

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 635#

### Save Public Money:

### Make Private Schools Public

Economic arguments of the private and corporate education interests are being turned on their head. The time has come to take over private taxpayer dependent schools and make them public schools. The public pay for them. They should be able to own and use them.

State Aid to private systems of education, whether they be religious hierarchies, corporate raiders, or individual profiteers, always is, always has been and always will be:

- Uneconomic : *costs too much*
- Inefficient : *leads to ridiculous duplication of resources*
- Socially and politically divisive: *leads to disadvantage and plutocracy*
- Corrupt: *there is lack of accountability for expenditure of public money*

Our own, Australian history, should have taught us this lesson. But this generation – and our children- are unfortunately being forced by governments in the thrall of powerful lobbyists, - to learn the lesson again.

Leaving aside billions provided annually to private education in the form of taxation expenditures ( taxation exemptions) – the direct public funding of many Catholic schools is now running at more than 90%. This system, at least, should be taken over.

Chris Bonnor and Bernie Shepherd, in their monograph *Private School, Public Cost* have crunched some revealing figures from the Myschool website and other sources. They are discovering that, because the ‘dependent’ schools are costing the taxpayer ever greater amounts, it is becoming more and more a realistic economic proposition to actually take over private schools and make them into a public system. They write :

#### **What about the savings?**

With government already providing non-government schools with between 83% and 94% of the recurrent funds they give to their own schools, it is apparent that the 'savings' (or alternatively the 'costs' of taking these students into the public system) are not going to represent the huge "fiscal suicide" or "financial tsunami" that the commentators quoted above are predicting. A realistic way to calculate claimed savings is not to use gross averages, but to examine the cost differences incrementally across the advantage range, comparing

the costs involved with students at similar levels of advantage. To do otherwise is to assume that the average (relatively advantaged) private school student would and should attract the same recurrent funding as the average (relatively disadvantaged) public school student. That is a fundamentally flawed approach, yet it is the basis for many of the wilder claims in this area of the school funding debate.

Such an incremental calculation would look like the one given in Appendix 3. Using 2013 data and dividing the nation's schools into ten ICSEA groupings, we calculate the total difference between the government recurrent grants to private schools and the recurrent funding of ICSEA-equivalent government schools. For the record, the difference is around \$2.2 billion, just 5.7% of the \$38.9 billion total of government spending reported on My School for 2013.

If the small size of that figure is a surprise to some, then a further surprise might be found in the fact that the difference has actually been getting smaller year by year.

For further information from this monograph see:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxK25rJrOw-eQ3dlZmZZRGNNV1k/view>

Chris Bonnor and Bernie Shepherd will be updating this monograph in March 2016.

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