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18 JANUARY 2010

Time for a real education revolution

ANTHONY ASHBOLT

News that elite private school fess are becoming increasingly less affordable hardly comes as a surprise. What would be genuinely surprising is news that they had become increasingly accessible to poorer sections of the community.

That, of course, is not going to happen.

Elite private schools service the elite. Forget the occasional dramatic publicity about Aboriginal scholarship students. They are publicity tokens propping up the illusion that social justice informs these school's charters. Elite Catholic schools are particularly good at manufacturing images of social concern and commitment. The images disappear at the front door. Rigorous selection criteria, based now more upon class or status than faith, take over.

So stories about rising school fees should not prompt renewed debate about the merits of public funding of private schools. The debate should be at centre stage now. It is one of the key social justice issues of the time. Indeed, arguably it is the key social justice issue because education underpins the social structure.

An education system based upon principles of social justice helps preserve a society in which some sense of egalitarianism prevails. That sense disappears rapidly when private schooling becomes a priority for the middle class. It is then that elite private school fees become an issue because even affluent sections of the middle class suddenly feel that these fees are somewhat prohibitive. So they turn to less wealthy private schools (because private schooling of whatever sort automatically confers some social status) or they (perhaps reluctantly) choose a public school, preferably selective.

For social justice to prevail over class and status prejudice, this middle class mindset has to change. The only thing that will change it permanently is a proper level of Government commitment to public education. This requires a massive shift of funds away from the private sector and to the public sector.

Under the current SES (Socio-Economic Status) funding model for schools, lavishly equipped elite private schools get substantial government funding. This fatally flawed model, preserved by a Labor Government that simply accepts the previous Liberal Government's neo-liberal policy agenda, compounds its flaws by undermining its *raison d'etre*.

Socio-economic status was to be used to determine the level of Government support a private school would get. Yet built into the model was a provision that no school would get less funding. Add to this bizarre guarantee the fact that the socio-economic status being established is that of the student's residential district. There is no reference whatsoever to the accumulated wealth of the school.

Thus it is that the King's School in Parramatta, for example, could well be advantaged by this model because it has a high proportion of rural students whose overall residential district would not necessarily be wealthy. More peculiarly, under the guaranteed or maintained funding rider, the funding of schools whose SES status is established as wealthy may even be increased. Thus it is that in 2007, a majority of private schools were funded in excess of their entitlements under the SES score. And while over-funding is rampant for systemic Catholic schools, the elite private schools also benefit.

So the SES model, far from introducing a social justice element to private school funding, has simply exacerbated the problem with such funding itself. This should be clear to any policy-maker guided by a vision of equality. Sadly, such a vision is either lacking or seriously blurred these days.

The issue, then, is not rising fees for elite private schools. A Government solution to this issue might simply be to increase their public funding. The Howard Government's doctrine of choice, a doctrine embraced fully by new Labor in Australia, was premised upon policy designed to make private schools more appealing by helping make them cheaper. While it did not work in terms of elite schools, it certainly made some other private schools more affordable. Yet this was and is choice increasingly circumscribed because public schooling begins to disappear as a choice for the middle class. Government fuels the tendency by reducing the relative funding of public schools. The future under this scenario is bleak.

Middle class flight becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and the public schools are ultimately residual education providers for the poorer sections of the working class and the more disadvantaged generally. This has grave implications for democracy because a critical foundation-stone of every democratic system of Government has been a strong public education system.

Genuine choice means transforming all public schools into schools of excellence, which will require substantial expenditure on infrastructure and teachers. It also means returning private schools to their private status whereby they are dependent solely on private funding. What becomes of the Catholic systemic schools and other less affluent religious schools that have proliferated as a consequence of the Howard Government's generous funding of private schools is a policy matter for the future.

The urgent requirement now is the gradual removal of public funds from elite private schools and the reconstitution of public schools as the centrepiece of our education system.

329 COMMENTS

Add your comment

- **lukeo :**

  19 Jan 2010 1:02:00pm

  I went to both private & public during high school. They are both good, as far as current education standards go.

  I would prefer a debate about whether eduction (public or private) is necessary to success in the modern world.

  Why waste the best years of peoples lives in a qausi-prison system such as school?

  *school is day care for peoples children
  *school churns out good employees for the wealthy
  *the education industry is too big; and will always argue the importance of education

- **VoR :**

  19 Jan 2010 11:54:58am

  What a nothing article. Let's force everyone to go to the local public school except the truly wealthy.

  How about making the local public school a place where parents WANT to send their children. I did, until I tried it for a few years.

  - **Algernon :**

    19 Jan 2010 12:35:46pm

    I did and it became a nationally recognised centre of excellence through the hard work by parents and teachers. The same with our local high schools. The local private high schools including one GPS are simply not providing the quality of education or outcomes I'd expect for the money being paid.

    - **VoR :**

      19 Jan 2010 1:37:29pm

Good on you Algernon. There was a lot of hard work and effort by parents at our local public school, and by some of the teachers. But it couldn't overcome the attitude from the top. A hypocritical and lying headmistress, and a deputy-head who'd been at the same school for years too long, thick as a brick and with the culture of teacher victimhood firmly entrenched.

- **Algernon :**

  19 Jan 2010 5:16:11pm

  We also managed to get rid of a principal (who covered it by retiring). They'd managed to bully at previous school but alienated most from their first day at the school. It didn't like having to negotiate settlement with committee leaders and the P & C after being ordered to from higher up. Following principals have done a lot to repair the damage dome.

- **VoR :**

  19 Jan 2010 6:23:19pm

  Easier when the principal is too dumb or too arrogant to be hypocritical. But you did good Algernon.

- **Elizabeth Mayson :**

  19 Jan 2010 11:34:47am

  I have Just sent an email to the Prime Minister in reply to his statement yesterday on this subject (Public funding increases to PRIVATE SCHOOLS) However your comment should be sent one million times to him. However getting GetUp to do their work on this matter,

- **no name :**

  19 Jan 2010 11:08:28am

  What really offended me was when a member of my extended family who worked for a very well known private school came home and related the suggestion by the school that she take low wages so that she could then receive government benefits and the school would also benefit from such a situation.
  The school is wealthy.
  It is just another way private schools manipulate the system.

  Re: selective schools in the public system - the inference was that they are 2nd best to private schools - on what planet would that be.
  Ask many an Asian parent who have tried to get their children into those schools. They realise a choice between a selective and private school the selective is always the superior option.

  Re: selective private schools - it needs to be recognised that they are usually only selective for the students who couldn't get into the state selective schools.

  One of my children won a scholarship to a private school and was also offered a place at a selective private school for years 11 and 12. That child elected to stay at the state selective school. For that child

there was much more kudos in rejecting the offers rather than taking either of them up. The child was merely testing the knowledge already gained.

The other child was moved at the end of year 10 from a selective high school to a nearby private school (well known and wealthy) as the child specifically stated that uni was a place that was not on the agenda. Smart kid was also very creative and the private school catered to those traits. Said child spent 2 weeks at private school and could not wait to get back to the state selective school. Till the day I die I will thank them for keeping the spot open for the child.

