

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF  
GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**  
**Press Release 992**  
**TEACHER SHORTAGES AND THE  
STATE AID FUNDING  
ISSUE**

Current teacher shortages, growing inequalities in the Australian Education system and the decentralisation or school autonomy ‘fashion’ are all intimately related.

Common sense and historical experience indicate that the funding of a dual system of education in which the two systems have diametrically opposed objectives is going to lead to inequalities and a wastage of human potential.

The public funding of a private system which chooses children on the basis of class, creed and colour can never be reconciled with a public system open to all children and dependent upon public funding. It is also common sense that well qualified and experienced teachers require a decent salary; security of tenure; curriculum support from a well funded central administration and relief from onerous administrative tasks that take them out of the classroom.

State Aid to private schools started as a trickle in the 1960s and in 2023, billions of dollars later, has now reached the stage where they are publicly overfunded while public schools go begging. It is little wonder that Australia has now one of the most segregated systems in the Western world and teachers are walking away from their classrooms.

In the last week two interesting articles have attempted to come to grips with the equity and school autonomy problems.

Professor Pasi Sahlberg of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne has produced a paper entitled [\*Achieving Equity in Education is Contingent on Clearly Defining It\*](#) while Trevor Cobbold of Save our Schools have reproduced a speech he gave to a forum at Deakin University to launch a report on [\*School Autonomy Reform and Social Justice in Australian Public Education\*](#).

These academic analyses are full of valuable ideas and statistics. But those defining equity and equality of opportunity do not grasp the idea of schools themselves being equal – and equally open to all children, employees and parents. Most contemporary commentators, reluctant to confront the powerful religious lobby, concentrate on the ‘wealthy’ schools, in the equity debate, avoiding the diametrically opposed objectives of the two systems.

A good place to start might be that only schools which are public in purpose, outcome, access, ownership and control, as well as publicly accountable through a strong centralised administration should be publicly funded.

Our nineteenth century forefathers understood these basic principles derived from common sense and withdrew funding from schools that selected children on the basis of class, creed and colour.

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