

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT

SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 761

PUBLIC SCHOOL REACTION TO COALITION /CATHOLIC SPECIAL DEALS:

STATE AID DEBATE ALIVE AND KICKING

A plan from former prime minister **Malcolm Turnbull**, for a \$4.4 billion top-up to Catholic and independent schools over the next decade, has been leaked.

<https://www.crikey.com.au/2018/09/04/turnbulls-peace-deal-for-catholic-schools/>

According to *The Herald Sun*, Turnbull allies say that a “peace deal” with Catholic schools was to be contingent on needs-based funding and was just days away from being agreed on when the prime minister was ousted. News of Turnbull’s proposal, which underscores current plans from **Scott Morrison**, comes a day after reports of \$7.6 billion in pre-election, marginal seat infrastructure sweeteners were similarly leaked to the *Herald Sun*.

The possibility of a Catholic sector campaign against the government at the next election has spooked backbenchers and Morrison has given the new education minister, Dan Tehan, a remit to solve the issue. But the Catholic sector is neither the only nor the most numerous and vocal political force in the funding battle. Nor are the two major political parties –which for half a century have bowed to pressure from the private sector – the only political options on offer.

Dan Tehan himself faces a delicate problem. The non-Catholic private school sector has signalled doing a “special deal” with the Catholic sector would [risk reigniting the so-called funding wars](#). Guardian Australia has [previously reported an agreement with the Catholic sector could prompt a backlash from the states](#).

Teacher Unions and many public school parents are, understandably, outraged at the arrogance and shamelessness of the private sector. The AEU has warned the Coalition that ‘all bets are off’ if it bows to Catholic school funding demands.

The public school parents group, ACSSO, may be in disarray, with its leadership influenced by the coalition. And public school parents’ organisations have often been taken over by private school and/or political interests. ACSSO no longer represents NSW, SA or WA public school parents organisations.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/public-school-parents-body-in-disarray-as-largest-state-quits-over-funding-stance-20180830-p500ti.html>

But ACSSO has long been politically moribund on behalf of public education. Its erstwhile State affiliates are in disagreement with Coalition policy and are doing their own thing. In NS the public school parents' organisations are joining the AEU in letting PM Morrison know where the majority of Australian children attend school.

The AEU has begun a publicity blitz in 18 marginal seats, claiming the government has cut funding to public schools while seeking to appease the Catholic sector. According to The Guardian at <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/sep/03/teachers-union-warns-morrison-against-special-deals-with-catholic-schools>

The campaign will target [Peter Dutton's](#) seat of Dickson in Queensland, Chisholm in Victoria – where sitting MP Julia Banks has [announced she will quit because of “bullying” within the party](#) – and marginal Nationals seats such as Page in New South Wales.

On 3 September 2018 the head of the AEU, Correna Haythorpe, said that The AEU will spend about \$200,000 launching billboards calling for “fair school funding” on highways and in shopping centres, as well as mobilising volunteers for a door-knocking campaign in NSW and Victoria.

In all of the seats – but particularly in Queensland – volunteers will hold “personal conversations” with voters outside public school gates.

“If Prime Minister Scott Morrison thinks the solution to ending the school funding wars is by doing a special deal with private schools while ignoring public schools, then he is very much mistaken,”

“More than 2.5 million students attend public schools across Australia. They have been forgotten by the Morrison government.”

“Our week of action will be a big reminder that these children deserve the same treatment, the same school funding, and the same chance at achieving their potential as do private school students.”

Under the Morrison government:

- *\$1.9 billion has been cut from public school funding in 2018 and 2019*
- *the federal government has arbitrarily capped public school funding at only 20 percent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) while private schools receive 80 percent*
- *only 13 per cent of public schools will receive enough funding to reach the minimum Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by 2023*

“Our public school system welcomes each and every child that arrives at the front gate. Public schools are our universal education choice, a path to success for all,”

And on 6 September nearly eleven thousand public-school supporters sent a strong message to Prime Minister Scott Morrison to reverse his billion-dollar cuts to public school funding.

The supporters signed an open letter to the Prime Minister criticising his government's policy of favouring private schools while simultaneously cutting \$1.9 billion in funding for public schools in 2018 and 2019.

A colourful six-metre-long banner carrying the names of the thousands of public school supporters were unfurled in front of Scott Morrison's electorate of Cronulla, while the open letter was delivered to his electorate office.

"In just two weeks we had nearly eleven thousand people telling the Prime Minister to fund our public schools fairly. This shows that public school funding will be a crucial issue in the upcoming federal election."

"We've also got thousands of campaign volunteers across the country spending this week as a 'Week of Action' educating parents and the rest of the community about the importance of fair public school funding for their children's futures."

"Our week of action will be delivering a clear message: our local public schools are missing out on billions in urgently-needed funding because of school funding cuts by the Morrison government," Haythorpe said.

"Community support is firmly behind funding public schools and behind the fair funding now campaign. Recent polling showed that three in four residents said public school funding is personally important to them as an electoral issue."

"Voters, parents and families tell us that they are very happy with their local schools, teachers, principals and support staff, and do not want them to be savaged by Scott Morrison's cuts to school funding"

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<http://www.3cr.org.au/dogs>