

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 663#

## NEW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS GIVEN PREFERENCE OVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN VICTORIA

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Education James Merlino

*“One in three Victorian students attend Catholic and independent schools – they are a vital part of our education system and this funding (will help provide better facilities to more Victorian students.”*

### Quote attributable to Ambassador for Non-Government Schools Capital Funding Nick Staikos

*“I’m proud to be part of a Government that is committed to securing the best possible education for students from every school in Victoria, including our many Catholic and independent schools.”*

<http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/27-6-million-boost-for-victorian-independent-schools/>

Victorian children can no longer regard a public education in a public school as their right. The Victorian Lib-Lab governments, along with their federal counterparts, have provided preferential funding of religious schools to the severe detriment of proper public provision. State Aid started as Federal per capita funding in 1969. Now, in 2016, per capita funding is greater for private than public schools in many areas, and direct funding of private school facilities is now taken for granted. State Aid to private schools is an economic black hole. The point has long been reached where it would be cheaper to rationalise facilities and provide only public education for every Australian child.

Victoria has a publicly funded religious State within a State – and one that has been proven to abuse children. Yet the Premier Andrews and education Minister Merlino rewards their church with ever increasing taxpayer funding.

This occurs while proposed new public schools in the growth corridors of Victoria are pitifully short of demand, <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/more-than-a-dozen-new->

[schools-needed-in-whittlesea-growth-corridor-20141104-11gpp2.html](http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/27-6-million-boost-for-victorian-independent-schools/) while inner city parents are tired of skyscrapers housing families but no public schools , - only a huge, multi-storied 'Haileybury College' in King Street.

Two storey portables in existing facilities are no answer. As one parent said 'Chooks have more right than kids'. ( *The Age* July 20, p. 3) The State Government can provide money for new private schools while public schools make do with 6345 relocatables.

Any new public schools that are being built are PPPs or Public Private partnerships so they are a drain on the public Treasury - privately built, leased, and maintained for the next generation.

The Andrews/Merlino Government are more interested, not just in Catholic schools, but those in Ballarat.

DOGS invite readers to consider the contents of the following 20 July 2016 Media Release from the Education Minister at <http://www.premier.vic.gov.au/27-6-million-boost-for-victorian-independent-schools/>

### **\$27.6 Million Boost For Victorian Independent Schools**

20 July 2016

Students in Ballarat are a step closer to having a new primary school at Lucas, thanks to a \$1.5 million investment from the Andrews Labor Government.

Minister for Education James Merlino today visited the future school site to announce \$27.6 million in funding for 18 non-government schools across Victoria, including \$1.5 million for the new Lucas Catholic primary school.

Mr Merlino also announced Jo Brewer as the school's new principal and that the school will be called Siena Catholic Primary School. A builder has been appointed and construction will get underway soon.

Schools to receive funding include:

- \$1.5 million for construction of stage one of the new Lucas Catholic primary school, Ballarat
- \$2.5 million for construction of stage one of the new Craigieburn West Catholic primary school
- \$2.5 million for construction of stage one of the new Torquay North Catholic primary school
- \$2.04 million for a car park, science rooms and classrooms at Geelong Lutheran College
- \$1.32 million for art facilities, classrooms and seminar spaces at Holy Trinity Lutheran School, Horsham

- \$1 million to refurbish the junior centre and build a new library at Galen Catholic College, Wangaratta
- \$1 million for 14 new classrooms at Catholic College Bendigo
- \$1.3 million for a gym extension at Casey Grammar
- \$1.71 million for a new discovery centre and administration building at Hillcrest Christian College, Casey
- \$2 million for a new year 9 building at St Peter's College, Casey
- \$2 million for 18 new classrooms at St Francis Xavier College, Cardinia
- \$1.5 million for 8 new classrooms at St Clare's Primary School, Cardinia
- \$1.1 million for stage two of the junior school building at Lakeside College, Cardinia
- \$2.03 million for a new middle years building and car parks at Good News Lutheran College, Wyndham
- \$1 million for a new multipurpose hall at St Oliver Plunkett's School, Moreland
- \$1.35 million for new classrooms and car parking at St Mary of the Cross MacKillop Catholic Parish Primary School, Whittlesea
- \$997,000 to finish a building housing a library, classrooms and offices at Gilson College, Whittlesea
- \$750,000 for six new classrooms at St Francis of Assisi Catholic Primary School, Wyndham

