

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR THE DEFENCE OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

PRESS RELEASE 654#

VICTORIAN EDUCATION BUDGET:

A MOVEABLE FEAST OF FIGURES

How much is Public Education worth to the Victorian government – really?

The Age, April 27 claims that the 2016 Victorian Government funding budget provides \$1.1 billion for education. *The Australian* April 28 mentions \$924 million and the Treasurer at <https://www.budget.vic.gov.au/priority/education-state> says :

Using funding allocated last Budget, we are investing **\$747 million** from the start of the 2016 year to provide additional support to schools, students, principals and teachers. The Government will make further announcements, about additional investment for the 2017 school year.

The Treasurer provides Gonski guff :

We have talked to thousands of Victorian teachers, principals, parents, carers and students who have told us that our schools are 'good'. The system isn't broken, but more work needs to be done. We must take our schools from good to great, and we must support the kids who need extra help.

We are continuing to make the case to the Commonwealth Government to honour its commitment to fully fund the Gonski Agreement. If the Commonwealth Government doesn't honour the final two years of this education funding agreement, Victoria's government schools will be \$1.1 billion worse off.

Victoria is doing its part. We've reaffirmed our commitment to the Gonski Agreement, and provided the single biggest injection of education funding in the State's recent history.

Channel Nine News provided more details:

Ageing and outdated classrooms and school buildings will be upgraded in Victoria's largest single investment in school infrastructure.

The government unveiled a \$1.1 billion education package in the 2016/17 state budget. Elected on a "making Victoria an education state" campaign, Education Minister James Merlino says the funding will go to fixing the schools most in need - especially in regional areas.

"Our kids can't get a first-rate education in second-rate classrooms," Mr Merlino said on Wednesday.

Mr Merlino's own Monbulk electorate missed out on new funding.

The budget will provide \$48.3 million to roll out a Doctors in Secondary Schools program to give students access to healthcare.

Gonski funding levels will be met until 2017 but funding for 2018 and 2019 is uncertain because of the federal government's failure to commit, Treasurer Tim Pallas says.

What is in the education package?

- * \$287 million to acquire land to build or complete 23 new schools. (at least 220 ARE REQUIRED)

- * \$92 million to establish 10 Tech schools at TAFEs and universities across the state.

- * \$68.5 to upgrade specialist schools in the poorest condition, including \$10 million for students with a disability.

- * \$63.3 for relocatable classrooms.

- * \$50 million to help schools become community hubs.

- * \$28 million to remove asbestos from school buildings.

- * \$16 million to grow community pride in schools and build new sporting facilities.

- * \$12 million to plan upgrades at 35 existing schools to accommodate growth and update old facilities.

No mention is made of direct and indirect grants to private sectarian schools. This figure appears to be assumed – at 25%

Read more at <http://www.9news.com.au/national/2016/04/27/14/46/vic-building-blitz-to-upgrade-schools#rZtEf5LcDPqdr53k.99>

<http://www.theage.com.au/comment/state-should-embrace-public-debt-not-private-partnerships-to-fund-essential-projects-20160430-goiw9h.html>

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It is difficult for the citizen - taxpayer to obtain Budget papers on the internet – the Government Printers office has long gone - that are not festooned with mission statements and bits and pieces of statistics.

But this is what DOGS discovered. In Budget Paper 3 on Education Table 2.5 figures suggest that \$13,489.6 million is being spent on total services but school primary education contained \$4,930.9m of this and secondary \$4,156.8m. Buried with numbers of students participating in secondary programs on page 177 of this paper is a figure of \$385.8 million which is described as an 'investment in non-government schools (secondary). This private school figure is but a fraction of the total State grants to private schools which go –as the Auditor General discovered - with few if any strings attached to a sectarian system guaranteed to escalate social and economic inequalities.

The mixing of public finance with private enterprise in education inevitably leads to corruption.

DOGS, as usual, discover that Government Budget papers are designed to obfuscate rather than inform taxpaying citizens.

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