

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Press Release 716

## Will the Gonksi 2.0 funding model rob

### Coalition of Catholic vote ?

**Why do more than 75% of Australian voters put up with the extraordinary power wielded by the Catholic hierarchy in matters of education and other services? Perhaps they should look at legislation taking taxation privileges away from church ‘charities’ that get involved in politics.**

The Coalition is set to lose the next election for many reasons. But the Catholic hierarchy and its education bureaucracy are already circulating the rumour that they will be responsible for the Coalition’s loss to Labor.

Why?

Because - they did not get everything they wanted from Birmingham, namely billions in special deals with bells and whistles and no accountability. The Murdoch Press have already started the ‘Catholic’ vote talk while Paul Williams from the *Courier Mail* has fanned the flames at <http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/opinion/opinion-gonksi-20-funding-model-could-rob-coalition-of-catholic-vote/news-story/e8d8776c0fbd72aefe7a85ebbb0b2a9d>

Strangely, the Sydney/Melbourne media and even the ABC have tended to ignore the issue.

On May 24 Paul Williams a political scientist from Brisbane asked in the *Courier Mail* article noted above:

*Has the Federal Government cut off its Roman Catholic nose to spite its electoral face?*

*That’s what poll watchers will ask after the Catholic education system allegedly declared war on the Coalition over a new Gonski funding model that could send their school fees skyrocketing.*

*Public schools and independent educators say Catholic protesters are overreacting, and Defence Industry Minister Christopher Pyne – a Roman Catholic Liberal MP – claims the*

*Catholic education system is pretending it has been duded despite receiving an extra \$1 billion out of this agreement over four years.*

He then went on to give a potted history of Catholic influence and its disruption of the Labor Party. Liberals of course, are dismayed at the current disruption of the Coalition – noting that Abbott was once a member of the DLP.

More recently *The Australian* on July 31, took up the beware the ‘Catholic vote’ cry at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/nation/turnbull-risk-losing-power-over-catholic-funding/news-story/2cb2cb470f5cdd55f4d27e56eab9e4b3> John Ferguson had the following to say:

*The Turnbull government is exposed to a voter backlash in 13 marginal seats along the eastern seaboard that could cost it power after igniting a row with the Catholic education sector that included allegations of church lies and deceit.*

*Analysis of 13 marginal seats in NSW, Queensland and Victoria shows that almost 70,000 children were Catholic-educated in those seats last year.*

*The census data shows that the flow-on effect of the government’s war with the Catholic - sector could be electorally disastrous, particularly in Queensland, where up to seven seats could be impacted by a longrunning church campaign.*

*The poll comes as Malcolm Turnbull faces internal pressure to end the war with the Catholic sector: the fight has spread beyond school funding and struck at the heart of the Catholic establishment, which has vowed to campaign against the Coalition.*

*Several senior Liberals have told *The Australian* that lobbying is under way to force federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham to build bridges with the Catholic community, amid concerns about the withholding of \$1.1 billion from Catholic schools after the new deal with the Senate crossbench on the Gonski 2.0 school package.*

*The \$1.1bn “gap” has created a significant challenge for Senator Birmingham because the Catholic sector believes it provides an advantage to independent schools but he argues that it is a consequence of pushing all non-government schools into a consistent funding formula.*

*Victorian Labor Party assistant secretary Kosmos Samaras estimates that in an electorate with 5000 Catholic schoolchildren, there could be as many as 9000 parents of voting age in seats of about 100,000 people.*

*“It can actually determine the election result,” Mr Samaras said. “I’ve had a look at it and there are enough parents in the marginals for this to be a big issue.”*

**What is extraordinary is that in Australia the political power and direct lobbying of government by the Catholic hierarchy is taken for granted. Up**

**to the present time and the Trump presidency, the United States however, has had the JOHNSON AMENDMENT.**

What is the Johnson Amendment? And why are many Americans frightened of losing it?

**In America**, [This federal law](#) for more than 60 years has protected the integrity of tax-exempt organizations, including houses of worship, by ensuring they do not endorse or oppose political candidates. The Johnson Amendment protects charities and churches from being used as political tools. And it protects taxpayers, who should not be forced to subsidize the partisan election activities of these organizations.

**However**, President Donald Trump and a few members of Congress and far-right religious leaders want to repeal or weaken the Johnson Amendment for their own political gain. Trump has repeatedly [threatened](#) to “get rid of and totally destroy the Johnson Amendment,” a promise he [reiterated](#) during a July 13 [interview](#) with TV preacher Pat Robertson on the Christian Broadcasting Network.

The same day, the House Appropriations Committee [voted to cripple](#) the IRS’ ability to enforce the Johnson Amendment. The House Financial Services and General Government (FSGG) Appropriations bill [includes an amendment](#) that would make it incredibly difficult for the IRS to investigate churches that have violated the law. The committee narrowly voted down an amendment from U.S. Reps. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.) and Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) that would have stripped this harmful language from the bill.

The spending bill with the provision to weaken the Johnson Amendment next goes to the House floor. That’s why it’s crucial that members of Congress hear from you now about why the Johnson Amendment is so important.

*Americans United for Separation of Church and State say that ‘ It’s a perfect time to remind members of Congress why the Johnson Amendment is so important.’ To learn more about the Johnson Amendment and AU’s decades-long fight to protect it, visit [Project Fair Play](#).*

Many Australian taxpayers are fed up with the influence of religion on politics and the incursion of religious organisations into the public Treasury and our political parties.

**Perhaps it is more than time that we demanded a ‘JOHNSON AMENDMENT” and withdrawal of taxation exemptions for political religious institutions in Australia!**

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