Reasons to go back to the selective -

Changed maths classes and what they were doing in year 10 had been covered in year 8 at the selective school
conservative attitudes pervaded the atmosphere at the private school
The selective school insisted on problem solving and internal responsibility for actions and yet those kids also played the system as much as they could - absolute opposite in the private school.

So why would one want to go to a private school - perhaps lack of brains and money can buy one some status

Oh forgot to mention - money will not buy a place at a state selective school.

Always remember a student who goes to a private school in most cases does not have what it takes to get into a state selective.

The real issue is better teacher training for state schools as in many private schools at least a masters is needed and often a doctorate to teach.
Teaching should only be for a maximum of ten years once well qualified and then only after being out in the general workforce for a few years. Teachers who teach straight after gaining a degree after high school will be immature forever.
Perhaps a teaching degree should

- **OFistFullOfDollars :**

19 Jan 2010 11:08:10am

Ideally all primary and hight schools in Australia would be private schools. All would be required to adhere to a federal government approved curriculum.

These schools could charge fees and have their income supplemented by the federal government to help subsidize those who cannot afford to pay the fees.

These schools could be run by large national companies.

- **jenks :**

19 Jan 2010 10:22:30am

A left leaning parent like myself would ideally choose public schooling for our daughter. Unfortunately, doing this is not going to greatly influence the quality of the education system to allow for smaller class

sizes, access to more extracurricular activities, sufficient resources to accommodate gifted or struggling students etc etc.
So... not being willing to sacrifice my daughter's chances at getting ahead in life, we have chosen the private system. We work hard to pay the fees but have felt it has been worth every cent.
What has interested me the most is the number of children at this school whose parents are teachers themselves in the public system. That's a clear indicator of the health of our public education system.

- **VoR :**

  19 Jan 2010 11:55:13am

  Exactly jenks.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:09:36pm

  Ummm... Jenks your child spends around 6 hours a day at school. They spend around 18 hours a day outside of school. If you really think that by not sending you child to a private school you are spoiling their chances in life then maybe you need to think about what kind of home environment you are providing for them.

  - **VoR :**

    19 Jan 2010 1:42:30pm

    A comment that makes no distinction between time spent sleeping and time spent at school. That's one we should all pay attention to.

    - **Oliver S :**

      19 Jan 2010 6:07:30pm

      It was to illustrate a point. Okay then Mr Pedant, 8 hours sleeping means they still have 10 hours at home while awake. Still almost double the amount of time they spend at school.

    - **VoR :**

      19 Jan 2010 6:36:16pm

      That's Madame Pedant to you Oliver S.

- **gerard :**

  19 Jan 2010 10:07:52am

  The issue of 'choice' in education shows how bereft and bankrupt Australia's social conscience is.

  How dare we imply that one is better than the other when talking about our children's future. Surely a sign

of a truly developed nation is a good education for all.

Do we have different quality levels of water or electricity?

- **Algernon :**

19 Jan 2010 9:46:25am

Why is it that Australia is the only country in the OECD that publically funds private learning institutions. Private schools are private businesses with the product they sell being education. They can choose who they want and who they don't want. They can exclude anyone who fails to meet up to their values. Public schools cannot do that. In fact they cannot expell anyone under the age of 15.

No private school should be funded out of the public purse. That private schools which educate 30% of the school population can receive $12b more that public schools is offensive. It is also offensive that an exclusive local private school can gloat about the $5m spent on resheeting their walls in Howard sandstone yet the local high school has walls virtually falling down around them.

By all means have private schools but if you want to send children to them then pay for it. Fund public schools properly.

  - **Elizabeth :**

  19 Jan 2010 11:41:24am

  Well said, how about contacting GetUp, and really sort out these private companies called schools.

  - **VoR :**

  19 Jan 2010 11:45:16am

  Public schools can get rid of just about anyone they want to. By the simple expediency of hounding the child, and, if that doesn't work, hounding their siblings. It happens every day of the week.

    - **Algernon :**

    19 Jan 2010 12:08:37pm

    And where do they go VorR. Private schools just get rid of them, very few private schools take children with troubled backgrounds. In fact, most will not touch a child with problems or medical issues save the odd token child just to show they care.

    Public schools are obliged to take children in their local area, private schools are not. Public schools can suspend for periods but the cannot expel until the age of 15. Harassment leaves the school open to legal and other claims. In this PC world they're not likely to do so, wereas harass a child in a private school and the parent will straight to the school with their lawyer in tow.

      - **VoR :**

19 Jan 2010 1:46:03pm

I know where mine went Algernon. To a decent private school. That backed him to the hilt and supported him all the way through.

Public schools are obliged to take those child ON PAPER. An they do. But not obliged to keep them. And they don't.

- **Oliver S :**

19 Jan 2010 12:12:38pm

Not quite true - they can certainly ship the child off to another public school (not a good outcome for the child). But the difference is that the private schools can refuse to take someone on who is too 'difficult', whereas a public school is mandated to take on students. Of course this process drastically reduces the choices open to the parents of the 'difficult' child, but I bet the other parents at the private school don't care too much about that.

- **VoR :**

19 Jan 2010 1:47:09pm

Some private schools refuse to take them, some don't. But taking them isn't what counts. What counts is keeping them.

- **ElijahThomas :**

20 Jan 2010 2:16:52am

"It is also offensive that an exclusive local private school can gloat about the $5m spent on resheeting their walls in Howard sandstone yet the local high school has walls virtually falling down around them."

i went to a government high school with walls virtually falling down, windows cracked and equipment broken every two steps you took. do you know why the school couldn't afford repairs? guess...

it wasn't a lack of money. it was a requirement by the QLD government that government schools use their own publicly owned and run repair and supply service, a service that charges up to three times what a private company would charge for the same.

if the school had been able to go to the private sector for its supply and repair work rather than being mired in more government bureaucracy there wouldn't have been a single issue.

"Fund public schools properly."

the FUNDING isn't inadequate at all... the way that money is spent by the public sector is woeful.

"By all means have private schools but if you want to send children to them then pay for it."

parents of students at non-government schools DO pay for the education of their children. they also, through their taxes, pay for the education of government school students. where are your 'user pays'

ethics there?

- **Pleb :**

19 Jan 2010 8:48:19am

When I read the title "Time for a Real Education Revolution" I was hoping for an article with some in-depth analysis of the meaning of 'education' in the modern world. Instead, it is nothing more than the tired old arguments about funding.

The entire 'education system' is hopelessly outdated and based on a model suited to the horse and buggy days. Education is now, or at least should be, a lifetime affair, and designed to lubricate our path from the cradle to the grave with a minimum of fuss and stress. So let's have some meaningful discussion about our real NEEDS in the 21st century before we get all hung up about funding.

  - **Juvenal's maid :**

19 Jan 2010 11:41:58am

Hear hear --- Universal design for learning is the way to go!!!!!! Remember the snow on the ramp and the stairs --- the janitor was going to clear the stairs first then the ramp for the student in the wheelchair when another student said --- forget the stairs just do the ramp and we can all use it !!!!!

