

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 648#

UK Chancellor Osborne turning all English Schools into Academies: Australia should reject this Privatisation Game.

Australian politicians, lacking a sense of Australian history and identity, have an unfortunate habit of mimicking developments in the UK or the USA.

The Federal Coalition's flirtation with the idea of English-style academies is no exception. This 'experiment' means the wholesale decentralisation and privatisation of the public education system as we know it and it must be resisted at all costs.

'Academies' are private schools run by 'sponsors'. These can be religious organisations or companies run for profit. They can even be wealthy individuals. These schools will be publicly funded but able to select enrolments. There appears to be little or no accountability for public funds to any 'bureaucracy', so Ministerial responsibility under a Westminster system has become a joke.

In the UK education has always been more decentralised than in Australia. It is run by local councils. But this latest development means that a central government is using its power to isolate individual schools from any supporting structure or pay scale. Any Australian teachers thinking of a UK career change may be left to sink or swim.

UK Teachers have already warned the government of more industrial strife as they claim academisation of schools will push down pay and make it harder to attract young people into the profession. The budget will also include a raft of fresh austerity measures in the face of a weakening global economy.

Kevin Courtney of the National Union of Teachers said dismantling pay scales would cause 'complete chaos' He said: *"There could be individual negotiations with up to 20,000 schools and that is bound to lead to more disputes over pay. There is already a teacher shortage and the fact that you can't advertise pay scales or say what you'll be earning in four years will put young people off."*

Asked whether schools might increase pay, he said: *“Of course it is not going to mean teachers are paid more because funding will be standing still in cash terms.”* Courtney said many academies were sticking to pay scales at the moment, but some free schools were offering salaries below the minimum. Teachers have already reported problems with mortgages as it was not clear how much they might be paid in the future.

<http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/mar/16/academisation-of-schools-more-pay-disputes-union-nut>

According to *The Guardian* <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/mar/15/osborne-chancellor-focus-budget-schools-reform-academies> draft legislation for this radical shake-up of schools system could be expected in the UK as soon as the next Budget – in the coming week. Chancellor Osborne will set out plans for the most [radical shake up of the schools system in decades](#) by ensuring that all schools become academies, independent of local authorities. Draft legislation, which may be published as soon as Thursday, will begin the process of implementing a pledge made by [David Cameron](#) in his conference speech last autumn. The prime minister said his “vision for our schooling system” was to place education into the hands of head teachers and teachers rather than “bureaucrats”.

Osborne plans that schools will be able to use to provide an extra five hours’ teaching or activities each week, to lengthen the school day.

Australian politicians like Christopher Pyne and Brimingham have already floated these ‘ideas’.

The government’s education plans will be fiercely opposed by Labour, which argues that taking thousands of schools out of council control undermines democratic accountability for the education system.

Lucy Powell, the shadow schools minister, said there was *“no evidence to suggest that academisation in and of itself leads to school improvement”*. She pointed out that the chief inspector of schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, had written to the secretary of state for education highlighting serious weaknesses in academy chains.

“How the government can plough ahead with the wholesale academisation of all schools in light of his evidence beggars belief. We want to see robust accountability and oversight of all schools regardless of type,” she said. Powell said ministers should focus instead on teacher shortages, school places and inequalities.

In his memo to the education secretary, Wilshaw had said: “Many of the trusts manifested the same weaknesses as the worst-performing local authorities and offered the same excuses. Indeed, one chief executive blamed parents for pupils’ poor attendance affecting pupils’ performance. However, the legislation is very likely to pass because the issue is widely supported by Conservatives, and the SNP would probably abstain on any votes affecting English education.

ENGLAND IS SET TO TURN THE EDUCATIONAL CLOCK BACK TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY OR EVEN FURTHER. DOGS ASK: DOES AUSTRALIA HAVE TO MINDLESSLY FOLLOW

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