

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Press Release 733

RISING SCHOOL COSTS RITUAL

Private school education to crack \$500,000 barrier

There is a ritual in Australian media reports on education. It is January, so it is 'Back to School' commentary and time for the 'Rising Costs' ritual. Right on time, the Murdoch Press obliges, with information on the rising costs of private – and 'free' public education for parents.

This year, the facts and figures are especially poignant for aspirational parents struggling with rising house prices, stagnant wages and an economy suffering stagflation and decline.

Financial services group ASG, which provides education loans to parents and grandparents, a nationwide survey of more than 13,500 families has found overall private education costs have jumped as much as 61 per cent over the past decade. In 'faith-based schools', costs increased as much as 54%. The average cost of putting a child through private school in a capital city has been forecast to top \$475,000, while Sydney and Melbourne families could see their education bills reach almost \$550,000. Public school costs have also risen substantially. Melbourne is the most expensive city for public education, where the cost of educating a child from kindergarten to Year 12 is estimated at \$75,000, 13 per cent higher than the national average. The survey asked parents to estimate costs associated with their children's education, including tuition fees and levies, uniforms, books and stationery, travel, technology, excursions, camps and extra-curricular activities.ⁱ

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/education/private-school-education-to-crack-500000-barrier/news-story/6ab5b5eeb7973434685c1bd60b4c9b45>.

The figures are not good for business so the independent Schools Council of Australia have questioned the ASG data, claiming it risked misrepresenting the cost of independent schooling. Council executive director Colette Colman said independent school costs varied greatly, 'with the majority of them much more affordable than modelling like ASG's suggests'.

These figures may persuade parents and grandparents to pay money into an ASG loan fund. But they may also persuade them to shop around for value for their educational buck. And it is not unsurprising that the local public school has become a definite option for many middle class as well as disadvantaged parents.

But pity the Australian parents who have forgotten to fight for perhaps the most precious inheritance they can give their children : A Free Education. Whatever happened to this noble ideal?

Comments to the 16 January article in *the Australian* are of interest:

Robert

Why the pretence that Catholic schools aren't private?

Its a bit like ACU and Notre Dame (founded via Victorian/Queensland and WA acts of parliament respectively) - they only exist so Catholic institutions can employ only Catholic educated (from kindergarden to PhD) staff.

Many private schools just ripping people off. No difference when you get into your adult life.

Roy

Pricing themselves out of business

R. Ambrose Raven

Is that a government-driven cost too? Recall yesterday's article "Rising cost of essential services putting the squeeze on homes".

Private school websites boast that the secondary education they can provide will lead their students to prosperity. They seem less keen on acknowledging their massive public subsidies. Such schools will never going to be accessible to ordinary families; Hard Right ideologues know that, and are undoubtedly pleased. Ordinary families are finding just paying ordinary household bills and mortgage repayments (due to the financial commoditisation of housing) enormously difficult.

Then Abbott Minister for "Education" Pyne's own comments regarding the massive expansion of fee-gouging by tertiary "education" providers demonstrate the hypocrisy of the private-school subsidy gougers; he argued that the 60% of Australians who did not go to university were subsidising the 40% who attended (yet those who don't attend private schools are subsidising those who do).

schools are suffering serious resource stresses. Nothing perverse about that.

Mark

Compare these elite schools with some of our struggle state schools and tell me Australia not a class society

Dean

Save your money folks!

Our daughter went through the public system and left school with the highest exit mark possible. She is happy and studying in the area she desired.

We are \$500,000 up and have bought her a new car.

Augusta

Spending all that money on private education is a waste. There are just as many options to broaden a child's experiences and horizons in the public system. If a parent is worried about broadening a student's horizons surely they should take more personal interest in doing so rather than passing the responsibility to someone else at huge expense.

Anthony

Beginning of the school year and this old chestnut does the rounds again. Data is dicey to say the least and survey undertaken by a firm with a vested interest in making it appear that education costs are out of control.

BTW, private education is a privilege not a right of the middle classes - pay up and shut up or go to your local government school.

Homer

Why do we continue to accept being at the low end of world education standards at the high end prices?

David

In real terms it seems that if we had put our five children through the best private schools it would have cost about 30 years of our household income, before taxes, mortgage payments, food, lollies, holidays and so on were paid for.

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ⁱ According to the data, Brisbane has emerged as the most expensive city for faith-based education, with a forecast cost of \$251,866, slightly higher than Sydney's \$251,143, and above the national metropolitan average of \$240,697. Faith-based schools in regional Queensland were also above the national regional average, costing \$198,000.

But the prices pale in comparison with the estimated cost of 13 years of private schooling in Sydney, where some of the most expensive schools are known to charge secondary school fees of more than \$35,000 a year.

The average overall cost of a Sydney private school education, for a child born this year, has been estimated at \$547,414, compared with \$536,683 for Melbourne and \$431,473 in Hobart.

ASG chief operating officer Bruce Hawkins said parents often failed to appreciate the expenses associated with schooling, such as technological devices, excursions and extra-curricular activities.

“The index also debunks the myth a government education is a free education, with the latest figures showing Melbourne families could spend on average \$75,263 per child on a so-called, free education,” Mr Hawkins said.

Sydney father Daven Timms is facing hefty bills to put his three daughters through secondary school at Barker College in Hornsby in Sydney’s north, where the annual fees are in the range of \$28,000-\$30,000. And with all three girls — Eve, Eden and Sierra — enjoying a range of sporting and artistic pursuits, he estimated the cost of extra-curricular activities will exceed \$156,000 by the time they graduate.

“There have been periods where education costs have taken up about 25 per cent of the family income,” the lawyer said.

“It is a big cost but our approach to education has always been to provide opportunities that broaden their horizons.”