

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 677#

INDEPENDENT 'GONSKI' ADMINISTRATIVE BODY :

JOBS TO BUY OUT THE STATE SCHOOL BOYS AND GIRLS?

State school lobbyists have done an exceptional job in exposing gross inequities, inefficiencies and national stupidity in current educational funding arrangements. The policy of State Aid to the private sector has failed dismally. MySchool data showing funding inequality has led Birmingham to use them as a smoke screen to call for new negotiations over Gonski funding and the revival of Gonski's proposal for independent body to administer funding.

https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/sep/30/independent-body-could-remove-politics-from-school-funding-expert-says?CMP=share_btn_tw

DOGS should warn public school supporters.

Been there, done that.

So-called 'Independent' education Bodies are never that. They consist of representatives of interest groups and numbers of people. Private school interests make sure they have the numbers and politicians and their private school mates will make sure that State school representatives chosen have a price. Status and careers are the carrot. Vilification the stick.

In 1973 The Schools Commission was expected to take the politics out of State Aid to sectarian schools and introduce a genuine 'Needs' policy. Initially it did the job. In fact it did the job so well that State school representatives graciously grabbed the few crumbs on offer for State schools, stayed mum, and enjoyed their status and careers.

From the very beginning, The Schools Commission was skewed towards private school interests. There was never any genuine "needs" policy. No school lost

any money and the wealthy schools were rewarded again and again for their greed. Representatives of private schools like Peter Tannock, who later became Chairman, were responsible only to their sectarian base. He, at least was true to his cause and the Pope recognised this.

Public school representatives were outnumbered, hand-picked and badly compromised. When finally, State school representatives issued dissenting reports in 1984 against outrageous favouritism to the private sector, the Commission was abandoned. It had outgrown its usefulness if public school supporters were no longer compliant.

Consider the story of Joan Kirner, a strong State School supporter until the possibility of a power and a political career beckoned her. And she made it – The Premier of Victoria for a short time – a poison chalice that she passed on to Jeff Kennett.

When she was a parent in 1970, she assisted in the organisation of large political demonstrations of state school parents, and became an accomplished public speaker in her cause. Joan Kirner was an extremely able organiser and lobbyist. She was attracted to the State Aid issue in 1971 and was persuaded to become a signatory to the DOGS High Court writ. She later regretted this and attempted to have her name removed.

In 1973 Kirner was selected by the Federal Minister for Education, Kim Beazley Snr from a list of nominees as a representative of State school parents on the Schools Commission. She did not disappoint Minister Beazley or her fellow Commissioner, Father Martin, the representative from the Victorian Catholic Education Office. She claimed that this fellow Commissioner persuaded her to take her name off the High Court Challenge.¹

Kirner also organised a change in the State Aid policy of the National State Schools organisation (ACSSO) to reflect the federal ALP State Aid 'Needs' policy. Members from her parents' clubs attended an annual VICCSO Conference with the same objective. Margaret Willshire, who at that time was the President of VICCSO noted faces she had never seen before and stepped down from the chair to speak in favour of retention of the VICCSO 'No State Aid' policy. The numbers fell in favour of the federal ALP policy

Joan Kirner from the state school parents clubs had placed her name on the list of plaintiffs in the DOGS case, but later applied to get off it. Bill Hartley, on the other hand, rebuffed all approaches made to him to follow Kirner's example. Hartley was cast out of the Labor Party in 1987, living the rest of his life in political exile. Kirner made it to Premier of Victoria in 1991.

¹ Anne O'Brien, *Blazing a Trail: Catholic Education in Victoria, 1963-1980*, David Lovell publishing, Melbourne, 1999, 143.

Joan Kirner joined the Socialist Left faction of the Labor party in the late seventies. Margaret Willshire, at that time the executive officer from the Victorian Council of State School organisations (VICCSO) informed her friend Joan Coxsedg that Kirner had come into the socialist left faction of the Labor Party because she thought that it was the best opportunity to become a candidate in a safe seat. At a crucial meeting she had the numbers and the old socialist left was taken over.

So DOGS say to current State school supporters: Stay genuinely independent, exposing the private school interests until you can take them over – again. It was done in the nineteenth century when they became too expensive for the taxpayer. It should happen now that the figures are getting out of control. It should happen before the private school interest persuaded the Coalition to impose charter schools upon us.

Stay well away from politicians and bureaucrats and private School representatives bearing questionable gifts.

Politicians are the froth on top. They should be our servants, not our masters.

You will have won when they are quoting your facts and figures, then quoting and putting your objectives into action.

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