

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

PRESS RELEASE 827

**LIES, LIES AND DAMNED STATISTICS
IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION**

The Privatisation Empire has finally fought back on the Statistical Front.

Trevor Cobbold and his fellow researchers from the Save Our Schools Organisation have provided comprehensive figures from official sources which indicate that federal government funding of private schools has, in many cases, surpassed government funding of public schools. This research has been used in electioneering by the Australian Education Union and the 'Fair Funding Now' group, And gained considerable coverage in the mainstream media. We quote from Trevor Cobbold . **The Facts About School Funding in Australia, Posted on 24 June 2019 on <https://johnmenadue.com/trevor-cobbold-the-facts-about-school-funding-in-australia/>**

Education Funding 2009 to 2017.

The income disparity between public and private schools has widened substantially since 2009. Total real income per student in public schools fell by \$58 per student (-0.5%) but increased by \$1,888 (17.8%) in Catholic schools and by \$2,306 (15.1%) for Independent schools.

The increased income disparity between public and private schools was due to much larger Commonwealth Government funding increases for private schools than for public schools, reduced funding of public schools by state governments and fee increases above cost increases by private schools.

Government funding increases have massively favoured private schools. Real funding for public schools was cut by \$17 per student (-0.2%) while funding for Catholic schools increased by \$1,420 per student (18.4%) and for Independent schools by \$1,318 (20.9%).

The Commonwealth funding increase for private schools was over double that for public schools. It increased funding for Catholic schools by \$1,309 (22.7%) per student and by \$1,205 (26.3%) for Independent schools compared to \$560 (34.9%) for public schools.

Every state cut funding for public schools. Several cuts were very large as in Western Australia (-\$1,575) and the Northern Territory (-\$4,777). Average state funding for public schools was cut by \$577 (-6.4%) per student while increasing funding for Catholic schools by \$112 (5.7%) and \$113 (6.5%) for Independent schools.

Private schools also increased fees and other income by more than cost increases. After allowing for inflation, Catholic schools increased fees and other income by \$466 (16.1%) per student and Independent schools by \$988 (11%).

The Centre for Independent Studies

The Centre for Independent Studies have questioned these figures. They say that public schools have been faring better than private schools as their funding ‘soars.’ The Education Unions and others, they complain, have looked at only the ‘nominal amount.’ i.e. the actual dollars. This figure is higher because the federal government shoulders a bigger share of spending on private schools under its agreement with the states.

Their figures deal only with federal government funding, not total direct federal and state government funding.

Blaise Joseph, the education policy analyst at the Centre for Independent Studies says that, instead of the ‘total’ amount the more significant figure is the ‘rate’ of increase.

<https://www.afr.com/policy/health-and-education/public-schools-fare-better-as-government-spending-soars-20200203-p53x91>

We will let our readers read the figures from Save Our Schools and the Centre for Independent Studies and make up their own mind.

The Report on Government Services in education, released on Tuesday, shows that in 2018 Canberra spent \$2387 per student a year in government schools That compares with \$1825 a decade ago – an increase of 55 per cent. Capital grants figures were excluded.

In the same time, federal spending per private student went up by only 43 per cent to \$8479.

*The Centre for Independent Studies asserts that percentages mean more than ‘nominal amounts’; recent increases for private schools ‘certainly haven’t been at the expense of government schools. There has been no ‘cut’ to government school spending in the last ten years, and if government schools are underfunded the states are to blame; and, the most worrying aspect of the trend in Australia is that despite massive levels of spending, running at \$1.7 billion a week from all levels of government, international and domestic tests show a collapse in student results. **Meanwhile, no-one is standing up for the taxpayer.***

If percentages are limited to federal funding increases are the most relevant statistic, DOGS note that a government school pupil is only worth 28% of a private school child to the Morrison Government. i.e. $2387/8479 \times 100$

But statistics are never enough in an argument about the education of the next generation. DOGS suggest that, as in America, the crocodile tears for the ‘taxpayer’, are usually for corporate citizens whose bottom line is the take home ‘profit’, these specious arguments from the Centre for Independent Studies can be identified as rhetorical assertions from ‘disrupters and deformers of public education. They have been used in the USA to prepare the way for privatisation of public education for private, ‘for-profit’ as well as denominational schools.

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