  - **VoR :**

19 Jan 2010 11:55:41am

Exactly Pleb.

- **Helvi :**

19 Jan 2010 8:47:55am

Yes, let's start our education revolution by eradicating all bullying from all schools. I read somewhere that kids and teachers are taking AVOs against bullying older students!

  - **Algernon :**

19 Jan 2010 10:21:29am

Here Here Helvi, bullying is scourge whether its at a private or public school!

- **Dion :**

19 Jan 2010 3:26:22am

Google Anthony Ashbolt. A Marxist lecturer in politics at Wollongong University. He does not appear to ever have taught at any Australian public or private primary or high school. Then consider whether this chap has any undisclosed agenda regarding the Australian education system. Significantly, he does not

state where he went to school, nor where his children, if any, attend.

Some public schools are excellent. Some private schools are excellent. In my opinion each Australian family should receive a voucher of equal value or a tax deduction for each school-age child, and then decide what school they want their children to attend. For example, they could choose St Swithin's Grammar School and perhaps pay fees additional to their voucher value, or they could choose Smith Park Public School and perhaps pay nothing extra. In a democratic society, we call this choice, just as we choose our homes, clothes, cars and holidays. Marxists exist to deny individual freedom and to restrict our choices and control our childrens' thoughts, which they can most easily do via public and private schools dominated by radical education unions, third-rate teachers, selective scholarship and curricula that prioritise fuzzy and politically-driven 'social justice' and 'diversity' subjects over learning excellence. The anti-religion diatribe is just part of the package.

Read anything by Orwell or Solzhenitsyn and learn what Marxism intends for your children - a generation of illiterate and innumerate robots or 'proles'. Perhaps then you will realise what (or what what not) your children are being taught by the state in the name of 'education'.

- **gerard :**

  19 Jan 2010 9:09:41am

  Not so fast Dion:

  Here an UN list of world's highest literacy rates:

  Latvia 99.8%
  Barbados 99.7
  Slovenia 99.7
  Belarus 99.7
  Lithuania 99.7
  Ukraine 99.7
  Kazakhstan 99.6
  Tajikistan 99.6
  Armenia 99.5
  Azerbaijan 99.5
  Turkmenistan 99.5
  Russia 99.5
  Hungary 99.4
  Kyrgystan 99.3
  Poland 99.3

  Need I go on?

  By the way, Australia is number 19 despite or because of its silly dual system of education. Marxism did not do too bad, did it?

  - **James :**

    19 Jan 2010 12:06:56pm

I really don't think heading to extremes will help the argument of funding for education.

Marxism V Neo-liberalism should not be the debate.

- **gerard :**

  19 Jan 2010 1:02:46pm

  Public expenditure on education in Australia as % of GDP ranks Australia at number 12 of OECD countries in year 2000 which was 4.6%
  Back in 1975 it was 6.2%

  Public share of education expenditure was a mere 51% in 2000 compared with 76% in 1975.

  The Data from OECD.

- **Elizabeth :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:08:59pm

  You are so SAD. I have been educated in both private and public schools (Likewise my late husband). My two sons only educated at Public schools, (as a result of a big financial failure of my late husbands private company) one of my sons is so right wing politically it is frightening, the other is a thinking person. The right wing son, who drove expensive cars, earnt heaps of money, has just suffered from the latest financial crises, the thinking one has almost paid of his house by renting out, the three bedrooms while he lives in the downstairs rumpus room. My two sons have hardly heard of communism or any other leftwing activity they both stuck to the Science and Math type subjects which has been a good background for the Business and Computer type occupations. They both were in the school bands (primary and secondary) These bands were very successful in international and state competitions. They both learnt art and acting outside the (what you think) terrible influence of the Public School Teachers, all of whom were far superior to those teaching my husband and I in those private secondary schools of the 1950 era.

- **PA :**

  19 Jan 2010 2:14:46am

  There definately should be a reduction in government funding for private schools and preferably eventually a complete halt. However, doing so immediately would be disasterous, as fees would skyrocket, and students would flock out of the private system; probably in the short term hurting public schools as well.

  The increased funding to public schools also has to be carefully considered and directed. Just aimlessly allocating it is a recipe for disaster.

- **Juvenal's maid :**

  19 Jan 2010 11:36:58am

Funding of non-government schools only began in the mid-1970s some schools received funding later than that. For 150 years all education was provided in Australia by the private sector, charities and church organisations. The government is very much a Johnny come lately to education.

The Kings School which always takes a beating in the funding debate was established in 1831 on the Parramatta River, everything on the site was paid for in after-tax dollars by the parents of the students who attended the school. There are over 1000 students that attend. The average recurrent cost of educating a government high school student is about $12,000 so if a government school has 1000 students the school would receive $12 million dollars and that's just for teachers salaries etc.... there are other funds provided for many different school resources. So if the 1000 students at the Kings School get one-twelfth of $12,000 ($1000) each that means the school gets $2 million --- the funding is done on a socio-economic basis which is based on the average annual income of a particular postcode

The non-government schools who cop the caning the most that is the elite school provide many scholarships to low-income students who are bright and have always done so and many provide amazing programs and opportunities for indigenous students.

So what you are advocating is to go back to the 1950s in terms of equity and fairness. Non-government schools who educate about 33% of the student population and save the tax-payers $5,000 per students. You do the maths.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:20:56pm

  How much does it cost for the Kings School to maintain those old buildings? And can you honestly tell me that they haven't taken one of the interest free loans offered by the Government to either maintain or build new buildings?

  How much are the fees at Kings? I can (sort of) understand that funding for private schools came about because there were some which were actually funded less than public schools. But I'm pretty sure Kings charges more than $12k per student. So whatever it was that you were saying about funding is irrelevant.

  What is the percentage of the school population at the elite schools that are on a scholarship? Don't try to tell me that by providing a small number of scholarship places these schools are doing society a favour. Tell me how the scholarship students are treated by the students. Also, are you sure that the scholarship places are restricted such that only those from low-income families can get them (because I know of at least one example where a wealthy person has used it).

  There is a reasoned response to the furphy that private schools save money for the tax-payer further down in the responses. Please read it and, if you can, refute it. If you can't stop using that argument.

- **Hades :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:28:58pm

Funding of non government schools started earlier in the fifties when Robert Menzie funded science labs. But you are right it really took off once the catholic wing of the labor party agitated for more government support to the catholic system and it has been on a roll ever since.

This highlights the fact that public school supporters have been less adept at lobbying governments. The job has been mostly relagated to the teachers' union who have their own agenda and not parents group or the broader community. By contrast religious groups have been much more vocal and effective.

However you can't say that about the quality of the education they deliver. When you consider that they have the right to screen out applicants that do not share their ethos, and that they draw their students from higher socio econmic backgrounds you would expect better results. In NSW they don't deliver anything special, selective and many non selective public schools do a much better job.

