

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 683#

'I am embarrassed for Australia': Education Minister Birmingham slamming 'appalling' maths and science results'

What happened to Ministerial Responsibility for all this?

Surprise! Surprise! Australia is falling behind in the international education race. And you know we are in strife when any 'Stan' country is ahead!

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, released on Tuesday, [shows Australia dropping 10 spots](#) in year 4 mathematics since 2011. Australia also fell five spots in year 8 maths and year 4 science.

The results show Australia fell from 18th to 28th out of 49 countries in year 4 mathematics. We also fell from 12th to 17th in year 8 maths and from 12th to 17th in year 8 science while remaining steady at 25th place in year 4 science.

Kazakhstan, which has a GDP per capita of \$US10,546 (\$A14,100) compared to Australia's \$US54,718 (\$A73,174), placed significantly below Australia in maths and science in 2011 but now outperforms us.

The tests were conducted in 2014 – the first year the Gonski school funding reforms were rolled out.

Responses have followed the usual scripted pattern:

1. **More money will not fix the problem. Birmingham says** ‘the results do not justify more money.’
2. There is no mention of ministerial responsibility for the inequalities in funding
3. The responsibility lies with teachers and teacher unions – there is always a cue for a teacher bashing bonanza.
4. Funding misinformation
5. Plans for further Testing procedures and fiddling with the curriculum.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/wakeup-call-australian-students-fall-behind-kazakhstan-in-maths-and-science-rankings-20161129-gszvt1>

Meanwhile the Grattan Institute has come up with a refined version of a ‘Needs’ policy, pussy footing around the State Aid issue.

They write:

Lifting all schools to their target funding levels is extremely costly under the current model - we estimate that it would cost more than \$3.5 billion each and every year to fund all schools even at 95 per cent of their target.

But times have changed and unprecedented low wages growth means that needs-based funding has never been easier to achieve than right now.

We propose a new deal that aligns funding to need for the same amount of money. We create big savings by reducing the automatic annual growth on school funding (indexation), affecting all schools. We then reallocate these funds to the most under-funded, getting all schools to their target by 2023.

They also propose setting up an independent body to oversee transparency and other issues. SO, back we go to 1973 and the Schools Commission fiasco.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/grattan-institute-presents-radical-but-achievable-plan-to-fix-australias-school-funding-mess-20161127-gsyehz> and <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-28/new-model-for-school-funding-that-wont-break-the-budget/8063902>

The representatives of independent schools, not to mention the Catholic Education Commission, have, predictably, muddied the waters. They accuse the Grattan Institute of ‘oversimplifying’ school funding arrangements. *Australian Financial Review*, 29 November 2016, p. 10

But Perhaps it is time that Australia cut to the chase, cut out State Aid to these outmoded systems of a caste ridden society, and ‘simplified’ the education issue.

When will we ever learn?

In 1900 Australia led the world in education – because we educated all our children. We had all our children in school because we had withdrawn State Aid from private religious schools, centralised our educational administrations and had Ministers of Education responsible for the expenditure of public money! Other countries, like Finland and the even the ‘Stans’ countries are now learning these basic lessons.

While Australia is being led by the nose back into the messes of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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