

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

### **SCHOOLS**

#### **PRESS RELEASE 794**

### **STATE LABOR FOLLOWS MORRISON GOVERNMENT IN PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT TO PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

As the Labor Party licks its wounds after the Morrison – ‘same old same old’- election win, the State Labor Party is rushing to shore up what it regards as part of its traditional power base namely, the ‘religious’ vote.

Not since the darkest days of nineteenth century, in the period 1854-1862 have public schools so badly needed a Sir Henry Parkes to take up their cause. Our Lib-Labs at both federal and State level, have very short memories.

Imitating the Morrison/Tehan government in Canberra – which has ‘private schools in their DNA – and the Coalition Government in New South Wales, Andrew and Merlino have upped the ante in distributing largesse to religious schools in Victoria, nor only for running costs but for capital works. They were going to provide \$120 million, but this has now been increased to the NSW Government’s figure, namely \$400 million. Now we have private, religious school infrastructure paid for by taxpayers and privately funded public school infrastructure is leased by the government in private/public partnerships.

What a strange topsy turvy world the neoliberal theology has created.

The latest Andrews Government largesse has a personal twist.

We discover from the *Australian* of Tuesday May 28, 2019, that

*The government has bolstered the size of its non-government school infrastructure fund, from \$120m over four years to \$400m over four years, and the low-fee Catholic primary school Corpus Christi at Glenroy will be one of the first to benefit.*

*Why this particular school? The school, where Premier Daniel Andrews was educated from Prep to Year 3, will receive a \$1m grant to refurbish toilets, classroom and external areas.*

Mr Merlino defended the provision of government funding to non-government schools, saying every child deserved access to “a great school close to home”, but the infrastructure fund has proven contentious.

The Australian Education Union's Victorian branch president, Meredith Peace, has reacted. She said the increased funding was a "significant concern" despite the "increased investment in public school buildings and infrastructure".

Ms Peace said recurrent funding for public schools must be prioritised in any new bilateral funding agreement with the federal government.

Meanwhile, the public sector needs at least 200 new schools if it is to successfully enrol the next generation of baby boomers. Victoria has commissioned, the building of 17 new public schools in rapidly growing areas and will upgrade a further 109 as part of a 2.8 billion investment in school education. The government has increased its spending on building projects — from \$1.3bn last year to \$1.82bn in this year's budget — in a bid to fulfil a promise of providing 100 new schools across the state over eight years. The budget also delivers on a promise to provide \$400 million for the non-government school sector, Catholic and independent schools to assist with building maintenance, renovations and the removal of asbestos .

Like their coalition counterparts in Canberra, Andrews and Merlino are selling the public system short, robbing Paul, to pay Saint Peter.

Meanwhile, Mr Morrison says he is going to deal with 'the nation's curse' of youth suicide.

How does he intend to do this? By bolstering what he regards as 'religious freedom' to enable private schools to label and damn children on the basis of class, creed, cash, and sex?

We hope he includes the bullying, religious moralising and divisiveness bolstered with taxpayer funding that is leading to ever increasing levels of inequity and youth suicides in this country.

A large percentage of our youth are being sold short in an ever dwindling job market. They ALL need the best education we can offer in well resourced, public schools open to all children which respect and develop their talents.

DOGS remind Morrison, Tehan, Andrews and Merlino, that the only way that the next generation can learn to live together is through putting them in school together. The only way to combat tribalism, incivility and the downward slide into hate and violence is for children to learn civility, together, in school. If children are separated into schools for the haves and have nots then social dislocation will exacerbate the economic dislocation of the next digital, artificial intelligence revolution.

This is why our public system needs the protection and support of both adequate and sole public funding.

Only the public school system can educate ALL AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN.

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