As for the generous scholaships, they have been designed to lift the schools ranking on the HSC league table by drawing academic students.

- **Socrates :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:45:30am

  It is obvious Anthony Ashbolt has a prejudice against Catholic Schools. His article borders upon defamation.
  If Mr Ashbolt were to complete his research with more rigour he would find that other religious denominations eg Lutheran, Anglican, Muslim, Morman etc plus Special Educational Schools are equally funded. To point the finger at only the Catholic system before he understands the Catholic system is simple ignorant prejudice.

  The majority of children attending Catholic Schools in Australia are not from families or suburbs of the elite.

  But Mr Ashbolt you are forgiven; for your article is posted only to stir wrath based upon unsubstantiated evidence. Your agenda appears unintentional in attack upon Catholiscism rather only to garner support or comment upon a narrow minded viewpoint.

  - **Oliver S :**

    19 Jan 2010 12:21:45pm

    Most of the elite religious schools are Catholic? His article was against elite private schools. Not against religion.

- **hotmacca :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:21:39am

  Roll the clock back 80 years and Anthony would be cheering for collectivisation of agriculture in the Soviet Union.

  My son attended a private school (I did not - so there is no sort of elite dynasty here). His education cost

me more and the taxpayer less than had he attended a public school. My choice and the government's investment of taxpayer resources has not deprived anyone else of anything.

The real objection to Government funding of private schools comes from feather-bedding teacher unions acting in their own self interest.

- **Sync :**

  19 Jan 2010 1:25:46pm

  My daughter attended an "elite" private school. After Uni and several years in the workforce she went and did her Dip Ed and is now teaching in a public high school.

  Judging the standard at her school (and it's an average high school - not a selective one) she now wonders why we wasted such a large amount of money (over $10,000 per year 15 years ago) sending her to the school we did.

- **pilotyoda :**

19 Jan 2010 12:12:07am

Regardless of the level of Government providing education funding (which is a separate argument regarding who should be responsible and what mix, if any, there should be), the equation is (or should be) fairly simple: Funding should be simply a $value funding per student for ongoing education costs. This should cover the cost of staffing and general facilities within the schools' infrastructure.

The infrastructure (buildings, land, recurrent maintenance and the like) will also be provided by the government for public schools. Private schools, right down to the exclusive (or not) locations, large or small tracts of land and their huge swimming and sporting complexes, big auditoriums, etc. are part of what makes a private school elite and should not be covered by public money. Most private schools have always charged a building fund or equivalent and this won't change. Less pretentious schools have simpler buildings and smaller sites, but the principle is the same.

Should parents wish to send their kids to a private school and should they be able to afford an elite one then they may do so in the knowledge that they are getting their share of tax dollars. The extra they pay gets them the exclusivity (smaller class sizes, additional specialists, higher "values", better facilities, a religious or ethnic slant, different education process) or whatever they deem to be a good reason for the choices they make.

No school fees of any type should be tax deductible. A) this simply takes back the tax dollars from the allocation for education; and B) tax deductions, by their very nature, benefit those on higher incomes, while the poor and those on Government support payments, while still having to pay many costs, get little or nothing back.

Additional funding for problem students, disadvantaged, those with disabilities, etc. should be available equitably, paid on a per student basis and for special staff and facilities, strictly be based on needs. If any private school wants to take on students from those demographics, then they can get the same extra that public schools get!

Similarly, funding could be reduced or eliminated from (private) schools that fail to teach the complete basic

curriculum including human rights, anti-discrimination, public responsibility, etc. Those that push a strongly religious line, that contains elements that preclude the standards of our secular society, would not get public funding. This would possibly apply to some evangelical religious schools, possibly to schools run by Scientologists and The Exclusive Brethren. (I can hear the protests being formulated already).

Then and only then can our education system be fair and equitable. And for goodness sake, can some people stop blaming teachers and unions for the current state of the education system. Unlike executive bankers, they have little or no say in the current funding mess and the catastrophe of negle

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:23:42pm

  Actually private schools usually fund their building projects through interest-free loans from the Government. This is yet another way that private schools receive an effective hand-out from the Government. But its also something that flies under the radar a little when they are talking about funding levels.

- **Social Anathema :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:11:41am

  The SES by postcode model of funding has to go, as it is so grossly unfair.
  For example, in a certain neighborhood lives a family, two career parents, with good jobs,etc. They get an overseas posting. The kids go to an elite private school, paid for by the company, not the parents. The house is rented, to a less well off family.
  Next door is the struggling single parent with a basic job, and not much "choice" as to where her kids are sent to school.
  Now, the SES of the first set of parents raises the average SES status of the area to above that of the single parent. Therefore, the school attended by her kids will get less money than they would have if the career couple did not have that area as their address.
  By the same token the SES status of the sole parent lowers the average SES status of the area. This means that the elite school attended by the career parents' kids will get more money than they would have if the single parent did not live there.
  Not really fair, is it?

- **Trace :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:08:16am

  I felt very committed to my local state school, and was very happy to send my son there. But as time went on he was diagnosed with ADHD. The school treated my son as a problem, and created more problems this way. He would be put out of the classroom for misbehaviour and told to stand on 'the red dot', which he generally could not do.

  I ended up sending my son to a private school. This (of course) did not solve the problem, but they treated him really well. They had specialist teachers available, and they did a great job on getting him through.

  I am low income, and I had to sell my house to do this. The solution for me should have been available in the governments school, but was not.

Resources were part of the problem, but the other part was the culture in the government school, which I felt to be arrogant. They could not, for example, accept information from me as to what worked and what wouldn't. It was clear that I was not to be involved in my son's education.

The private school, however, took on board what I had to say, and my son had a better experience. I am glad that I sent my son to the private school, but the problem for me is the financial loss, which I will not be able to make up.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:26:31pm

  And that is the problem. The more people that leave public schools the less funding they have and the fewer resources. Of course I do not blame you as you have to do what is best for your child. Those resources should have been available at a public school so that you aren't in the financial position that you are in. It is the middle class social ladder climbers that are causing the problem.

- **Prime Time :**

  18 Jan 2010 11:39:13pm

  There are passinate supporters on both sides of
  This debate. Just remember that if private schools disappeared and we had only a state system, the total cost of running the school system would increase substantiality because it costs alot more in terms of overall funding (both state snd federal) to educate a student in state schools than in private schools. The government is actually saving money when more students attend private schools. If a voucher system was introduced state schools would become evem more disadvantaged than they are now.

  - **Blunt pencil :**

    19 Jan 2010 1:03:33am

    I do not think that is a reasonable argument.

    The state system takes on the high maintenance children since it is the private system that picks and choses.

    - **VoR :**

      19 Jan 2010 11:58:28am

      That simply is not correct in practice Blunt pencil.

      For starters, in NSW anyway there are some selective publics schools. Also, only some of the private schools are selective. Also, in practice public schools get rid of any child they don't like by deliberately damaging them and/or their siblings until the parents realise they have no choice.

