

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS
Press Release 728**

**Declining PISA Results linked to
Australia's "misplaced reliance" on parental choice and competition
between public and private schools**

DOGS have always opposed State Aid to private schools because sectarian schools

divide our children,

duplicate facilities,

foster social and economic inequalities, and

affect educational standards.

State Aid to religious schools also contravenes the principle of separation of religion and the State.

Half a century after the re-introduction of State Aid to religious schools the results are becoming blatantly obvious. Research in Australia, England and the United States vindicates the DOGS position.

Australian Research : Falling Behind the International Jones

The latest PISA results, released last year, showed that [Australian 15-year-olds are declining in both absolute terms and relative to their international peers.](#)

They are two-and-a-half years behind in maths compared to students in Singapore and one-and-a-half years behind them in science. The latest results from the 2016 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) will be released on Tuesday.

Why?

A new paper investigating the "unsolved mystery" of worsening test scores, blames Australia's "misplaced reliance" on parental choice and competition between public and private schools may have created the conditions for declining student performance. The paper looks at Australia's "significant decline" in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results between 2000 and 2015, but focuses on mathematics because maths scores have dropped more than reading or science. The authors Dr. Leila Morsy from the University of NSW and a academics from Stanford University and the National Research

University Higher School of Economics, noted the drift from public schools to publicly subsidised private and Catholic schools, as well as an influx of new immigrants to Australia, as contributing to declining standards.

The paper said an emphasis on choice and competition between public and private schools to improve education "may have created the conditions for declining student performance" because attention is drawn away from teaching improvement strategies, strong school accountability and adequate funding for low-income schools.

It is of further interest to note that in spite of the billions of dollars poured into Catholic schools in particular, the

DOGS note that this was all predictable.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/the-clues-that-could-explain-our-falling-pisa-marks-20171204-gzybj1.html>

The United Kingdom

The privatisation of education in the United Kingdom has been on the conservative – and Labor party agenda for several decades. Subsidisation of private schools gathering pace since 1944, but there has been greater accountability than Australia. However, in recent years the local government administrations of State schools has been undermined by the establishment of autonomous, privatised ‘academies’. These are run by trusts and resemble the Charter schools in the United States. Like private schools in Australia and charter schools in the United States, they are intended to attract members of the aspirational and insecure middle classes.

But, surprise, surprise, the latest research has found that the introduction of academies is deepening divisions within the English education system. The results of this research have been published in a new book by Manchester professor, Mel Ainscow CBE, written with Maija Salokangas of Trinity College Dublin. *Inside the autonomous school: making sense of a global trend* provides a unique account of developments over more than ten years in one of the first English academies, and analyses how this led to remarkable progress over the first few years, followed by a subsequent decline.

Linking the analysis to wider research, including studies of charter schools in the USA, Australian independent public schools and free schools in Sweden, the book points to both the potential and dangers of school autonomy initiatives - particularly when they are set within policy contexts that emphasise competition, high stakes testing and parental choice.

The research points to the fact that the vast majority of new academies have struggled to live up to their ambitious promises, especially in relation to raising attainment amongst low income families. In addition, rather than introducing reforms that lead to improvements in educational approaches, they have mainly focused on structural reforms that focus on organisation and management. <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/academies-deepening-divisions/>

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The United States of America

In America the privatisation of education through charter schools is assisting rampant racial segregation of children. Across Los Angeles and Orange counties, one out of every five Hispanic children — 259,000 kids — attended a school in 2014 where practically every other child shared their race: the student body was at least 95 percent Hispanic.

And in the 550 or so of those most racially isolated schools in Southern California — as rated by [an analysis published Sunday by data journalists at the Associated Press](#) — students are less likely to have met state standards in reading or math.

In its analysis, the AP reported that measures of school segregation across the U.S. have regressed to levels not seen since the days of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, or since the 1970s, when courts across the nation began ordering districts to institute busing programs to integrate their schools.

That [segregation persists in Southern California](#) isn't news to many educators, experts and practitioners in the region's schools, like Alberto Retana, who leads the non-profit Community Coalition of South Los Angeles.

Retana readily rattled off school segregation's causes, both historic and systemic: "[Red-lining](#), [housing] covenants, chronic disinvestment in where development happens, white flight, capital flight — it's totally not surprising that our schools are an indicator of our society as a whole."

But the Associated Press's findings do shed fresh light on *where* to find racially homogenous schools across California.

In fact, put the AP's data on a map, and it shows pockets of racially isolated schools spread south and east of downtown Los Angeles, scattered across inland L.A. and San Bernardino counties and clustered in Santa Ana and Oxnard:

<https://www.scpr.org/news/2017/12/03/78190/the-california-schools-where-the-kids-are-all-the/>

DOGS NOTE THAT THEIR OPPOSITION TO STATE AID FOR THE LAST HALF CENTURY IS NOW, SADLY BEING VINDICATED. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT, ACADEMIC RESEARCH, ALBEIT RESEARCH PRESENTED IN CAREFUL EXPURGATED PROSE, IS FINALLY POINTING TO THE DANGEROUS SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL FRUITS OF STATE AID TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS.

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