DOGS note that the Gilson Seventh Day Adventist College has a very minimal enrolment while more than a dozen new public schools are required in the Whittlesea growth corridor. The population in this area alone is forecast to grow by 61 per cent to almost 300,000 people by 2030. In 2014 *The Age* reported Victoria would [need 550 extra schools](http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/more-than-a-dozen-new-schools-needed-in-whittlesea-growth-corridor-20141104-11gpp2.html) within the next two decades according to Grattan Institute forecasts. <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/more-than-a-dozen-new-schools-needed-in-whittlesea-growth-corridor-20141104-11gpp2.html>

DOGS also note that while to date they have been reluctant to discuss the Commission and the sex abuse cases within the Catholic and other churches, the government's emphasis upon the St Lucas school in Ballarat prompts some comment. The school and church fences of Ballarat are still covered in memory ribbons for children whose childhood's were stained and taken away. And the following information is matter of record

*AT LEAST one in 20 Catholic priests in Melbourne is a child sex abuser, although the real figure is probably one in 15, the state inquiry into the churches' handling of sex abuse was told yesterday.*

*RMIT professor Des Cahill said his figures, based on analysing conviction rates of priests ordained from Melbourne's Corpus Christi College, closely matched a much larger American analysis of 105,000 priests which found that 4362 were child sex offenders.*

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/one-in-20-priests-an-abuser-inquiry-told-20121022-2816q.html>

The intercultural studies professor also told the inquiry that the Catholic Church was incapable of reforming itself because of its internal culture. He said the Church's Melbourne Response abuse protocol had to go, and the state would have to intervene to achieve it.

In other key testimony, Professor Cahill:



- Called for married priests, as are being allowed now in the Anglican ordinariate within the Catholic Church, as a "circuit-breaker" that would reduce child sex abuse. The state should remove the Equal Opportunity Act exemption letting the church discriminate on grounds of marital status, he said.
- Described the Church as "a holy and unholy mess, except where religious sisters or laypeople are in charge, for example schools and welfare agencies".
- Called for an "eminent Catholic task force" of lay people to work with the Church on reform and transparency.
- Said other religions were not immune from child sex abuse, including credible anecdotal evidence of two incidents within Melbourne's Hindu community where the offending monks were "shipped back to the home country".

Professor Cahill said that 14 of 378 Corpus Christi priests graduating between 1940 and 1966 were convicted of child sexual abuse, and church authorities had admitted that another four who had died were also abusers, a rate of 4.76 per cent.

The Catholic church does not have a clean record with either children or according to the State Auditor General, with public money. ( See DOGS Press Releases 647 and 649)

Yet Victorian citizens and taxpayers are confronted with, not only the building of a new Catholic school at Lucas in Ballarat of all places.

But they are also confronted with absolutely no plans whatever for a public school in this place

<http://www.thecourier.com.au/story/3324524/new-schools-to-open-in-2017/>

Nearby Alfredton Primary School principal Laurel Donaldson said his school was growing rapidly and another public school would ease the pressure.

“We would love to think there is another government school to be built,” Ms Donaldson said.

Ballarat’s closest public school to open in 2018 will be in Bannockburn, which will include a primary and secondary school.

Opposition spokesperson for education Nick Wakeling said there was a clear need for a public school at Lucas and the Liberal government had committed funds for a new school.

“The Ballarat community want for Premier Andrews to start focusing on their needs, particularly in regards to education services in Lucas.”

But where was the Liberal Party when it needed to build new public schools?

Victorian parents, not only in Melbourne, but in the regional and country areas are starting to wake up to the fact that private schools are not , and never intended to be interested in the ‘rights of children.’

If their children are to be given the *right to a good public education*, rather than be treated worse than chooks, then, they will have to confront the politicians who have ears only for religious groups which have long since proved wanting.

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