

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Press Release 994

TEACHER UNIONS AND PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPPORTERS NEED TO BE CONGRATULATED FOR SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING BUT

Teacher Unions and other public service pressure groups like Save Our Schools have succeeded in recent years and months in putting the public school resourcing and teacher shortage problems on the media map.

For example, in the last week, the Australian Education Union Victorian Branch persuaded the Andrews Government to desist from [cutting visiting teacher positions](#). And economists from Save our Schools, the Australian Education Union and the Australia Institute have produced facts and figures proving the gross inequalities in funding between the private and public sector and the unfortunate economic implications of the sectarian education system.

The most recent of these is Chris Bonnor's [What happened to Gonski's schools?](#) from *Inside Story* and a report published by the [Australia Institute's Centre for Future Work](#)

The Greens have taken up the cudgels on behalf of public education. Penny Allan-Payne Has been emailing public school supporters, noting that public schools are underfunded by \$6.6 billion every year according to the Report from the Centre for Future Work, and organised an online Town Hall meeting on the subject for the 31st August 2023. She wrote:

*Did you hear the latest in public school funding news? A **new report by the Centre for Future Work** found that it would cost an additional \$6.6 billion a year to ensure that all public schools receive 100% of the Schooling Resource Standard – the funding level schools require to provide the bare minimum level of staffing and resources.*

This shortfall could be met tomorrow if Labor reduced government spending on the overfunded private system by only one third.

*We can't talk about student performance without talking about school funding, and the **recent NAPLAN results** are clear evidence that Australia needs to entirely rethink its school funding approach.*

These apologists have succeeded in changing the prevailing rhetoric from the mantra of educational schooling 'choice' pedalled by the Coalition and private sector to 'equity' in schooling. In the process they are questioning the unequal funding policies but not the fundamental difference in objectives between the two systems.

Such a change in Rhetoric is symptomatic of wishful thinking but not political action.

There is currently a lack of political will in both the public sector and their political supporters to confront the private religious sector. In public school ranks there has always been a reluctance to bring down the charge of ‘sectarianism’ on their heads by those who are the real perpetrators of sectarianism themselves.

And there is an inclination to start, not with the commencement of public funding of private religious schools in six decades ago in 1964, but with the more recent report of Gonski in the Gillard Government of just over a decade ago.

The reason for this is the desire for compromise with the private sector with the promotion of ‘Needs’ policies, of which the Gonski compromise is the latest incarnation.

There is also a reluctance to confront the fact that the private sector have successfully ‘gamed’ every *Needs* policy invented by politicians and educationists. This is because, like private contractors and private ‘consultants’ they are not, in the final analysis responsible or accountable to the Parliament and their administration for the expenditure of public money. They are, in fact, a law unto themselves and their private, and in the case of many schools, religious or class objectives.

The only way forward, now that many private schools are ‘overfunded’ is to take them over and make them into public schools. If they wish to remain independent, then they should reject public funding.

This is why the DOGS do not hold a position of advocating “Needs” policies or any other compromise. Our nineteenth century forefathers, like many generations before them, understood that the principle of separation of religion from the State avoids the inequalities and sectarian problems Australia now faces in its educational system.

They understood that only a public system which is public in purpose, outcome, access, ownership, control, funding and accountability can do the job of educating the children of a democratic nation.

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