

# AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

## Press Release 737

### WHICH WAY WILL GONSKI JUMP ? : THE BATTLE FOR CONTROL OF EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

It is almost March 2018 and the Australian Education community is currently awaiting the Gonski Report 2.0 Which way will he jump? Or should we say, how high will Gonski jump for whoever he considers the strongest master? Public, private, political, or maybe, maybe, his own conscience?

David Gonski himself understands that, as a survivor in the hurly burly of Australian political, business and even philanthropic life, he is the great survivor. In his own words, he is an accomplished courtier.<sup>1</sup> But has he been given an impossible brief? Which way, where, and how will he jump?

The numbers are on the internet. Australia is falling behind in the international education race – and even for the most hardened materialist – this will affect the monetary value of our ‘education industry’. More importantly, the levels of inequality in education provision are becoming an international scandal.

#### What exactly is Gonski’s job?

David Gonski's [\*Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools\*](#) will give the federal education minister strategies to raise school performance which will be used as a

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<sup>1</sup> Who is David Gonski and what has made him Australia’s most accomplished Courtier? Wikipedia gives an interesting story of his life at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Gonski](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Gonski). Growing up in Eastern Sydney, his educational experiences included Sydney Grammar, the University of New South Wales and a return to Sydney Grammar as Chair of the Board of Trustees of Sydney Grammar School (between 2003 and 2010). But his claim to be the most accomplished courtier in Australia lies in his extraordinarily wide range of networks. Gonski's business background is extensive and it is estimated that he sits on more than 40 boards. He was also a close friend and advisor to the late media baron [Kerry Packer](#). Together with [Lloyd Williams](#), he was an [executor](#) of Packer's estate. While he provided advice to Packer, Gonski was also a director of Packer's media competitor, John Fairfax Holdings. He is close friends with [Izzy Asper](#), [Arthur Boyd](#), [Rupert Murdoch](#), [Kerry Stokes](#) and [Frank Lowy](#).

trade off for an additional \$23 billion over 10 years to be injected into the system. These will be the basis of the 2018-2027 funding agreement to be signed this year.

In the Gonski 2.0 terms of reference last May, the government said the review would provide "advice" on how this extra money should be used.

In June, Canberra heightened its expectations. Under its Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes banner, the government said its investment in schools would be "tied to the implementation of our evidence-based quality reforms".

And in the statement on declining PISA standards, the Government said that from 2018 the amended Education Act 'will tie funding to reforms that will boost education outcomes'. (See *Financial Review* Feb 18, 2018)

Gonski 1.0 has gone the way of all preceding 'Needs' policies namely, into private Greeds . But with Gonski 2.0 the Chairman is confronted with the stark evidence of the results of all State Aid 'Needs' policies – growing inequalities and lessening academic results in Australian education systems. According to the Financial Review of February 18, 2018,

*Dr Glenn Savage from the University of Melbourne said the education debate was driven by deep divisions over who should be in control and, in recent years, the roles had become confused. He said the federal government can't control the flow of money to schools – it can only control the amount that goes to the states under the SRS model.*

*But the states are finding they are less able to assert authority in the debate.*

*"There has been a strong shift in sentiment to accepting a national approach. State policy makers see a shift to national reform especially on issues such as equity and using an evidence-based approach," Dr Savage said.*

*"Of course it doesn't always translate into practice. Political divisions come to the fore."*

<http://www.afr.com/news/policy/education/david-gonskis-education-review-is-on-its-way-and-critics-are-taking-position-20180215-h0w5gd#ixzz57kLeHFr0>

### **Battle for control**

Savage is not wrong. But he has left out a number of key players in the 'battle for control'. He does not mention that rear guard action of Mr Elder from the Victorian Catholic Education Office who is determined to re-define the meaning of 'resources standard'. His aim appears to gather in ever more money for The Catholic system's overfunded mythical poor parish schools. Nor does he mention the hierarchies and bureaucrats of the various religious denominations who are determined to control their schools and employment policies with minimum attention to public accountability .

DOGS suggest that David Gonski forget his survival and self-image as an accomplished courtier and follow his conscience. If he does, he could look at

the policies of Finland, Germany, and other countries with successful education systems. And he could recommend a clearing out of the Australian Augean stables. As our forefathers did in the nineteenth century, he could recommend the rationalisation, and / or taking over and opening up of the private sector. Taxpayers pay for overfunded private schools.

It is time an inefficient system was rationalised and opened to all children, regardless of their race, religion or ability to pay.

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