

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

Press Release 1032

ACADEMICS PUSSYFOOTING AROUND THE ‘STATE AID’ ISSUE

Journalists and academic commentators thrive on talk of ‘educational crises’.

The current fashionable crisis relates to the rising enrolments in private schools with the corresponding decline in public school share of enrolments.

Academics, consultants and ‘influencers’ writing in both mainstream media, and the Academic Press like *Inside Story* and *The Educator* have waxed lyrical on this theme over the Christmas break. We are told by Jonalyn Cueto on 15 Jan 2025 that the [Public school exodus highlights Australia’s education crisis](#)

And John Frew, a former principal in the public system and founder of Frew Consultants Group, highlighted in an article in *The New Daily* [‘The Silent Crisis Killing Australian Public Education’](#) that this growing trend demonstrates deep systemic issues, including violence, resource shortages, and the exclusion of vulnerable students from private institutions.

Families opting for private schools

Sally Larsen, an education lecturer from the University of New England, has examined why Australian families are increasingly opting for private schools in her article in *The Conversation*: [‘More Parents are Choosing Private Schools – We Need to understand why’](#). While she noted that well-funded independent schools attract middle-income families with promises of better academic outcomes and stricter discipline, the reality is more complex. Public schools, she pointed out, often shoulder the responsibility for students with disabilities and behavioural challenges who are excluded from private institutions.

The exclusion of vulnerable students is a systemic issue. Children with disabilities or those exhibiting disruptive behaviour are frequently turned away from private

schools, which claim inadequate facilities. This leaves public schools to accommodate these students without the necessary resources or support.

In New South Wales alone, over 3,000 permanent teaching positions remain unfilled, leaving many classrooms without proper supervision. The workload for teachers has become overwhelming, especially in schools that serve low-income communities disproportionately affected by these challenges.

Experts point to early-childhood trauma as a major contributor to behavioural issues in schools. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, one in seven Australians experienced abuse during childhood, often leading to long-term psychological and social difficulties. Without sufficient funding for specialised staff such as psychologists and behavioural therapists, public schools struggle to address these underlying issues.

BUT

What are the answers to Australia's educational – and social woes?

Academics and commentators are merely calling for a change in ways of dealing with traumatised children, more support and more public funding for public schools. Despite a federal promise to fully fund public schools by 2026, scepticism remains. Critics argue that addressing the deeper crisis requires bold leadership and substantial investment. "Public schools must become sanctuaries for all children," Frew noted, advocating for systemic reform.

The flight from public education they argue underscores an urgent need to address inequities and restore trust in Australia's education system.

Our academics are pussyfooting around. They are reluctant to bite the hard bullets. After all, they are underpaid, and their careers are pretty uncertain in universities dependent upon private international student fees.

At least Trevor Cobbold from *Save Our schools* calls out the gross overfunding of the private as opposed to the public sector as well as their shameless [whining over minimal and indeed window dressing cuts to the extremely wealthy institutions.](#)

DOGS SOLUTION

DOGS have a much simpler solution.

Take the private schools over and make them public schools.

The State Aid experiment in the period 1964 to the present in which private schools have been propped up with ever expanding billions of dollars of public money, has failed and failed dismally.

Our children are being further divided along the lines of class, creed and ethnicity, not to mention disability – by a shameless private sectarian system, while parents, teachers and students in public school go begging. The rich get richer and the poorjust survive to fight another day.

Yet in spite of underfunding our public school and teachers are still doing marvellous things with our next generation, not only teaching our children to think but also how to live together in harmony. All this in spite of increasing handicaps.

The simple answer to the problem is – to take over the private sector and make them public schools – with a public purpose, and public in outcome; open to all; as well as public in ownership; control and above all accountability.

We pay for them. It is time we were able to use them. If schools want to be independent then they should be free to do so. And wouldn't' it be great to have genuinely independent schools in Australia – again.

There is nothing new about this idea. It happened in the second half of the nineteenth century throughout Australia. In order to go forward we need to go back and learn from our forefathers.

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