

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

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**Victoria is a Failed Education State: Public
School Supporters should Avoid the Major
Parties in the November Election.**

The following is a summary of a well researched paper by Trevor Cobbold from Save our Schools:

The full paper can be downloaded at <https://saveourschools.com.au/>

Victoria is not the education state it claims. It is a failed education state because it has largely failed to improve results for disadvantaged students, the vast majority of whom attend public schools. Funding failures are a major factor behind the education failure.

There have been a few successes, most notably in some Indigenous outcomes, but they are few and far between. The Victorian election is an opportunity to fix the failures. The funding of public schools is a key test for candidates and parties.

Education Failure 1: Many disadvantaged students do not achieve national literacy and numeracy standards. For example, one-quarter of more Year 9 low socio-economic status (SES) and Indigenous students did not achieve the reading standard in 2022, about one-third or more did not achieve the writing standard while 14% of low SES and 19% of Indigenous students did not achieve the numeracy standard.

Education Failure 2: There was virtually no learning improvement by disadvantaged students since 2010. There were large falls reading, writing and numeracy by Year 9 low SES. Reading by Year 9 Indigenous reading improved but there was no significant improvement in writing and numeracy.

Education Failure 3: Large achievement gaps continue between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Year 9 low SES and Indigenous students are nearly four years behind high SES students in literacy and numeracy. The reading gap between high and low SES students increased since 2010, a small decline in the writing gap and little change in the numeracy gap.

One clear success was a large reduction in the reading gaps between Indigenous and high SES students. However, reductions in the writing and numeracy gaps were due to declining performance by high SES students.

Education Failure 4: A large proportion of low SES students still do not complete Year 12. In 2020, 26% of low SES students did not complete Year 12, although the rate is up from 2009.

Funding failures by successive Commonwealth and Victorian Governments are a major factor contributing to the education equity failures. Public schools are vastly under-resourced to meet their learning challenges.

Funding Failure 1: Combined Commonwealth and Victorian government funding increases have heavily favoured private schools since 2009. For example, funding per student, adjusted for inflation, in Independent schools increased by over three times that for public schools and for Catholic schools it was over double that of public schools.

Funding Failure 2: Victorian private schools have a large resource advantage over public schools. Income per student in Independent schools in 2020 was 75% higher than for public schools and the income of Catholic school was nearly 20% higher.

Funding Failure 3: Bureaucratisation of public education. Much of the small increased in funding for public schools went to a huge increase in bureaucracy. Central and regional offices staff increased by 83.4%, nearly three times the overall increase in teachers of 29.3% and over four times the increased in students of 20.2%. Nearly all this increased occurred under the Andrews Government. Non-school staff increased by 81.8% since 2015. Executive staff increased by 57.1%.

Public schools and disadvantaged students are being robbed of funding to support a bloated bureaucracy devoted to regulation and compliance which requires more administrative staff in schools. For example, administrative and clerical staff increased by and 56.5% in secondary schools since 2009 compared to 13.3% for teachers and 13.1% in students.

Funding Failure 4: Public schools are massively under-resourced. Victoria, along with Queensland, is the equal second most under-resource public school systems in Australia after the Northern Territory.

The current Commonwealth-Victorian funding agreement defrauds public schools of billions Public schools are currently funded at only 84.6% of their Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). They will be funded at just under 91% of their SRS by 2029 unless the agreement is changed. The cumulative under-funding from 2019 to 2029 is estimated at \$19.5 billion.

Funding Failure 5: Private schools are over-funded. Victorian private schools are over-funded because of special deals introduced by the Morrison Government and will remain over-funded until at least 2029. They are currently funded at 101.8% of their SRS – 81.9% by the Commonwealth and 18.94% by the Victorian Government.

Money matters in education, especially for disadvantaged students, as numerous peer-review studies have shown over the past decade or more. If Victoria is to become a successful education state, it must increase outcomes for low SES and Indigenous students, over 80% of whom attend public schools, and reduce the large achievement gaps between rich and poor.

The next Victorian Government must address the funding failures of the past. Candidates and parties in the election campaign must commit to ending the defrauding of public schools and ensuring they are fully funded within the next four years.

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