

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 631#

### Ravenswood Captain, Sarah Haynes on

#### **Elite schools where 'more value is placed on those who provide good publicity or financial benefits'**

The captain of an elite school in Sydney's upper North shore, Sarah Haynes went off script to tell it as it is in the elite school's bubble of 'business-like' operations, with an image that could be 'unhealthy'.

The question for taxpayers is: should their millions be going to an elite school which charges parents \$28,000 for an 'unrealistic' education in which images mean more than realities?

Parents may be stupid to spend unwisely. But should taxpayers be constantly asked to send good money after bad? When good money should be put into good public schools, not bad elitist ones?

Back to Sarah Haynes. Her sister was expelled earlier in the year, and no-one is saying why, or whether she had a public school to go to as an alternative. But Sarah wrote two end of year addresses: one for the school's censors. And the other one – which she delivered.

Her speech went viral on the internet. Here it is:

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/ravenswood-captain-sarah-haynes-accuses-school-of-betrayal-20151206-glgmfq.html#ixzz3toSNW6az>

What did she say? Here are some excerpts:

"I wrote two speeches today just so I would be able to say that Ravo isn't perfect."

"Everything I wrote had to be censored by those higher up than me," she said in her address.

"I was never trusted to say the right thing."

"I sent this to those in charge of me and received a reply: 'Great speech but change the ending. No parent wants to hear that the school isn't perfect'."

"I don't know how to run a school but it seems to me that today's schools are being run more and more like businesses where everything becomes financially motivated, where more value is placed on those who provide good publicity or financial benefits,"

"If the school can't admit it isn't perfect how can they expect adolescent girls to realise perfection is unattainable."

"The image (the school) tries to project isn't real."

"We learn from mistakes. The only dangerous thing about mistakes - which I think Ravo may have lost sight of this year - is not being able to recognise and admit to them."

"I fell for this image that the school presented to me. I thought the school was absolutely perfect. To be valued within the school a lot of people feel they have to present the same image of perfection that the school does. It's important to know that to be valued within a school you don't have to be a model student."

She said the school left her feeling "hurt and betrayed".

Ms Haynes said her speech was not a personal vendetta resulting from the circumstances surrounding her sister's departure from Ravenswood but she hoped the school would learn from its errors in the same way it expected from students.

Her speech received a standing ovation from the students and some parents although she described the reaction from staff as "reserved".

Public education advocate Jane Caro said some private schools carefully shape their image to help justify their fees.

"For those elite schools, it's all about brand, it's all about image," she said.

"When parents choose to send their children to those schools, what they are buying is prestige, brand, image and status. When someone calls that status into question, it raises the question of what exactly the school is offering for the money."

Some of the 'Comments' on the Sydney Morning Herald report are of interest.

*Haynes' actions look to me like a breath of fresh air.*

**Carol Flanagan** West Pennant Hills

I would have been proud to have had an articulate and intelligent Sarah Haynes as school captain at the large public girls school where I was principal in the 1980s and 90s. She would have had the opportunity to raise concerns at many regular formal and informal discussions with me and other staff during the year. I find it incomprehensible that her concerns have had to be held back until the final occasion in the school year.

It is even more incomprehensible that the School Council chairman, who was there, cannot recall any reaction to Haynes' comments.

We all need to reflect there are nearly always more adult citizens of Australia in year 12 than there are on the staff and it is important that the culture of the school reflect this. Building mutual respect is far better than any approval or censorship process.

**Jim Harkin** Engadine

Your front-page story reminds me just how many people are prepared to pay whatever is asked for the prestige and status of an elite private school. And being a long-time resident of the upper north shore, I've had ample opportunity to observe just how wealthy these schools are.

The school across the road is currently spending a fortune on adding to its stock of tennis courts. A few years ago, it applied to appropriate a nearby council oval because it wanted to spend millions to build an all-weather running track around the outside of it. Thankfully, the proposal did not proceed.

How much money do elite private schools have? Answer: more than they know what to do with.

**Chris Love** Wahroonga

DOGS NOTE THAT SARAH HAYNES HAS PROVED HERSELF AN  
INDEPENDENT THINKER IN A SCHOOL IMPRISONED BY FALSE ELITIST  
IMAGES

WHAT A PITY THAT RAVENSWOOD WITH \$28,000 PER PUPIL PER ANNUM  
FROM  
INDEPENDENT SOURCES CANNOT BE INDEPENDENT OF STATE AID

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