    - **Special schools are not Elite :**

19 Jan 2010 6:00:18pm

Well Blunt Pencil, I can't speak for any other independant school but my son's independant school. Kingsdene Special School "picks and chooses" the most intellectually disabled and most challenging students.

Many of Kingsdene's students have previously been suspended or expelled by their local catchment area public special school and/or rejected by other independant special school!

- **Si :**

19 Jan 2010 6:50:34am

I would like to see a study done into this often-repeated claim. On the face of it, it seems pretty simple, but consider the following:

1) Not so long ago there were a lot less private schools in Australia. Nevertheless public schools were funded adequately at a time when the public was taxed far less than now

2) There would be no mass exodus of the private system. As Mr Ashbolt's article states, private schools confer status and the image of a "better" education. People are going to cling to that as tightly as they can, the move away from private schools would be a trickle, not a flood.

3) There would be an exponential saving in the cost of educating a child with more students. Buying in bulk, as it were, where children share various resources as a class, or as a school. So even if the overall education budget grows, the cost of educating an individual child would in fact fall.

It may well work out that private schools still save the taxpayer money. But I doubt anyone's actually studied the scenario and tested it.

- **the yank :**

19 Jan 2010 7:30:41am

While I am uncomfrotable with the government giving money to any religious based organisation I can almost live with that.
What I cannot live with is government money going to elite schools like Kings. There is a difference.

  - **Elizabeth :**

19 Jan 2010 12:21:07pm

Surely some one who has authority knows this where is the "moral teaching" that the private schools continuallu sell. Does God say that only the wealthy are worthy of a decent education.

- **Jody :**

18 Jan 2010 11:29:50pm

I think that education actually starts in the home. It's something that parents teach their children. For

society to hope blindly that even the best teaches will provide the inspiration for most children to excel or even just succeed is laughable, when at home parents place no value or inspiration to learn.

As for funding, well as a disclaimer, my parents worked very hard, saved every penny and sent my sister and I to private schools. I also went to a public school in my last year. My choice. The difference was small. The students and teachers were pretty much the same at both, in abilities and in attitude. I personally think funding from the government should be spent on government services. In education and in health. Any argument that this will only increase the pressure on the public system is flawed. If you add the extra money you saved from private schools funding, you make available a system that is properly funded, for teachers, for students.

I don't believe in a secular society that tax money should be in any way funding religious education. If that's what you want for your children, that's ok. I am only to happy to pay to educate your children in things they need. Maths, Science, English, and basic computer, health, life, and economic skills. but I think all students in this country should have available the same level of opportunities. This doesn't happen when some are from families that simply cannot afford to send their children to private schools.

- **Elizabeth :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:23:39pm

  Well said Jody

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 7:07:50pm

  Absolutely correct. There are too many parents (and I am not trying to point fingers at any of the posters here) who think that their responsibility to educate their child ends when they drop them off to school.

- **Barnesy :**

  18 Jan 2010 11:17:49pm

  I will fight tooth and nail with my catholic wife to send my son to a public school. I don't want his head filled with bible preaching, god praying, satan hating stuff.

  It would be a lot better for him to learn about and socialise with different people from varying backgrounds, rather than just white, middle class catholics.

  There is more to an education than grade point averages and having the latest technology.

  - **anote :**

    19 Jan 2010 1:44:17am

    I would not be so aggressive. You may misunderstand or exagerate the religious side.

Besides that if you think all the kids and even the parents swallow it you would be mistaken. It is just part of the cost of going there.

Yes there is hypocracy about it but there is hipocracy of a different kind in the public system.

I would not to get overexcited about it and weigh the pros and cons as objectively as possible, not that it is easy.

- **Haha :**

  19 Jan 2010 2:00:34am

  I spent most of my teenage years in a private catholic school.

  A good part of my time was with people from varying backgrounds, including middle class white catholics and people from all around South East Asia.

  Each day, our heads were filled with bible preaching, god praying and satan hating stuff. And it didn't work.

  If anything, it helped us develop a healthy resistance to the lot of it.

- **Elizabeth :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:25:05pm

  Congratulations Barnesy should be more of you

- **Special schools are not Elite :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:36:09pm

  My son goes to an independent school but not for a silly school tie, blazer and boater hat ensemble.

  He doesn't go there as a stepping stone into big end of town corporate life. They have no debating team nor a single football field.

  He is publicly funded less than a third of the funding he'd receive at a public special school and I will pay at least fourteen thousand dollars in fees this year.

  This private school is run by a charity who welcomes the students who are so profoundly disabled that public schools and other private schools reject them. There is nothing elite or prestigious about it.

  This school and many like it will soon disappear from inadequate government funding.The students will flood back into the public schools where they are likely to revert to very aggressive and time consuming disruptive behaviour.

  If this happens we parents will not transfer our children to elsewhere so the principal can have a happy life. As there will be no other option the public schools will just have to shut up and cope graciously.

Spare a thought for students for whom public schooling is not an option and watch Four Corners on eight of February.

- **gerard :**

  19 Jan 2010 7:40:11am

  The answer is to fight for some public schools to also cater for the disabled or disruptive student like is done in most developed countries where private education is never heard of.

  What happens to parents who can't pay the fourteen thousand dollars and have a disabled child?

  Why is Australia so poor?

  - **Juvenal's maid :**

    19 Jan 2010 12:12:10pm

    Hi Gerard
    Thanks for this insightful question -- Australia is just peeping out of the front of the cave when it comes to educating students with disabilities. We have 33% of children attending private schools because the history of education in Australia began with private schools as was always the case in all western countries. It was only when government gathered a more sophisticated and broader-based tax system that education became a government responsibility

    Mass education in Australia followed mass education in other western nations. The Australian Education Act was passed in 1909.

    But for students with disabilities government deemed them unable to be educated until the early to mid-1970s. The charity-operated schools had been educating students with disabilities for 150 years and had developed curricula which were specific and innovative with respect to different disabilities.

    The school referred to in " Special Schools are not Elite" post is a school which has operated for over 33 years on the charitable dollar and educates students with severe to profound intellectual and multiple disabilities. The students at that school have been in other government schools some were excluded, others the school just could not provide them with the extended learning program which this school provides --- there is no government special school like it in the entire country and the general education system is poorer for it -- the government refuses to equitably fund the students and that is why is it will have to close. The only school of its kind in the country -- while in other western countries like the UK such schools are commonplace and recognised as adding enormous value to the education and training and skill development of children at the extreme end of disability. These students learn such basic skills are spoon-feeding, toiletting, walking turn-taking, making friends and allowing people into their personal space and they are all so much better and easier to assist by their learning those fundaemental things that we all think just happen and take for granted.

    255 of all Students with disabilities are still educated in charity-operated schools and these students are not funded at the same level as a student with similar disabilities in a government school as if disability recognises sector divides and socio-economic boundaries.

It is an unedifying ride that governments, state and federal, take on the backs of charity-operated schools when education is the business of government NOT charity.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 7:06:28pm

  Actually I know of several local public schools that do have support units with similar curricula. And thats not even including the specialist schools for children with developmental delays.

