

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 904**

**HOW FREE IS PUBLIC EDUCATION
IN VICTORIA?**

Public Education is allegedly free secular and compulsory. In fact, due to the erosion of basic principles, and penny pinching governments, it is none of these things.

Perhaps the most basic principle however, is that it should be free. Otherwise there will never be any hope of equality of opportunity for children or social and economic fairness in the society in which they are educated. The DOGS have consistently questioned the public funding of private education and the consequent underfunding of the public sector. But the other side of this coin is the burden placed upon public school parents who pay triple taxation – taxation for both public and private schools and then taxing themselves for the shortfalls in public education itself.

The level of unfairness confronting parents and children in Victorian public schools as well as the hypocrisy of the State Labour Government has been thrown into the spotlight in recent months with two reports by Adam Carey in *The Age*.

1. On March 15, 2021 we discovered that Victorian public school parents spent more than \$400 million last year in “parent payments” on education essentials, sparking protests that the money is being used to compensate for the chronic under-funding of public schools.
<https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/victorian-state-school-parents-spend-record-400m-on-free-education-20210314-p57akt.html>
2. And on September 6, 2021 we discover that Victorian state schools have been banned from pressing parents to make voluntary payments on curriculum essentials such as stationery, devices, camps and excursions, in a crackdown principals fear will force them to make deep cuts to their educational programs. [\(Victorian state schools banned from pressing parents to fund learning essentials \(theage.com.au\)\)](#)

DOGS suggest that, instead of hounding principals of trying to make ends meet in their cash strapped schools, the State Government should redirect all State Aid to private schools back into the public schools which are their primary responsibility

But perhaps the last word should be given to the following comment on the issue:

Czar

I'm all for free education (or state funded as the case may be), but the state of Victoria simply does not fund schools adequately. For example, the Federal government funds the Catholic and Independent school sector, but Victoria also provides an additional 25% of what they fund to a government student to these other jurisdictions. It means that state school students are seeing hundreds of millions being sent to an already well funded Independent and Catholic system, whilst their government provides the lowest funding in the country to them.

This was introduced by Bracks. Not a Liberal Premier, a Labor Premier. They have actively taken from state schools and are squeezing until there is nothing left. I'd expect it from the Libs, but not a leader from the left. They don't mind wasting billions on construction cost blow outs though.

The state has pushed costs such as maintenance inspections, assessment software needs, learning management systems and more onto government schools, already stretching their budgets. Most schools are innovative and find ways to make ends meet, but I know my local school is looking at slashing English, Maths, Science PE and Arts budgets and they still don't know how they will make ends meet.

The DET are expecting schools to fund students on camps, so one family might pay voluntarily and find themselves funding the family next door so that the school can cover costs. That's not right.

The state government can end parent payments if they want, but they have to fund public schools to cover the shortfall. They can easily find the money by stopping the inexplicable syphoning of money from state schools to Independent and Catholic schools. Let the Feds deal with those schools as it is their responsibility.

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