

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT  
SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 835  
HOME SCHOOLING IN TIMES OF PLAGUE**

In these times of plague, most Victorian, if not Australian students will learn from home when school returns on Wednesday 15 April. Year 12 exams will be postponed until at least December.

If the pandemic is still not under control by the end of the year, VCE students could receive their ATAR without sitting final exams, but the Premier and Education Minister have reassured students there would be no need for a "Year 13".

The Department of Education will loan more than 6000 laptops and tablets to public students who don't have access to digital devices, and deliver free SIM cards and dongles to children, with priority given to students in bushfire-affected areas, senior secondary students and families who cannot afford an internet connection at home.

In some cases, students will be given their coursework on USB sticks or provided with paper copies.

[Premier Daniel Andrews outlined plans for the 2020 school year](#) on 7 April 2020:

The General Achievement Test for VCE and VCAL students will move from June to October or November, the number of School Assessed Courseworks (SACs) will be reduced and universities will be asked to delay the start of the first semester in 2021.

All vulnerable students and children of essential workers will be allowed to return to the classroom for Term 2, and "small groups" of Year 12 students will be allowed to attend school for short periods of time if they cannot do the coursework at home (for example, a practical chemistry lesson).

There are about million students enrolled in Victorian public and non-public (private) schools. Attempts to provide laptops and tablets to public school students along with dongles

1. will not 'close the gap' of glaring inequalities between public and non-public ie private school students. And

2. The indispensability of teachers should not be overtaken by commercialisation of the Home Schooling movement as we have seen in America.

## 1. Glaring inequalities revealed.

Students themselves, stuck at home with their laptops are well aware of glaring inequalities.

We quote from a Letter to the Age on 7 April 2020 from Rosie Thyer, year 12, Northcote High School:

### **Public Pupils Miss Out**

*When school holidays end and everyone will be learning remotely, I think it is interesting that the differences between students' socio-economic status has not been discussed. I am lucky to have access to internet resources.*

*However, we do not have access to extensive video-conferencing facilities and high-tech resources as many private school do. This will lead to further inequities in the VCE system and disadvantage public students.*

## 2. The Important Role of Teachers

There is no substitute for human contact in learning and teachers. And our children need to learn to live together, not in an individualised bubble.

While we are experiencing isolation in a time of plague, we must beware of the Homeschooling Movement from both Australia and America. In America, with online Charter schools and evangelical privateers, homeschooling is big business.

[Jeff Bryant, from Our Schools, America](#), gives us the following warning:

*Advocates for homeschooling and other forms of public school privatization want you to believe the pandemic has a silver lining—they're wrong.*

**Bryant produces evidence that homeschool advocates like Betsy DeVos, and other proponents of public school privatization, who cheerlead for their cause while tragedy unfolds resemble vulture capitalists that have taken advantage of other catastrophes.**

**DOGS recommend his analysis of the American situation as a cautionary tale:**

<https://go.ind.media/webmail/546932/594929433/a33fe93cc22c5f79cab30f29676002c0ab68ee9c4639a2abefcd26d0e01ef334>

**LISTEN TO THE DOGS PROGRAM**  
**855 ON THE AM DIAL: 12.00 NOON SATURDAYS**  
**<http://www.3cr.org.au/dogs>**