

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 828
DAMNED STATISTICS
AND LOBBY GROUPS
IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION**

It does not take a prophet or the son of a prophet to note that the private schools are outstripping the public sector in the Government funding stakes. Public schools have committed teachers, principals, researchers, and even lobby groups.

Yet the lobby groups for the private sector – the Catholic Education Commissions and the Independent School lobby always seem to gain the upper hand in both the statistics and the funding stakes. Why?

The Use of Statistics

In recent weeks, conflicting interpretations have been made from raw statistics provided by government reports. Research done by the Save Our Schools Think Tank and the Centre for Independent Studies differs markedly. Statistics are used to prove almost opposite interpretations and justify the pouring of extra Treasury funds into the private sector. So what is the real situation?

Even official statistics can obfuscate.

DOGS have gone, as they always try to do, to the primary source material.

The 2020 Report on the most recent, controversial Government Services (RoGS):

Here are some generally accepted facts:

In 2018, there were 9477 schools in Australia (6240 primary schools, 1414 secondary schools, 1341 combined schools, and 482 special schools) . The majority of schools were government owned and managed (70.1 per cent)

There were 3.9 million full time equivalent (FTE) students enrolled in school nationally in 2018 . Whilst the majority of students are full time, there were 11,057 part time students in 2018 (predominantly in secondary schools) (ABS 2019).

- *Government schools* had 2.6 million FTE students enrolled (65.7 per cent of all FTE students). Over the past six years this proportion has increased from 65.1 per cent (in 2012)
- *Non-government schools* had 1.3 million FTE students enrolled (34.3 per cent of all FTE students).
- The proportion of students enrolled in government schools is higher for primary schools than secondary schools

- A higher proportion of FTE students were enrolled in primary schools (57.8 per cent) than in secondary schools (42.2 per cent)

Special needs groups

Nationally in 2018, government schools had a higher proportion of students from selected special needs groups than non-government schools, including for:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students — 7.3 per cent of government school students and 2.7 per cent of non-government school students (table 4A.5)
- students from a low socio-educational background — 30.6 per cent of government school students and 13.0 per cent of non-government school students (table 4A.6)
- geographically remote and very remote students — 2.4 per cent of government school students and 1.0 per cent of non-government school students (table 4A.8).

For students with disability, 19.7 per cent, 18.0 per cent, and 19.2 per cent of students at government, Catholic, and independent schools, respectively, required an education adjustment due to disability

Funding

Nationally in 2017-18, government recurrent expenditure on school education was \$61.5 billion, a 4.8 per cent real increase from 2016-17. State and Territory governments provided the majority of funding (70.0 per cent)

Government schools accounted for \$46.6 billion (75.8 per cent), with State and Territory governments the major funding source (\$39.4 billion, or 84.6 per cent of government schools' funding). Non-government schools accounted for \$14.9 billion (24.2 per cent), with the Australian Government the major funding source (\$11.3 billion, or 75.7 per cent of non-government schools funding)

Funding over the Decade

The total ten year figures are masked in this report in bar graphs. They are difficult to decipher if only because the graphs are arranged State by State. They are sourced from mainly unpublished official documents: Education Council (unpublished) *National Schools Statistics Collection* (NSSC); Australian Government Department of Education (unpublished); Australian, State and Territory governments (unpublished);

The AEU however have dug deeper and claim that the 2020 Report on Government Services (RoGS) showed that non-government school funding per student grew by 3.3 times faster than public school funding per student in the last decade, a gap that has widened further in the last year.

They claim that Government funding for public schools has grown by only 11 per cent over the last ten years, whereas government funding for private schools has grown by 35 per cent.

They note that these findings are extremely concerning for public education in Australia. Public school student enrolments are soaring, yet the Morrison Government continues to

ignore the needs of two thirds of Australia's school students by refusing to provide equitable funding for public schools.

Successful Lobby Groups

The Public sector is, despite billions of dollars in State Aid to private schools over more than half a century, still carrying the responsibility for the educating the majority of Australian children, most particularly those in the disadvantaged and special education sector.

With billions of private investment as well as public subsidisation however, the private sector still receives preferential treatment.

Is this because their lobbyists have special entry into the corridors of power?

Private School Lobby Groups

The Old Boy networks of the wealthy private school are well known. Even Bill Shorten, like Abbott and Hockey, was Jesuit trained. But these days, the influence of Catholic bishops in the corridors of power is more subtle. In recent years, with the Cardinal Pell and related matters, their direct intervention in public affairs lies hidden behind more secular lobbyists.

And what, in these latter days, makes a most effective lobbyists with inside knowledge?

Who better than an ex-politicians or ex-banker? After all, the Catholic education sector has long since become a multibillion dollar business.

An insight into their selection of effective 'insiders' was reported in the Australian of February 12 2020 as follows:

... The National Catholic Education Commission has appointed former Macquarie Group chief executive Nicholas Moore as its new chair.

Mr Moore replaces former South Australian Labor education minister and lobbyist Greg Crafter, who served as chair for seven years... Mr Moore retired from Macquarie in November 2018 as Australia's highest-paid executive, receiving annual remuneration of \$18.9m....

Mr Moore is also chairman of Screen Australia, the Sydney Opera House Trust, the Centre for Independent Studies, The Smith Family and Willow Technology Corporation. He is a member, and former chair, of the University of NSW Business School Advisory Council.

And .

The Archbishop said the new chair had a "sound understanding" of the challenges facing education and would bring "a new perspective and different skills and experience that I am sure will be challenging, and beneficial to Catholic education".

"On behalf of the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education, I congratulate Nicholas and pledge the Bishops' support in one of our greatest tasks: the education of young people academically, spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically," Archbishop Fisher said.

He thanked Mr Crafter for his work, saying he had "dealt with three prime ministers and their cabinets and helped to secure long-term funding vital to the future of our Catholic schools".

In 2018, the Catholic sector secured an extra \$3.2bn in funding over 10 years from the Morrison government, after it had campaigned strongly against the Turnbull government's

Gonski 2.0 reforms, which would have seen fees rise at some Catholic schools based on government assessments of parental income.

NCEC executive director and former Labor senator Jacinta Collins said she looked forward to working with Mr Moore.

“As the largest provider of schooling outside of government, Catholic education will benefit greatly from the extensive business and board experience Nicholas brings as our new chair,”

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/nation/banker-nicholas-moore-to-steer-catholic-schools/news-story/8fb469a4a05571f90609d3f54ce8fb48>

DOGS note that,

Given the billions in State Aid received by the Catholic Education Commissions throughout Australia, and

Given the previous political salaries of Senators Crafter and Jacinta Collins and

Given the annual remuneration of 18.9 million enjoyed by Mr Nicholas Moore in his previous position as Macquarie Group Chief Executive,

Citizens should be made aware of his current remuneration as an active lobbyist for the Catholic education sector.

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