

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT
SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 834**

Online schooling and distance ed in the times of plague?

Don't be afraid, Public Systems have been doing and improving it for 100 years

The issue of school closures as a sensible response to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted fierce debate as the virus spread into the Australian community. Federal and State Governments were at loggerheads.

But many parents, at least those who could, - walked with their feet - into home schooling.

And this is where public education, over the century has once again, been the quiet achiever. As [Philip Roberts and Natalie Downes](#) on an Australian educational research blog on March 23 2020 pointed out:

Amid all the concerns about closing schools and setting up online learning In Australia it is important to note that Australia is actually a world leader in school distance education. Indeed, distance learning is not only achievable for Australian students, but very normal for many students around our large island continent. In rural and remote regions of Australia, students have been learning 'by distance' since the inception of '[school of the air](#)' in Alice Springs over 100 years ago.

And in [Victoria](#) we have,formerly known as Distance Education Centre Victoria, [Virtual School Victoria](#) . This is **one of the largest state government schools in Victoria**, dating back to 1909. Their teaching model is based on the most extensive evidence-based research conducted into virtual learning in Australia.

The Education Department has also issued extensive and clear advice on [Learning from home in a School Setting](#).

However, there is one essential matter missing.

Not all public school children, and even a few private school children may not have access to either an internet service or a computer at home. And even if they do, the NBN is still not universally available or, where it is, even operational. The [Grattan Institute](#) has looked at this problem. Julie Sonnerman for example, from the Grattan Institute has written a very useful article on this

question entitled: *Disadvantaged students will be hit hardest by the enforced move to online schooling*

And it is also essential that online learning is not privatised as in the Charter School online movement in America. Educational opportunity should no longer be at the mercy of the 'hypercapital' market.

Necessity being the mother of invention, perhaps the Morrison and Andrews Government will be forced back, past the days of privatisation and hypercapitalism, to responsible government, namely government which provides and accounts for essential services: education, health, transport, energy, and communication.

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