

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT  
SCHOOLS  
PRESS RELEASE 849  
A NEW PHASE IN THE STATE AID DEBATE:  
DOGS ARE NO LONGER ALONE**

The current times of plague have revealed the dark underbelly of inequality in our society, with children as the innocent victims.

DOGS predicted in 1969, with the resuscitation of the Catholic system of education by the Menzies government and the pouring of largesse upon the wealthy Protestant schools, that we would produce an even more unequal society, with private schools for the favoured classes, and the public system relegated to wastebasket status for the lower orders.

We were right about the private schools and wrong about the public system.

The public system has survived and in many cases flourished. Many of its schools have dedicated administrators, teachers, and parents that have prevented any possibility of a wastebasket fate.

Indeed, in the current crisis, members of the stressed middle class are realising its importance for the future of their children. Two thirds of Australian children still attend public schools. Billions of dollars propping up their system later, Catholic schools enrol 0.1 % less than they did in 1964; and the business plans of the non-Catholic sector are proving extremely fragile, in spite of almost 100% public funding.

Gross inequalities in funding arrangements guaranteed to prop up the private sector while undermining the public sector, have produced, in the last two weeks research and arguments from well-respected researchers and an academic. The stances taken by these writers and their supporters help to justify the position taken by the DOGS for the last sixty years.

1. Trevor Cobbold a former Productivity Commissioner, and advocate for the Save Our Schools think tank has revealed the deep school funding inequality entrenched over the past decade - since the 2011 Gonski Report –in a research paper entitled **Public Schools Face a Funding Crisis; Private Schools Are in Clover** at <https://saveourschools.com.au/funding/4745/#more-4745>

2. David Zyngnier, an Adjunct Associate Professor in the School of Education at Southern Cross University and former school teacher and principal has produced an article

for the AARE with the heading Stop all Government Funding for Private Schools: Why and how we could do it. At <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=5056>

The Trevor Cobbold figures received very full coverage in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* but not the *Australian*. David Zygnier's view receive wide coverage in rationalist and humanist circles.

## 1. Trevor Cobbold figures.

The most succinct summary of the Trevor Cobbold research is found in an AEU Media Release of 30 June 2020 at <https://www.aeuvic.asn.au/deep-school-funding-inequality-entrenched-over-past-decade> as follows:

New analysis of ACARA data by Trevor Cobbold from Save our Schools Australia shows that funding inequality has been exacerbated under the Morrison Government's funding legislation and special deals for private schools. Private school funding over the past decade has grown up to nine times faster in real terms than public school funding

Analysis of 10 years of school funding data reveals:

- Catholic and private schools are far better resourced than public schools in every state, even though public schools enrol more than 80% of all disadvantaged students, and 95% of all disadvantaged schools are public schools.
- The total recurrent income per student in Catholic and private schools in Australia was higher than for public schools in 2018. The average total income per student in public schools in Australia was \$14,940 compared to \$23,029 per student in private schools and \$16,401 in Catholic schools.
- Between 2009 and 2018, the increase in total income per student, adjusted for inflation ('real' income) for private schools was up to nine times higher than for public schools. The real total income for private schools increased by \$2,585 (16.9%) per student and by \$2,096 (19.7%) in Catholic schools, compared to an increase of only \$241 (2.1%) per student in public schools.
- Government funding increases have been pivotal in ensuring that private schools have far more resources than public schools. Government funding accounted for 77% of the increase in Catholic school income and 62% of the increase for private schools.
- The increase in real Commonwealth funding for private schools was more than twice that for public schools. Catholic school funding increased by \$1,502 (26.2%) per student and for private schools by \$1,427 (31.5%) compared to \$637 (39.7%) for public schools.

Australian Education Union Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that the analysis of the ACARA data exposed the funding favouritism shown to private schools by the Morrison Government.

"This analysis shows that per-student growth in private school funding in the past decade was up to nine times higher than for public schools," Ms Haythorpe said.

“This is a shameful indictment on the Morrison Government’s school funding legislation funding agreements and special deals, which have privileged the private school sector instead of delivering funding to the schools in most need.”

“The Morrison Government says that it supports needs-based funding, yet it has overtly favoured private schools with special deals that have resulted in funding growth which has rapidly outstripped that of the public sector over the past decade,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“This analysis shows the deep inequality that exists under the Morrison Government’s school funding legislation and must be an urgent call to action for all governments to address the growing funding gaps for public schools.”

“Prime Minister Scott Morrison has delivered a new age of school inequality. This is set to continue due to the many special deals his government has provided to private schools,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“The Morrison Government’s school funding agreements mean that by 2023 all private schools will be at or above the minimum funding benchmark, the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) while the vast majority of public schools will be below that benchmark.”

“Public schools teach the vast majority of students, including 80% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have the highest level of need,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“For every child to achieve their full potential, Australia’s funding inequality must be rectified. It is a joint responsibility between the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments to ensure that public schools have the resources needed to cater for the educational needs of every child.”

## **2. David Zyngier :Stop all Public Funding of Private Schools**

The David Zyngier article does not take a strict DOGS position but recommends a mid-way funding position similar to that in the UK or New Zealand. This deals with discrimination practiced by Australian private schools on the basis of fees, and other enrolment tests. But, unlike Australian public schools ‘maintained’ private ‘faith’ schools in the UK and New Zealand are not necessarily public in purpose and outcome. Nor are they owned and controlled by the government that pays for them.

DOGS remind supporters that public schools are:

1. Public in purpose and
2. Public in outcome;
3. public in access;
4. public in ownership and control;
5. public in funding and
6. public in accountability.

If a school is not public in all these six ways, then it cannot be a public school.

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