

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS
PRESS RELEASE 951**

**PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF CATHOLIC SYSTEMS
9 September 2022**

On 1 September, [Nicole Precel](#) and [Madeleine Heffernan](#) from *The Age* reported that the [De La Salle Brothers will sell their Malvern school](#), which has net assets of \$27 million, to fund compensation [claims from victims of historical sexual abuse](#) and to financially support ageing brothers.

The buyer, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools, will take over the running of the college for more than 1000 boys in years 5 to 12. Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools was [established in 2020](#) by Archbishop Peter Comensoli to govern and operate around 300 of Melbourne's Catholic schools in response to laws that enable survivors of sexual abuse to sue institutions.

De La Salle Malvern is the first school it has purchased since its formation and ensures Catholic education continues at the site instead of the school being closed.

The [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#) said Catholic Church data showed that [328 people made a claim](#) of child sexual abuse to the De La Salle Brothers between 1980 and 2015. The brothers accounted for 7 per cent of all claims made to a Catholic Church authority. Sydney lawyer Ross Koffel said his firm has settled a large number of cases against the De La Salle Brothers and has more than 50 unresolved claims, mainly in NSW and Queensland.

“Victims are very hesitant, but if they see other victims are prosecuting cases, they often get the courage to come forward, which is a great thing because it helps,” he said.

The brothers said they did not plan to sell their remaining schools: St Bede's in the bayside suburb of Mentone, Oakhill College in Sydney and St Michael's in Adelaide.

“Our dedication to the rest of the schools in the Lasallian network remains unchanged,” they said.

There will be no change to staff, educational approach or fees under the new ownership, the brothers and Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools recently told the school community.

DOGS believe that this development raises a number of questions.

1. Where does the \$27 million paid by the Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools, which, in reality is only an accountancy figure, with the Catholic church robbing Peter to pay De La Salle, come from?
2. Does it come from the taxpayers who fund the Catholic systems with billions and billions and ever increasing billions of dollars every year?
3. Does this mean that taxpayers are funding the compensation payments to abuse victims?
4. If the \$27 million does not depend upon taxpayer funds, then why are taxpayers subsidising the activities of an institutions that has access to these kinds of funds?
5. In the past few weeks we have been noting an International private school and a Jewish school which are under threat of losing their registration because of mismanagement of both private and taxpayer funds. See Press Release 950)
6. But ‘mismanagement of funds’ as a reason for de-registration pales into significance when compared with systemic child sexual abuse
7. Yet no Catholic school has been de-registered for these heinous crimes against vulnerable children placed in the care of religious men
8. On the contrary, the Church has resisted paying compensation to the victims of abuse for many years and, only after a Royal Commission and

numerous court cases, has it been prepared to part with any compensation money.

The favouritism shown to this particular church by Australian governments should mean that the consequent entanglement of church with the State contravenes Section 116 of the Constitution, on even a preferential basis.

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