  Of course these schools need more funding. And there should be more of them. But that is exactly what this is all about. If the 66% of federal funding went to these public schools rather than to private schools then we wouldn't have half as many problems in this area.

- **billie :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:32:53pm

  State Aid for State Schools!

  After the state schools have been adequately provisioned the government may dispense shekels to religious schools

- **anote :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:26:08pm

  Something else to put in the mix.

  A rich person is entitled to send their children to a public school and some do.

  A private school provides the same public service as a public school but gets less government funding on a per student basis. So the private system subsidises the public system.

  Where is the fairness if a rich person who sends their child to a public school is subsidised by a poorer person who sends there child to a private school?

- **Stoney :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:23:08pm

  Something truly revolutionary would be teaching the inhabitants of this fair land how to speak English correctly. Get rid of all that horrid "Yank speak" for starters, and we're on the road to success.

  As a prerequisite, we need teachers who possess an excellent command of our langauage, as well as having an ability to impart that knowledge to others. Does anyone know of such an "animal". Personally, I don't. If the average teachers' dress sense is indicative of their teaching ability, then there's no hope for us.

PS. No amount of computers is going to fix the problem Julia Gillard. We need to get fair dinkum, something about which our illustrious "Deputy Dog" knows little.

- **Property is Theft :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:22:47pm

  Private education like private anything. It unfortunately causes resources to be soaked up and defended by a wealthy minority. Should the wealthy minority have the wider social interest at heart we may be inclined to think such things could work. Unfortunately it is more about protecting there own interests.

- **Leeanne :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:05:15pm

  You proffer an extremely superficial assessment of the reasons for which parents choose non-state schooling for their children. Firstly, a user-pays system is better placed to meet demands for quality and good outcomes. Secondly, many choose a Christian-based model of delivery rather than have their children at the mercy of the swill of the prevailing 'political correctness'; thirdly the private school is not so much at the whim of a 'good' or 'bad' principal. On another note, imagine the pressures that would be placed on an already stretched State system if there were to be the total exodus from the private system that you seem to advocate. We who use the private system still contribute our tax dollar to support the State system, hence the saying,'what goes around comes around'. Please be a little more substantial than this, we pay you too!

  - **Elizabeth :**

    19 Jan 2010 12:45:10pm

    What interests me is that so called christian schools (remember Christ) are happy to take money from the poor that would be spent in a trully christian school that is a public school, where anyone can go) where everyone can exist together like I think Jesus Christ would approve.

    - **Special schools are not Elite :**

      19 Jan 2010 8:07:59pm

      Elizabeth, can I suggest that you take a closer look at the Anglicare funded Kingsdene Special School where any child from any nationality and any religion are welcomed IF they are disabled enough. I am sure Jesus Christ approves.

- **Armin Sensitive :**

  18 Jan 2010 9:31:02pm

  The real elite could not give a sh*t what anyone here thinks about the cost of education.

  Elite boys - inherit from Elite Dads.

Elite girls - gussy up to Elite boys.

End of education.

- **Elizabeth :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:46:27pm

  well said say it again - got nothing to do with values or christianity

- **Verify the facts :**

  18 Jan 2010 9:30:52pm

  How many of you have actually read the DEEWR website that lists the federal recurrent funding for every non government school in Australia?

  http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/RecurrentGrants/NonGovSchools/Pages/2009GazetteofNonGovernmentSchools.aspx

  How many of you actually know anything about NSW Department of Education funding to government schools and non-government school?

  http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/reports/financial/2009/vol9/pdf/08_fa1094_department_of_education_and_training_volume_9_2009.pdf

  How many of you are just happy to believe anything you read in the newspaper and run away at the mouth?

  http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/reports/financial/2009/vol9/pdf/08_fa1094_department_of_education_and_training_volume_9_2009.pdf

- **rumpole1 :**

  18 Jan 2010 9:15:31pm

  Government funding to both public and private schools should be the same on a per child basis to each school.

  If private schools think they can offer more and can sell their case to parents, their fees should reflect those extra benefits.

  - **Special schools are not Elite :**

    19 Jan 2010 8:17:09am

    Yes, Yes, Yes.

Thanks rumpole1. You are so right.

If funding to both public and private students from Federal and State governments was exactly the same then Severely / Profoundly Intellectually Disabled Students attending independent special schools would be funded to up to $60,000 per student like they are at the public special schools.This would take all the financial strain off the charities who have run these schools for decades so they can do their other community services as well as they do education.

- **Hades :**

  19 Jan 2010 10:00:05am

  "Government funding to both public and private schools should be the same on a per child basis to each school."

  That's not likely to happen, although we are getting pretty close to it. In NSW governments fund 80% of the Catholic systemic system. In effect many so called "private" or "independent" schools are de facto public institutions.

  Governments of all stripe want to spend as little as possible. Funding equally independent and public schools would defeat that purpose.

  As I see it, the issue is not the respective level of funding between the systems, but whether or not in a secular society governments should fund religious schools. The present funding model is fostering cultural and religious ghettos to the detriment of social cohesion.

  - **Elizabeth :**

    19 Jan 2010 12:51:32pm

    Well said

  - **Special schools are not Elite :**

    19 Jan 2010 4:40:08pm

    Hades, If all independent schools were funded the same amount as public schools most of them would be even more wealthier.

    What the readers here don't seem to want to accept is that public school students are funded to a greater dollar amount than private school students by both the federal government and the NSW government.

  - **Oliver S :**

    19 Jan 2010 6:13:34pm

    No. What I don't want to accept is that a private business which operates to maximise

profits for its owners/shareholders (education is NOT the primary aim) should receive public funding. I don't much care about the respective costs.

- **VoR :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:02:58pm

  Exactly Special schools etc.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:30:58pm

  So if your child would be better funded in a public special school why would you send them to an 'independent' one? Thats kinda the opposite argument that all of the other pro-private school people are taking.

  - **Special schools are not Elite :**

    19 Jan 2010 8:29:37pm

    Because the challenges that our students present are beyond the coping abilities of the public school system but are perfectly acceptable for one particular independent school.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:29:23pm

  But that is the whole point. Government funding for education IS the same on a per child basis. It is the parent's choice whether to take advantage of Government funding.

  - **Verify the facts :**

    19 Jan 2010 8:16:51pm

    Oliver,
    "Government funding for education IS the same on a per child basis". The same as what?
    Funding for government school students is > funding for independent school students.

- **Elizabeth :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:49:52pm

  That will be fine when all Government schools have raised the standard of their buildings etc teaching facilities etc etc. to meet the general standards of public education aroung the world.

- **Mark :**

18 Jan 2010 8:53:57pm

It's about opportunity cost. Prior to the Howard Government's SES funding model private schools had limited funding and serviced about 26 to 28 per cent of the student population. Over the last 12 years this has increased to around 39 to 40 per cent. So it can be argued that the additional students, who have entered private schools with the subsidy are saving the tax payer money, but in actual fact the vast majority, around 70 per cent, of private school students would have already been educated privately. So effectively these students got their parents a tax break, but only if the school decided to pass on the savings after all they receive the funding not the parent.

