

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT

SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 798

'PAYMENT BY RESULTS' AND AUSTRALIAN TEACHER MORALE

There is a looming crisis of both teacher retention and teacher numbers in Australia.

In comparison with the Scandinavian and many Asian countries, teachers in public education are trusted, but not held in high regard in Australia. Some parents believe they are fair game for violent abuse.

In *The Guardian* we are told that [* 'Sending new teachers to difficult schools could be driving them out of the profession'](#), and Teachers' union says poor job security and lack of autonomy contribute to teachers leaving the field early.

Meanwhile, in *The Age* of June 11, we are also told that children in country schools – or at least some of those in public schools – are falling behind their city counterparts. ['Country kids left behind as education gap widens'](#).

More than half of all regional and rural schools have recorded a slump in their VCE results over the past decade, triggering concerns about a widening achievement gap between city and country students.

The figures have prompted education experts, principals and students to call for more resources for country students, incentives for teachers to leave the city and greater support for country kids at university.

There is nothing new about this situation. But in our latter days of neoliberal failures, our governments and administrators are repeating the mistakes of the late nineteenth century.

In NSW the Liberal Government has upped the ante on a payment by results system by concentrating on 'outcomes' and standardised testing. Kellie Bonsfield, from Charles Sturt University, writes in *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/nsw-budget-giving-schools-extra-money-only-if-they-meet-outcomes-can-hamper-teaching-standards-119087>

'Success in education should not be simplified to concrete outcomes, specifically results in standardised tests, alone.'

As well as going back to contracting out the education of one third of our Australian children to selective class ridden, religious schools, - to the tune of billions of taxpayer dollars-our

governments are producing an insecure workforce chasing ‘ payment by results’. This strongly echoes the mistakes of the late nineteenth century.

In Victoria our school administration was decentralised in the 1980s and principals were given the power to hire and fire teachers. And in more recent years, on one year teaching contracts, dancing to the tune of NAPLAN results, schools and teachers are at the mercy of standardized testing. The central administration has been nobbled and principals and teachers are thrown to the winds of market forces.

Meanwhile public school parents are subsidising essentials in the public systems throughout Australia to the tune of at least \$1 billion dollars

Payment by results led to educational disasters in the nineteenth century. But the problems were solved.

By the early twentieth century some of these iniquitous practices had been largely abandoned. State Aid to private religious schools was abolished along with ‘Payment by results’. Teachers and principals were appointed, protected from violent parents and inspected by a strong centralised administration, and teacher training was done by Teachers Colleges and universities in collaboration with the central administrations.

History does not repeat itself, but it would be helpful if we learnt from it.

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