

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

## **Press Release 979**

### **‘CHOICE AND FAIRNESS, A COMMON FRAMEWORK FOR ALL AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS’- VERSION OF VOUCHER SYSTEM**

The introduction of State Aid to private schools in Australia in 1964 by the Coalition Menzies Government and its legitimisation by the Labor Party through various tweakings of a failed ‘Needs’ policy - whether it was the Blackburn/Karmel variety or the Gonski reincarnation - has led to the current situation. Australia is confronted with an education crisis caused by a parasitic private system which blatantly discriminates against families on the basis of class, creed and colour and a public system starved of funds. The private system is costing taxpayers at least \$16 billion a year in direct grants alone. It is undermining our public system and dividing our nation.

Those who wish to placate the private school lobby but support the public system have recently, in good faith, come up with the idea of fully funding private schools but requiring them to cease enrolment discrimination.

For example, in their report, [Choice and Fairness, a Common Framework for all Australian Schools](#), researchers Chris Bonnor and Tom Greenwell say the funding overhaul would cost taxpayers an extra \$8 billion a year but boost academic equity and achievement.

Private schools could continue to be independently owned and operated and could prioritise enrolments for families from faith backgrounds. But, the report says, private schools that want to keep charging tuition fees or to exclude certain students would not receive any taxpayer funding at all. ‘The reality is that our current hybrid public/private framework is not fit for purpose,’ Bonnor and Greenwell, both of whom also wrote *Waiting for Gonski: How Australia Failed its Schools*, argue in the report.

“We won’t solve Australia’s declining education performance and equity if we don’t first put in place a new equitable framework within which we fund and regulate our schools.” The biggest cost, at \$6.5 billion a year, would be funding each state school to its schooling resource standard – an estimate of how much total public funding a school needs to meet its students’ needs.

These ideas are being given broad coverage [in the Fairfax Press](#).

DOGS are saddened by these proposals. It means that keen and dedicated supporters of public schools have heard the siren call of compromise with a religious lobby. This lobby does not compromise but again and again has exploited the genuinely Christian feelings of those who wish to extend the benefits of education to all citizens and their children. It means that Greenwell and Bonner are prepared to give up on basic principles of separation of religion and the State in order to channel a few billion dollars back into the public system. They are prepared to let religious organisations continue to loot the public Treasury.

The Greenwell/ Bonnor proposal is a version of the American voucher system which has been peddled by billionaire religious organisations and billionaires themselves with highly questionable motives.

The following article should give Australian citizens and public school supporters food for thought. This story shows, even in conservative Virginia, legislators appear to regard a bright shiny new voucher scheme called an “education success account” a bit too obvious an exercise in looting to pass muster.

### **[Defeat of a School Voucher Program Reveals Motives Behind the ‘School Choice’ Debate](#)**

*By Sandra Jones, who served as an investigative reporter for nearly two decades and has received numerous awards for her broadcast reporting.  
Produced by [Our Schools](#)*

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