

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT

SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 792

**STATE AID TO RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS AN
EXPENSIVE FAILURE: WE PAY FOR THEM
MAKE THEM PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

In 1964 Menzies told taxpayers we could not let Russia and Sputnik beat us so we had to provide libraries and science blocks to religious schools, which, in those days, were not publicly funded.

In 1969 The Coalition started per capita grants to private schools.

In 1972, to get the 'Catholic' vote Whitlam spruiked a Needs policy, poured money into church bureaucracies (not disadvantaged schools) and some dollars trickled down into disadvantaged public schools. The DOGS could only communicate the State Aid manipulations through paid Advertisements.

By 1978, the Needs policy was a joke. Wealthy Catholic and Protestant schools always had to be paid off before the poor received a dollar.

Peter Tannock from the Schools Commission received Papal honours and George Pell later received a Vatican posting. Well done thou Good and Faithful gatherers in of taxpayer dollars.

Many Needs policies, Gonski Reports and Socioeconomic bean counters later, the number crunchers not only tell all, but are actually getting some media coverage.

The Save Our Schools think tank has been producing numerous research papers, the latest of which, is entitled '[The Vast Majority of Disadvantaged Schools are Public Schools](#)' while the Gonski Institute at the University of New South Wales

But the news of the weeks came from Jordan Baker in the Fairfax Media, quoting from the research done by Grattan Institute school program director Peter Goss with the front page headline on Wednesday May 15, 2019. :

[Private school funding growth outstrips public schools' despite Gonski](#)

It is now official, many private religious schools in Australia receive more from the public Treasuries of Australia per capita, than public schools

Government funding boosts to private schools outstripped increases to public schools in the 10 years to 2017, despite the Gonski reforms and a national consensus on the importance of needs-based funding.

Public school funding grew by just \$155 a student over the decade after accounting for student numbers and teacher wage growth, while private school students each received \$1429, an analysis of Productivity Commission data by the Grattan Institute has found.

Funding increases to private schools have outstripped those to public schools despite the Gonski reforms.

Grattan Institute school program director Peter Goss said funding practice had failed to match up to the theory. "This whole time we've been talking about needs-based funding, we have been heading in the wrong direction," he said.

"We have failed to live up to what we have promised ourselves. It's occurred under both Coalition and Labor federal governments." "

Between the 2007-08 and 2016-17 financial years, combined state and federal government funding for public schools grew by 22 per cent, adjusted for inflation, while public funding for non-government schools grew by 46 per cent.

The disparity is due to a significant increase in Commonwealth money. As the federal government mainly funds private schools and contributes just one fifth of public school funding, more of that money went to the Catholic and independent sectors.

The states, which are supposed to cover 80 per cent of the cost of their public schools, have been slower to lift their contributions.

When student numbers and teacher wages were taken into account, the states' contribution to public schools was found to have fallen by six per cent, while their payments to private schools grew by two per cent.

Well, DOGS say: what did they expect?

But, instead of looking at the rottenness in the whole idea that private religious schools should receive any State Aid at all, and confronting the administrators and proud clerics in their hallowed halls, the shortfall has been blamed on states' reluctance to contribute enough, putting pressure on the winner of Saturday's federal election to ensure the states do not shirk their obligations or use accounting tricks to inflate their budgets.

Both Labor and Coalition parties with [Plibersek](#) and [Tehan](#) took the cue, rushing in to pass the buck on to the States. Plibersek reducing the State Aid problem to State government 'accounting tricks'.

The Coalition does not plan to change school funding policy if it retains government. However, federal Education Minister Dan Tehan said a re-elected Coalition government would push the states to lift their spending contributions.

DOGS POSITION

Nothing has changed SINCE THE Whitlam Government tried to solve the 'State Aid' problem in 1972. Did they think they could outwit the servants of a multinational religious corporation that has playing power and money games since the fourth century AD?

In 1973 the Karmel Committee was set up to do away with the 'State Aid' problem with a 'feel good' Needs policy, and bean counting and 'socioeconomic' research. 'Equality of Opportunity was the catch cry'. Whitlam thought he needed the Catholic vote, but the Bishops had always short changed their poor children very badly. They continue to do so.

In 1972 a DOGS delegate asked Karmel why he could not just say that if children were to be given an equal opportunity, then the institutions themselves - the schools, had to be open, - with no entry requirements: fees, religious, academic, ethnic or any other tests for either students, teachers, cleaners, etc.

There was an embarrassed silence. Father Bourke gave the DOGS delegate a watery eyed stare and Professor Tannock shuffled his papers. Peter Karmel and Jean Blackburn looked, poker faced, into space.

A couple of years later, at a Conference Karmel bemoaned the fact that he could not recommend that all schools should be equal - it was not in his Terms of Reference.

There never has been and can never be a genuine Needs policy for Australian children until all the schools are genuinely free and open to all children. No political party has put this into a Needs policy Terms of Reference. Even from Julia Gillard, Gonski received a 'no school can lose a dollar' Terms of Reference.

Genuine equality of opportunity requires a system - a genuinely well resourced public school system before we can get to first base economically and socially. We found this out in the nineteenth century.

But we need people with the intestinal fortitude to take on the church lobbyists and would be aristocrats and say that the State Aid experiment has failed dismally - again. As in the nineteenth century, we now more than pay for an expensive, sectarian, socially divisive system. Take the over funded religious schools over, open them up to all, rationalise the excessive duplication of facilities and then start talking about what we can do for the disadvantaged and disabled who have a right to be enrolled in a public system.

Education for our children should be a right, never a charity, religious or otherwise.

The wealthy will always have the finance to buy something special for their children in genuinely independent schools. That's their problem. It should not be a problem for the taxpayers who actually pay their tax.

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855 ON THE AM DIAL: 12.00 NOON SATURDAYS

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