

# **AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

**Press Release 735**

## **Division in ranks of Catholic and Other Private School Sectors**

**In the 1960s, State Aid to private schools was re-introduced after an 80 year break because of an unholy alliance between Protestant and Catholic clerical hierarchies and school administrators.**

**In Victoria the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) has broken ranks with the non-Catholic private school sector on the issue of funding levels. The ‘unholy alliance’ is under strain. Or is it?**

### **What is going on?**

Stephen Elder, the executive director of the Catholic Education Office in Melbourne, has been spearheading a campaign against the Federal Government's school funding changes. The changes announced last year ended what federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham said were ["special deals" that gave hundreds of millions of dollars to state-based Catholic education commissions](#). In the process Elder has admitted the over funding of only 10 Catholic schools but pointed the finger at mainly Protestant schools.

Elder wishes to re-define the meaning of Gonski's "Need". Australian taxpayers have been here many times before, starting with the Schools Commission in 1973. But in the event, all Needs policies have become the Greeds policies. These have led to the current gross overfunding which has been exposed by the DOGS, the Save Our Schools network and Public Teacher unions.

Mr Elder and members of his Commission are themselves under scrutiny from both State and Federal Auditor Generals for the way they have diverted taxpayer monies intended for so-called disadvantaged schools to new and/or wealthy schools and their highly centralised bureaucracy. His grandstanding is opposed by the so-called independent sector and the central Catholic bureaucracy.

**So – is he causing a diversion which has inadvertently led to this division between the sectors?**

**Or**

**Is he imitating the banks who realised that a Banking Commission of Enquiry was inevitable – and, causing hoping to influence the Birmingham Schools Resourcing Board ?**

Dr Geoff Newcombe, chief executive of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW, said the CECV's assertion that top-end wealthy schools were entitled to no public funding was "a profound shift in philosophy for some Catholic education authorities".

"What's behind the Victorian Catholics' comment, I think very much, is to try and curry favour with the Labor Opposition, I think that's their aim," Dr Newcombe said. "They're putting all their eggs into that basket hoping that the Government will change and then of course they'll get what they want." They also seem to be trying to convince the Opposition that they should take money from independent schools and give it to Catholic-system schools."

The executive director of the Independent Schools Council of Australia, Collette Colman, said the Catholic sector's push for private school means testing suggested "all non-government schools should just charge minimal fees and cost-shift the bulk of their costs to the taxpayer."

"Clearly fees charged are not a measure of parental capacity to pay," Ms Colman said.

## **But**

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) tried to paper over the cracks between the two sectors. They issued a statement saying all schools should receive some level of Government funding and the NCEC acting executive director Ray Collins said the sector was prepared to work with the National Schools Resourcing Board. Mr Collins is a new boy on the block. He stepped into the chief executive's role at NCEC after former federal Labor MP Christian Zahra stepped down early this year for family reasons.

Senator Birmingham issued a statement:

"I urge the CECV to constructively engage in the independent review they called for that is examining possible enhancements to the funding model, which currently provides an extra \$3.5 billion for Catholic schools," Senator Birmingham said. DOGS could tell him that the Catholic sector is never satisfied – so he should not have bothered. Meanwhile,. It will be interesting to see how the Labor Party reacts.

**What the CECV Report says according to the ABC at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-02-07/750m-goes-to-private-schools-that-dont-need-it-says-catholic/9402782>**

The report by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV) that analyses a complex array of published data to estimate school wealth has concluded that taxpayers are pouring an extra \$747 million each year into the coffers of almost 200 private schools that don't need it under the Government's own test of need.

The report titled *The need to rethink need: How the Gonski Review got it wrong on funding non-government schools*, challenges what it says are "dubious" measurements of school need.

There are almost 200 non-government schools that raise all of the funding their students are estimated to need from private sources — mostly school fees," the report

said. Even though these schools already raise enough private income to reach their resource standard, the Australian Government nevertheless grants them almost \$750 million each year. Schools on the list include Canberra Grammar, Sydney Grammar, Knox Grammar and Melbourne's Wesley College and Haileybury College. In Queensland, Brisbane Grammar and The Southport School are listed while in South Australia, it is St Peter's College and the Westminster School in Adelaide. Scotch College in Perth and The Friends School in Hobart, are also named.

Some of the private schools receiving additional funds above SRS

<b>School</b>	<b>CECV estimate of resource standard (2015)</b>	<b>School private income (2015)</b>	<b>Excess of private income above resource standard (2015)</b>
Knox Grammar School NSW	\$30.5 million	\$70.2 million	\$39.7 million
Sydney Grammar School NSW	\$17.4m	\$45.2m	\$27.9m
Canberra Grammar School ACT	\$17.8m	\$25.2m	\$7.4m
Wesley College VIC	\$34.3m	\$87.4m	\$53.1m
Haileybury College VIC	\$40m	\$63.1m	\$23.1m
Brisbane Grammar School QLD	\$20.5m	\$31.8m	\$11.2m
The Southport School QLD	\$17.1m	\$22.2m	\$5.1m
St Peter's College SA	\$14.9m	\$27.7m	\$12.8m
Scotch College WA	\$18.7m	\$33m	\$14.2m
The Friends School TAS	\$15.6m	\$16.6m	\$1m

*Source: Catholic Education Commission of Victoria*

## How school funding works

- The Commonwealth contributes 20 per cent of baseline funding for government schools, and a maximum of 80 per cent for non-government schools
- State governments fund 80 per cent of public school students' education. The Commonwealth contributes 20 per cent
- Federal funding for non-government schools reduces depending on the school community's capacity to pay for students' education
- The current system (the Socio-Economic Status method, or SES) draws on data from an average of 400 households in a census district
- This is regardless of whether they have school-aged children and examines education, occupation, household income, and the income of families with children
- The data is then linked to student residential-address data to generate a school SES score

Mr Elder said this latest report should prompt the Schools Resourcing Board to ask hard questions. "This just isn't about Catholic and independents, this is about the Government's funding model that gives an entitlement to schools that they don't deserve because they meet the resourcing standard through their own fee income," Mr Elder said.

"Those schools that are charging massive fees, well in excess of what the student resource standard is, they should be asked to reduce those fees, and they shouldn't get any incentive for Government to charge those fees to the tune of \$750m that would be better off spent in those poor Catholic and Independent schools which the Government has taken money from."

The Commonwealth funds private schools on a sliding scale depending on their level of need, which is determined under a system called the SES model.

A board appointed by Senator Birmingham is reviewing whether the SES model accurately reflects school wealth, or the capacity of a school's community to support the school.

The changes to school funding legislation have divided the Catholic and independent sec

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