

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## PRESS RELEASE 676#

### SWEETHEART DEALS WITH THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ARE NOTHING NEW IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

The Fairfax Media through journalists like Matthew Knott are exposing sweetheart deals between the Catholic Church and governments of both parties in the last few 'Gonski' years. Consider the following quote from The Age, 12 Oct.2016 at <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/sweetheart-deals-exposed-wealthy-catholic-schools-benefit-from-corruption-of-gonski-20161010-grz0j8.html>

*Catholic schools in wealthy suburbs across Australia are being significantly overfunded by taxpayers, with some receiving up to four times their appropriate funding levels under sweetheart deals struck in the dying days of the Rudd government.*

Yet DOGS have been exposing the outrageous rorting of public funds in the Catholic system in particular and the private sectarian system in general since the introduction of Whitlam's 'Karmel' Needs system in 1974. In those days DOGS called the diversion of public money from 'poor' parish schools into new schools and wealthy institution 'Bottom of the Schoolyard' schemes. They resembled taxation 'Bottom of the Harbour Schemes' of Alan Bond and other would be magnates.

DOGS Press Releases were ignored by the Fairfax and Murdoch Press and DOGS complaints received no support from the Press Council. The President of those days, Ray Nilsen, paid for Advertisements in the newspapers himself. These also were ignored. However, they stand as evidence of DOGS attempts to blow the whistle. They are recorded in the 2011 publication, *Contempt of Court*. For example, *The Age*: 12 November 1970; 27 November, 1972, 4; 16 May 1973, 10; 12 July 1973, 14; 12 December 1975, 12 ; 23 June 1977, 16; 2 December 1977; 5 December, 1977, 12; 3 May 1984, 18; 28 November 1984, 20; 1 May 1985; 30 August 1988, 22-23; 2 March 1998, 11; April 26, 2005; 27 March 2006; *The Herald*: 1 December 1972, 11; 11 December 1975, 38; *The Australian* : 10 December 1975, 5; 19 July 1985, 7; *Canberra Times*: 18 December 1980; 4.

DOGS position has recently gathered considerable support, especially from those commenting online. Why?

What has changed? We suggest the following reasons

- The Australian Middle class is being hollowed out by globalisation and parents in insecure or casualised jobs cannot pay outrageous mortgages and school fees.
- The choice of a local public school cannot be taken for granted but must be demanded and fought for
- State school lobby groups like Save our Schools and City Schools for City Kids are flexing their muscles and doing their research. Much of the research used by the Fairfax Media has been done by Trevor Cobbold of Save Our Schools from basic figures are now available on the MySchool website. See [Full list: wealthy private schools over-funded by hundreds of millions. Charts on Government Funding Increases for Elite Private Schools and Disadvantaged Public Schools in Victoria 2009-2014.pdf](#)
- The State school vote, not the Catholic vote is what will put the Labor Party back into power.
- More than 60% of Australia's children attend public schools. Only 20% attend Catholic schools.
- The Royal Commission into the Abuse of Children has exposed the sickness at the heart of the institutionalised church.
- Even the Federal Education Minister has to admit to overfunding of some private schools in Australia. [How Birmingham unleashed his inner Underwood](#)

The Economic blackmail by private schools is looking less and less credible. As Chris Bonner points out We all heard the Federal Minister's statements on Q&A in late September. But did you hear Amanda Vanstone claim this?

*“if every parent took their kid out of private schools and went into public schools, the education bill would soar.”*

In fairness, some do tout that bill to be between \$5 and \$9 billion each year. From memory, Tim Hawkes said it would be fiscal suicide.

**But** private school funding is now so high that the real figure is much less. A couple of years ago we calculated the cost as less than \$2 billion, around 5% of government recurrent funding. We are currently updating our figures - so for the moment **we'll just call Amanda's statement an**

***Edu-fallacy***

**...with a sniff of**

***Edu-faith***

What are the figures?

Fairfax Media [revealed last month](#) that over 150 private schools across Australia receive more funding than they are entitled to under the Gonski formula, with some schools receiving up to 283 per cent of their entitlement. Now, new [data from the Department of Education](#)

shows the inequities and distortions in Australia's school funding system extend to the Catholic sector.

Catholic schools are funded on a system-wide basis and state and territory Catholic education commissions distribute funding among their schools as they see fit.

The Catholic sector, which educates 20 per cent of Australian schoolchildren, insists it redistributes funding among its 1731 schools on the basis of need. But Catholic schools that receive more government funding per student than local public schools and "over-funded" private schools in their area.

