

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT  
SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 836  
PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS. IN TIMES OF PLAGUE:**

Public School Teachers find themselves in the front line of the COVID-19 catastrophe, like health workers, taken for granted yet indispensable. They are servants of the public, pushed around from pillar to post by a Coalition Government that has treated them with disrespect, forcing them into the front line of growing inequalities in our social system for the last half century.

The main concern of many public school teachers in the current situation is the welfare of both their disadvantaged students and the safety of both children and teachers without sufficient funding, technical support or protection from the virus (PPE) .

Not so private school teachers. Many have been enticed into over funded (taxpayer funded) private institutions which treat them as servants to wealthy or aspirational parents. When the fees dry up, they are dispensable, unwanted by the 'market'. But then, given the private school 'networking' brand, in days of schooling at home, there is no market for private schools either.

So wealthy private schools are demanding further taxpayer funding in their current fee raising crisis. Wealthy parents are keeping their tech-rich, savvy, children at home., so why pay fees for a service that has gone the way of COVID-19?

The moment of truth has arrived as

1. First, private schools resist staying open at all, reacting with disdain as the [Federal Minister tells them to stay open because – he pays them.](#)
2. At least two wealthy private schools, Clarendon College and Haileybury have stood down staff in cost cutting measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Clarendon has stood down teachers at its yer 9 campus on King Island, while Haileybury has stood down many of its music teachers. After all, teachers, in private institutions are only servants that can be hired and fired.

In this brave new COVID-19 world where inequalities mean the difference between life and death, where governments are forced to view public health and education workers as providing essential services, public school unions have

stepped up to protect their members. On Wednesday 15 April, public school educators came up with the following Press Release. On Thursday 16 April, Prime Minister Morrison was forced to recognise, not only that they exist, but that our public school teachers are indispensable to the well - being and future of our nation.

He is now forced to PLEAD with them to return to classrooms, if need be putting their lives on the line As the [Huffington Post](#) reported :

*[Prime Minister Scott Morrison](#) has issued a direct plea to Australian teachers, asking them to return to classrooms and be the “great heroes” of Australia.*

*In a televised address to the teachers of the nation, the PM said their place in society has “always been critical”, insisting teachers must join cleaners, supermarket staff and health workers on the frontline to fight [Covid-19](#).*

*“There are people doing just amazing jobs, great heroes,” he said.*

But some teachers wish to survive to fight another day – for public education.

The following letter raises many basic questions. DOGS note:

1. If our public schools offer essential services then they are worth funding, especially in disadvantaged communities.
2. If our public school teachers are essential professionals, now and for the future generation, then they, together with their students are worth looking after.
3. Morrison still doesn't get it. The Coalition Government have used and abused public school teachers for several generations, and still want to put them on the front line without the requisite support. But this time lives are on the line.
4. Why should our public school teachers and children be considered dispensable and disposed of in this fashion.

### **Reaction of Queensland teachers to Mr Morrison forcing them into the front line on 15 April 2020:**

**\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\***Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup>April

Educators tell Morrison: Don't let our schools become the next Ruby Princess

Teachers and school workers are angry and appalled at Scott Morrison's TV 'appeal' today - an appeal that amounts to little more than a demand that school staff put themselves, the young people they teach, their families and everyone they come into contact with at risk from Covid19.

## **School Staff Organising Resistance in the Pandemic is a new group formed by teachers and educators.**

One of their co-founders, a teacher in Queensland, states, “We stand alongside the thousands of our colleagues who rightly express their rejection of this attempt to use us as little more than ‘glorified babysitters’. Morrison is determined to put the profits of business before the health of the 500,000 adults and 4 million students in our school systems.” “Around the world we see the terrible consequences of delays in implementing adequate safety in school systems -with 50 teachers and support staff dying in New York City alone in the past few weeks.”

Morrison claims that expert advice is that schools are safe. Yet, according to UNESCO, over 91% of learners and 196 countries have their schools closed currently and many epidemiologists in Australia and internationally argue that school closures are one essential element in lowering the speed and rate of infection.

The demand to return to business as usual in our school systems is uttered in almost the same breath as the plea that Australians should not become complacent about social distancing. “This absurd Jekyll and Hyde policy is a recipe for potential disaster,” states one Victorian special school teacher who has chosen not to reveal her identity.

We’re for schools allowing young students of essential workers, who cannot otherwise remain at home, to be admitted. However, for us, essential workers are those employed in ensuring maintenance of life and health of society -for Morrison and the state leaders, their definition is simply anyone essential for profit.

This is a dangerous definition and if applied, will see far too many attend school to allow for safe distancing.

“The government has provided billions to prop up profits -they can afford to reduce our risk of exposure by providing all staff and students masks, hand sanitiser and soap in every classroom, and reducing the student staff ratio. But the best harm minimisation is school closure.”

Schools are like cruise ships permanently docked in every neighbourhood with our students boarding and departing every day, most of them travelling by public transport. Morrison doesn’t care about student education -and he clearly doesn’t care about our health as he’s putting our lives and the lives of students at risk by pushing for schools to resume business as usual.

School workers are going above and beyond to support our young people and their families in this crisis -as we do every day. Putting nearly 5 million Australians back into Ruby Princess-style petri dishes because the profits of business are prioritised over our health is just not on.

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