

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 861 OECD REPORT EXPOSES AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION INEQUITY.

The latest OECD report on worldwide education indicators has confirmed that public investment into Australia's public education system is below the OECD average.¹ The Australian Education Union has analysed the results of the latest report for 2018 as follows:

According to the Volume V *Education at a Glance* report, Australian public investment in education is well below the OECD average, with Australia being 19th out of 37 countries and well below the OECD funding average per student. At the same time, Australia has the third-highest level of private expenditure on education, more than 2.6 times the OECD average.

According to the report:

- **Australia spends significantly less per student in public education institutions than the US, UK, Canada and the EU23 average**
- **Australia has the third lowest level of public investment** as a percentage of total education expenditure in the OECD, behind only Columbia and Turkey
- **Australia has the third highest level of private expenditure on educational institutions**, behind the US and UK, at \$US4,505 per student. This is more than 2.6 times the OECD average
- **Australia is fourth-last in the OECD when it comes to vocational education spending per student**, above only the Russian Federation, Mexico, Lithuania and Turkey.
- **Australia spends on average 36% less per student in vocational education** than the OECD average
- **Australia has by far the highest return per public dollar invested in upper secondary education**, with \$US4.90 return per dollar invested for men (more than double the OECD average of \$US2.20) and \$US1.90 return per dollar invested for women (above the OECD average of \$US1.40).
- Completing upper secondary study in Australia can mean an **additional \$US252,000 in post-tax lifetime income** for men and \$US173,900 for women.

¹ [PISA 2018 Results \(Volume V\) Effective Policies, Successful Schools](#)

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) examines what students know in reading, mathematics and science, and what they can do with what they know. It provides the most comprehensive and rigorous international assessment of student learning outcomes to date. Results from PISA indicate the quality and equity of learning outcomes attained around the world, and allow educators and policy makers to learn from the policies and practices applied in other countries. This is one of six volumes that present the results of the PISA 2018 survey, the seventh round of the triennial assessment. *Volume V, Effective Policies, Successful Schools*, analyses schools and school systems and their relationship with education outcomes more generally. The volume covers school governance, selecting and grouping students, and the human, financial, educational and time resources allocated to teaching and learning. Trends in these indicators are examined when comparable data are available.

This report provided further evidence of the inequity in education funding in Australia, inequity which has a deep impact on preschools, schools and TAFE..

The report confirms that Australia continues to fall behind its OECD peers when it comes to investment into public education.

An even more interesting section of the OECD Report is Chapter 7 which deals with *Private schools and school choice*. It explores the relationship between school type (broadly, public or private), on the one hand, and student performance and equity in the education system, on the other. It also examines whether giving parents a greater choice of schools for their child is related to the quality of the education system, as a whole.

The researchers found that

- In most countries and economies that participated in PISA 2018, the large majority of 15-year-old students attended public schools. On average across OECD countries, 82% of students attended a public school. In 56 out of 68 education systems, at least 80% of students attended public schools, including 24 education systems in which at least 95% of students attended public schools.
- In the United States, one of the countries where the debate on school choice is particularly vigorous, 93% of students attended public schools
- On average across OECD countries, 5% of students were enrolled in private-independent schools (i.e. private schools receiving at least half of their funding from private sources) and 13% of students were enrolled in private-dependent schools (i.e. private schools receiving half or more of their funding from the government) in 2018. **Thus, 18% of students, on average across OECD countries, attended a private school.**
- In most countries, the private-independent and the private-dependent school sectors are relatively small. In 55 education systems, 10% of students or less were enrolled in private-independent schools in 2018; in 39 education systems, 5% of students or less attended such schools; in 28 systems less than 2% of students did; and in Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation (hereafter “Russia”) and Slovenia, no 15-years-old student attended a government-independent private school
- . Similarly, in 53 education systems, less than 10% of students attended a private-dependent school, and in some countries and economies, namely Belarus, Bulgaria, Kosovo, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, New Zealand, Russia and Serbia, no 15-year-old student attended a private-dependent school.

As far as PISA results go, after accounting for students and schools’ socio-economic profile, students in public schools scored higher in reading than students in private schools, on average across OECD countries (by 14 score points, in favour of public schools) and in 19 education systems. At the system level, across all countries and economies, school systems with larger shares of students in private independent schools tended to show lower mean performance in reading, mathematics and science, after accounting for per capita AGDP .

This means that Australia, with approximately one third of its students in what the OECD terms private dependent schools (i.e. schools more than half government funded) is an outlier amongst OECD countries. And there is no evidence that parents spending hard earned dollars on private schools are getting any educational value for their money.

DOGS note that as the Federal Government attempts to stabilise Australia and its economy after the plague lockdown they should look no further than the public education sector. The privatised education sector and its profiteering business plans have failed both our children and young adults. Our public school teachers have done a mammoth job. They should be rewarded and provided with proper wages, resources, and buildings.

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