

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 674#

### Birmingham Admits that Some Private Schools are Overfunded

#### Who said that the State Aid issue was buried by any Needs Policy?

Education Minister Simon Birmingham was forced by Tony Jones to admit on Q&A on 26/09/16 that some private schools were 'over-funded'. Amanda Vanstone started it, by noting funding disparities caused by the Gillard dictum to Gonski that 'No school should lose money'. She could have said the same applied to Beazley with the Karmel Committee, and to Howard's botched SES program.

SO – The ALP could not resist the temptation to do what the Coalition did to Latham in 2004. They invited him to submit a 'hit list'.

And surprise, surprise, the mainstream Media invented a 'furore' and gave oxygen to the insecurities of the private sector. We were told that

*Independent Schools Council of Australia executive director Colette Colman said any future funding cuts to private schools could provoke "anxiety and uncertainty" among parents and lead to fee increases.*

*and*

*National Catholic Education Commission executive director Ross Fox said the government should focus on lifting standards for all students rather than moving funding between schools. "Springing funding cuts on schools or systems is far from fair and does nothing for funding certainty," he said.*

<http://www.theage.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/dont-treat-us-as-an-easy-target-private-schools-issue-warning-over-funding-20160927-grphju.html>

No mention of course was made of the anxiety and uncertainty of public school parents who no longer have the assurance of a local public school for their children.

All Birmingham was doing was admitting the worse than obvious. Educational inequalities and the preferential treatment of private schools has made a nonsense for 50 years of any attempt to introduce any semblance of a needs policy. Before even a few crumbs can trickle down to the disadvantaged the wealthy must be assured that they can have their cake, eat it, then demand more.

The Coalition party almost lost the election on the public school vote. Why? The mythical Catholic vote dissipated, and the savvy middle class parents, many of them in danger of falling off the social ladder into unemployment, worked out that there is much more bang for the educational buck in public schools .

They are looking around and finding inner city public schools of a bygone era closed, sold to developers or abandoned, and public schools in developing areas well behind schedule.

The Labor Party is still licking its scars from the DLP split of half a century since. Instead of running scared, they should be looking at where the real voting power lies. Labor education spokeswoman Tanya Plibersek said Senator Birmingham needed to explain whether he had a "secret hit-list" of schools whose funding would be cut. "Which kids will be robbed by this Minister, who seems incapable of being upfront about his secret plans for school funding?" she said.

Not good enough Tanya. The public school forces have re-grouped in recent years and public schools are no longer interested in crumbs from private school tables.

Senator Birmingham's comments have been welcomed by public school advocates and the Greens.

Gonski Review panellist Ken Boston, a former head of the NSW Education Department, said: *"A fair deal of money is being spent in schools that don't need it on things that don't matter." "There is no question that money needs to be redistributed to schools of low priority to schools of high priority."*

He was pleased Senator Birmingham said he was open to creating an independent body to oversee needs-based school funding. This was a key recommendation of the Gonski Review.

Chris Bonnor, a Centre for Policy Development fellow and public school advocate, said he sat "bolt upright" when he heard Senator Birmingham's comments.

"I really welcome what he said," Mr Bonnor said. "But this is going to be a very bruising debate."

Public school advocates however, should not be fearful of bruising debates. Private school advocates have always been bully boys – and girls. But bullies are cowards and these schools are now almost completely dependent on the public purse – OUR MONEY. Public school advocates must take the next step. Instead of sticking with Needs policies promises that never materialise, they should go for the jugular.

Some private schools are funded at the same and above the same level of public schools. SO they should be taken over and become public schools.

Taxpayers pay for them. Taxpayers should have the right to use them.

And if private religious schools want to stay private and/or independent then they should be funded with private, not public funds.

Private is Private and Public is Public. They are different species. They should not be and cannot be mixed.

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