So in actual dollars private schools save the taxpayer between 30 and 70 per cent, but the fact remains that the SES funding model wastes tax payers money. The real issue is what will provide the tax payer a greater rate of return, $1 extra in the private school system, or $1 extra in the public school system? What are the savings associated with educating a child so that they are not on welfare, but work and pay tax, versus a child who in all likelihood will work in a high skilled vocation (middle and upper class).

If economic efficiency is what we strive for then its time to look at an alternative funding model, one that does not provide $28 bilion over 4 years to subsidise a parents choice, when many parents can't afford this choice.

Perhaps we should consider the IPAs model of funding going to the parents not the school. But the level of funding should be asset based.

- **Joe :**

18 Jan 2010 8:39:49pm

As the manager of a school program that caters for those in the extreme of poverty I was most interested in this story. We operate with 140 students, outside of mainstream schooling, in a rural setting. We are proud of our outcomes and we could easily round up some busloads of students who are proud of their achievements. Thing is we operate out of a Catholic school. We survive on much less then our State counterparts running similar programs and our success is certainly not due to any special help from the Catholic system. It is successful because of the dedication and sense of mission that the school and staff have. Anthony, you have lumped all non government schools into a paradigm that reflects your own social angst. Get out of your tower (and the Eastern States) and go and visit some of the programs that are achieving great things for marginalised young people...you may find that has the SA State government just decided to "privatise" its offering for alternate senior schooling. Explore that one Anthony and then match that with why the whole Job Services system has been "privatised". The basic flaw in your theory is that you assume that it is only the State that can cater for marginalised people. Do we spy a statue of Trotsky on your desk there??! Looking forward to your visit.

  - **Special schools are not Elite :**

    19 Jan 2010 9:39:39pm

    Go Joe! NGO's do it better!

- **Umit Fox :**

18 Jan 2010 8:37:59pm

Unfortunatley elite schools will continue to get lions'share under Labor Government.DEJA VU.

- **Juvenal's maid :**

  19 Jan 2010 11:10:29am

  You must understand one fact and that is students in non-government schools do not EVER get more funding than students in government schools NEVER. Some of the few highly geared highly resourced elite schools (who educate the smallest fraction of students) get no state government funding at all. Write it out 100 times and it might get through.

  --- The state/federal dichotomy of funding does such a disservice and perpetuates and the skewed reporting which does not identify this is either deliberately mischievous or deliberately ignorant.

  Get this straight in NSW -- the state government provides 80% of the funding for students in NSW and the Feds provide the 20%. But the states only provide about a quarter of the recurrent cost of funding students in the non-government sector and then it is split into 12 categories of funding all dependent on socio-economic criteria not on anything else. To bring a little fairness into the mix the Federal government has upped its funding levels based on Socio-Economic Status which is basically worked out on the average wage based on the postcode.

  - **To tell the you the truth :**

    19 Jan 2010 2:36:33pm

    The Federal Average Government School Recurrent Cost (AGSRC)for 2009 was $8,380 per primary student and $10,646 per secondary student.

    Non-government schools receive between 13% and 70% of the AGSRC depending on their SES score.

    The average (based on all normal & special schools in the non-government sector) annual funding of non government education by NSW Government for 2009 was $9,851 per primary student and $12,142 per secondary student (Average = $10,816).

    The cost of funding non-government school education by NSW DET in the form of a per capita allowance and an interest subsidy scheme for 2009 was $1,791 per primary student & $2,276 per secondary student (Average = $2,033).

- **Elizabeth :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:59:37pm

  So it seems. Should we stop taking interest and watch some film or read a novel, or go to the beach or just die, I am 70 and no longer working, hoping to have time in my retirement - but it seems it is all too depressing - especially as the Christians, of which I once was, are behind all this non christian behavour.

  - **Special schools are not Elite :**

19 Jan 2010 9:44:35pm

Chin up Elizabeth. I found Jesus - He was at Kingsdene!

- **Chris Pyatt :**

18 Jan 2010 8:28:14pm

Um, hasnt anybody ever noticed what Australia is all about now..... Making money, and then making some more money. Profit before morals.

Until recently I worked as a route bus driver on the sunshine coast. This system was set up by the state government, funded by the state government, but was mostly privately operated, at very reasonable profit margins. No body ever thought about the fact that it was a public money that was being turned into private profit. The fact that the bus system carried only about 2% of the population on the sunshine coast is somewhat startling considering most of the buses during the day were running at an economical loss, mostly because they were mostly empty. This situation was never brought up by either the government or the private company, because the private company was paid for every kilometer they did, not how efficient they were.

When it comes to schools, why should the reasoning be any different. It has been known by the general population that the federal government gives far more per capita, to the private schools than it has and probably ever will to the public schools. Again this is a situation where public money is benefiting a few and is mostly taken as profit. (In no way am I making the statement that public buses should not be publicly funded)

Look at it this way. If you were in government and you wanted your kids to get the best education possible then you would send them to a private school. Then when it came to vote on how the education budget was spent, what would you do????

I know what I would do, private money for private schools, after all they are a business aren't they(?). The surplus that is left over can be used for the public schools, and then for the medical system, so that when we have all these bright new publically educated graduates, they have jobs to go to when they finish school...

- **daz :**

18 Jan 2010 8:16:39pm

Who is this creep Anthony? What is his true agenda. I know many country people who spend every last cent they can to educate their children in the private system.

  - **Algernon :**

    19 Jan 2010 9:03:50am

    With their farming subsidies.

  - **Verify the facts :**

19 Jan 2010 10:16:15pm

And look what the NSW government did to the publicly funded Dalwood Assessment Centre and Palm Ave School!

They valued prime real estate over education for rural students!

- **Algernon :**

  20 Jan 2010 6:46:56am

  I understand it has been moved to Westmead.

- **Helen :**

18 Jan 2010 8:05:32pm

I feel a bit more conflicted about this than I used to. I went to state schools and then on to university. But I actually had a learning problem in maths and it was never dealt with effectively. Because I excelled in other areas, I was able to go to uni, but I wish I had been at a school that had helped me with the math! I sent both my kids to state schools, and I used to think that was fine, but my daughter, once at high school began to express discomfort with some of the behaviour of other kids. She has ended up getting into a selective senior school that is state funded and I am really relieved as it will match her interests in the arts and there is a really positive atmosphere. If she hadn't got in there, I was considering trying to get her into a private school, but as we are not religious, wasn't sure where to go. I actually think part of the problem is the kids now are exposed to some pretty wild stuff in the media/the net/movies etc. I support state schools, but they need more autonomy and a greater sense of community. I believe the higher bureaucracy stifles innovation amongst good principals & teachers.

- **Ralf :**

18 Jan 2010 8:03:32pm

I agree entirely with pretty much the whole essay. The only thing I would add is that the teaching profession needs to become a "Profession".

At the moment, teaching is pretty considered a soft option if you miss out on a really good course at uni. The only way to solve this is to raise the income of the teachers to be comparable with other professions such as accountants, counsellors, health workers, HR, managers etc. Let's say 60K -80K over the first 1-10 year period.

