

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 942**

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE ‘FREE’ IN PUBLIC EDUCATION?

Since the 1980s Australian Governments have espoused neo-liberal policies and privatised so many of our public facilities. They have sold our children’s inheritance for a mess of pottage - as we are now discovering with the energy crisis.

In education however, the public sector have fought back and our public schools are still with us, and worth fighting for. But their funding has been eroded by the private sector and parents are under constant pressure to tax themselves with public school ‘voluntary’ fees.

Victorian parents raised over \$400 million for essential programs in 2020, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/victorian-state-school-parents-spend-record-400m-on-free-education-20210314-p57akt.html>

But in 2021 ‘voluntary payments’ in the form of fees and fundraising plunged. And public school families are being warned that a decline in voluntary payments from parents this year could force schools to cut curricular programs such as food technology and visual art, leading to “stale and beige” education for Victorian children.

Meanwhile, private schools, which make a nonsense of the idea of ‘free’ and therefore open access education for every Australian child, have, literally, an insurance plan to make sure they do not suffer from parents unable to pay their fees. After all they need to keep their children in their schools so they can get the windfall from the public Treasury in the form of State Aid. So, a ‘business plan’ is on the way for them.

According to the *Financial Review* of 20 June, an insurance product is sold to Catholic and independent schools, that protects them if a family is unable to keep paying school fees due to involuntary unemployment, injury or disability.

The reporter, Julie Hare informs us that ‘At any one time there are around 4000 children in the Catholic school system in Sydney on some form of fee relief costing many millions of dollars.

The new product is sold directly to school sectors, and the premium is passed on to parents.

DOGS COMMENT:

In a democracy, education is the right of every child and should be free. In Finland it is illegal to charge fees. In Australia, sadly, the educational opportunities of our children are more and more tied to their parent's background, culture, and ability to pay.

It is a disgrace that public school parents are expected to raise so many millions for essential services for their children. It is an indication of the private sector's view of children and their parents as cash cows for business operations when private school 'fees' are now part of the insurance industry.:

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