtation with GP co-payments or university fee deregulation. “The problems the government faced in trying to introduce co-payments and even in university fee deregulation pale into insignificance compared with these challenges,” he said.

Professor Harper has urged the government to respond to his review before the end of the year and warned that failure to take action would result in declining living standards and annual productivity growth of just 1 per cent.

Free Trade Agreement

The actual terms of the Free Trade Agreement has recently been made available to our Parliamentary representatives. We have been told that ‘the sale’ of our services on the global market is expected to replace the ‘commodities’ boom. Careful research is required.

DOGS encourage Public School supporters to call the Turnbull Government to account for proper accountability for public provision of a first rate public education –for every child.

Our national – and our children’s birthright should not be the plaything of politicians singing the hymn to choice and competition at the altar to global profits for multinational corporations!

We need genuine democratic representatives in national and state governments - not time servers who peddle the rhetoric of their wealthy corporate masters with reliable servility.

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