For example, **Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School** in the Melbourne suburb of Prahran received \$11,875 per student in combined federal and state government funding in 2014.

This is significantly more than nearby public school **South Yarra Primary** (\$7,754) and private school **Christ Church Grammar** (\$2,600), according to data published on the My School website.

Many Catholic schools are receiving more government funding than they are entitled to under the Gonski formula.

Christ Church Grammar received 130 per cent of its entitlement, suggesting Our Lady of Lourdes is dramatically over-funded by taxpayers.

In the well-heeled Sydney suburb of St Ives, **Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School** received \$9517 per student in funding in 2014.

This was more than \$7,918 per student for **St Ives Primary School** and \$2,742 for the high-fee **Sydney Grammar** preparatory school.

Corpus Christi has a Socio Economic Status (SES) score of 126, placing it among the most advantaged schools in the country.

This is scarce money that could be given schools of high need

The case of Catholic schools in the ACT is the starkest example of the special deals Education Minister Simon Birmingham says has led to the corruption of the Gonski Review recommendations.

Under a deal struck between the Catholic sector and the Rudd government less than two months before the 2013 election, ACT Catholic schools were all allocated an SES score score of 101 - the same as NSW and Victoria.

This is despite ACT Catholic schools having an average SES score of 118 and some having a score as high as 128.

A low SES score inflates the federal funding schools receive because it is assumed parents have a reduced "capacity to contribute" to their child's education.

Public school advocate Trevor Cobbold, a former Productivity Commission economist, said it appeared ACT Catholic schools were receiving \$50 million in excess federal funding a year because of the deal.

According to his calculations, schools such as Canberra's **St Thomas More's Primary School** were receiving four times more funding than if they had been funded according to their true SES score.

"These type of deals are completely contrary to the Gonski principles," he said. "This is scarce money that could be given schools of high need."

Senator Birmingham said he was determined to do away with the "cosy deals Bill Shorten ran around the country stitching up before the 2013 election".

"Similar non-government schools should be treated consistently by the federal government, wherever they are in Australia, just as similar state government schools should be treated consistently," he said.

"It is not fair that a student in a school of similar or identical disadvantage in one part of the country gets \$1500 less or \$1500 more from the federal government than a similar-looking school elsewhere in the nation."

National Catholic Education Commission executive director Ross Fox said: "Our funding operates on clear principles of equity and need and I believe we do that well."

He said the SES score allocated to a school does not always reflect its specific needs and that system-wide funding allows the Catholic sector to efficiently distribute funds between schools.

Catholic schools receive receive 83 per cent of the overall government funding given to public schools and are usually low-fee, he said.

Mr Fox said there were "very good reasons" for Catholic schools in the ACT to be treated differently to other jurisdictions.

Low-income residents tend to be more evenly spread throughout Canberra than Sydney or Melbourne, he said, which means the ACT has a "hidden disadvantage" not reflected in SES scores.

## **School funding snapshot: Sydney**

- **Sydney Grammar School, St Ives preparatory campus**

Sector: Independent

Government funding per student: \$2,742

Fees and charges per student: \$26,413

- **Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School, St Ives**

Sector: Catholic

Government funding per student: \$9,517

Fees and charges per student: \$2,970

- **St Ives Public School**

Government funding per student: \$7,918

Fees and charges per student: \$1,466

## **School funding snapshot: Melbourne**

- **Christ Church Grammar School, South Yarra**

Sector: Independent

Government funding per student: \$2,711

Fees and charges per student: \$20,587

- **Our Lady of Lourdes School, Prahran**

Sector: Catholic

Government funding per student: \$11,875

Fees and charges per student: \$1,720

- **South Yarra Primary School**

Sector: Public

Government funding per student: \$7,754

Fees and charges per student: \$635

The following are some of the responses to the Nott article. They illustrate the movement of opinion towards the DOGS'No State Aid position.

RobOct 12 2016 at 8:06am

Well they should get all the funding they need to supply their deserving children of all the necessary things they need for secondary education such as Olympic size swimming pools and high altitude training chambers.

- DarcySydney,Oct 12 2016 at 8:54am
- All of our Children deserve an equal and full Education from our Government - it is a basic right.  
That is where our Public-Private School System breaks down. Education is being served up according to what your parents can afford, what religion you belong to or who the Government of-the-day thinks deserves more funding.  
Our Children are all equal and they deserve better.
- George Oct 12 2016 at 9:19am

private schools are just that - private. They should be privately funded, not publicly funded.

**ON 3CR**

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