There's a big catch though, The teachers have to act like professionals. How about staying at work for 8 hours and accept your 4 week holidays like everyone else does. Say goodbye to your stundent free day - what the heck was that all about anyway? Feeling a little stressed - join the club called Profession.

No students to teach during you "holidays"? - how about running some programmes for disadvantaged kids during the holidays. How about running a sports programme for kids who are home while both parents are at work. How about some mandatory research on teaching and the implementation of sound evidence based practice instead of wheeling out the same old gumpff every year.

I'm guessing the above would take about 20 years to achieve.

Thanks for reading - I feel much better now. Cheers.

- **GraemeF :**

  19 Jan 2010 4:01:08pm

  Both my parents were school teachers and I can tell you that work didn't stop after hours, on holidays or weekends when necessary.

- **goffa :**

  18 Jan 2010 8:02:22pm

  What a load of rubbish!
  People send their children to private schools at enormous cost to themselves because they want their children to have the best chance to get a good education to give them the best opportunity they can get for their future.
  Pompous pontificators like Ashbolt just don't get it do they? I bet he has never set foot inside a public school room and seen the insolence and violence of admittedly a very few students who purposefully disrupt the teaching and teachers so that your average kid who just wants to learn has little chance.
  Ashbolt, you would do a whole lot better asking yourself why it is that these children's parents don't have the common sense to raise their children with respect for their schools, their teachers and their fellow students. I am sure you would find some whining reason that avoided the responsibilities that all parents must accept.
  In other countries in our world education is regarded as a priceless opportunity whereas in Australia, far too many kids, supported by coffee shop theoreticians like Ashbolt, waste that chance and then become the next in the dole queues.
  And I bet you really supported OBE too didn't you Ashbolt, that wonderful equitable educational idea which destroyed a whole generation of kids education and dumbed down the nation.
  And why do I have these points of view? Because I am a teacher who has worked in the public school system and I am far from the elite, I can tell you!!

- **James :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:50:29pm

  After spending approx $60,000 on private schooling at the primary level - I have seen the folly of my ways and now I am keen supporter of public education.

- **Stuart Ulrich :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:40:11pm

Has antbody ever thought to look at the Constitution, not the 1980's con job but the real Australian Constitution.

Just show me where the federal government has the authority to stick their noses in public education as this is a state responsibility.

What we have is that the federal government taking all taxes and instead of giving back 75% of this back to the states make them jump which is unconstitutional.

But then the people will believe what they are told instead of getting the facts.

I ran as an independent at the 2007 election and before that had done a lot of research and By Breaker Morant's standards our pollies should be dealt with under rule 303.

- **Captain Col :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:38:01pm

  This article is standard leftist trash. It is defeated by the simple mathematics of the situation. Every child is entitled to free education. If they all went to Government schools the cost would be horrendous. So we taxpayers pay far less to elite schools to educate a child than we do to state schools.

  What would really put the cat amongst the pigeons would be if each child got a voucher for the full amount of state funds and was free to spend it on education at any school. We'd see a real lift in the performance of many schools vying for customers.

  Yes, it's a conservative view. And it works. Ask why elite schools can charge fees. Because they compete for the fees and deliver a service the customers want.

  Economics 101.

  - **Blunt pencil :**

    18 Jan 2010 11:51:19pm

    Where do the undesirables go?

    - **Captain Col :**

      19 Jan 2010 1:24:47am

      The undesirables can go wherever they like to whoever will take them. Same as today.

      - **Blunt pencil :**

        19 Jan 2010 10:45:52am

        yes, choice rises its head again.

The choice in my locality is the public school because the private school has options on who has entry. The public school doesnt.

- **VoR :**

19 Jan 2010 12:04:08pm

Just a myth blunt pencil.

- **Colt :**

19 Jan 2010 10:53:13am

The undesirables go to the public schools because they can't be refused enrolment there.

Private schools do not have to take the student who has been consistently suspended from other schools and who's parents shift them around hoping to find a school that isn't a 'problem'.

I would actually like to have the choice of a private school but there are none in my vicinity. For me to send my boys to private school I would also have to pay boarding fees on top of the normal school fees. That would be well over my husband's annual income. I am currently out of work... since the public school where I worked suffered severe budget cuts and could not afford to keep me on as an employee.

So you see... all this talk of 'choice' is all smoke and mirrors for many people. There is no choice at all.

- **Oliver S :**

19 Jan 2010 12:32:32pm

And ironically if we weren't funding private schools your public school would get better funding and you may still be in work now.

- **JakartaJaap :**

18 Jan 2010 7:27:51pm

I am a child of the 60s and I remain true to that era's dicta - oppose the state, rage against the machine. I scrimped and sent my kids to private schools to show that they didn't have to be just another brick in the wall and that the actions of determined people could overcome the horrors of the state. Why did you all lose that militancy? If you don't want to subsidise private schools, fine, but refund to us who want something better than the grey pap doled out by the machine, the taxes we've paid that would go to the state propaganda machine. Maintain the rage!

- **Elizabeth :**

19 Jan 2010 1:20:39pm

I'll do that when you return the money you cost the state for the infants and primary schools

- **Ravensclaw :**

18 Jan 2010 7:11:52pm

Lets be honest, I know people who sold their homes to get their children into the best schools possible.

This topic is dirty, it is about envy, and it is about punishing our most successful schools.

You don't need to punish success to help the quality of education in other schools. What an utterly bigoted view to smear and suggest otherwise.

Anthony Ashbolt, I'm calling you out as a mischief maker.

Cheers

  - **Oliver S :**

19 Jan 2010 12:35:45pm

How do you measure success in education? Do you look at the amount of money invested in each child? Do you look at the children that the schools have to work with?

By your definition Jamie Packer would be one of the most successful businessmen in Australia. I don't think you would find many people who would agree with that...

And its not about 'envy' its about fairness vs greed.

    - **Ravensclaw :**

19 Jan 2010 7:34:36pm

Starting with your last sentence first I can summarise with one word "Rubbish".

How do you define greedy? The word is tossed around so easily.

Are people who wish to provide their children the best education they can provide greedy?

Are people who sell their home in sacrifice of their children's education greedy? Do you think these people care about prestige?

Are successful (thus wealthy) people automatically greedy?

How does this article start? - With a smear about the myth of class and elites, and who has access to our best private schools. Of course this article is designed to appeal to emotions, not common sense, or even welcome facts.

Do you meed to attack private schools to raise funds for public schools?

I will also state that the term "Social Justice" has been well and truly hijacked. I would consider "choice" an important consideration for social justice i.e private vs public; especially considering public education's lack of willingness to reform, as well as the opportunity for our best teachers to pursue their best career options, rather than pander to left wing dogma and find their careers stunted. And then of course there is the public disillusionment of public education that has little to do with funding.

Re your other remarks.

Kerry Packer as a (former) member of what is still a free country left a legacy (as he is entitled) to his son Jamie. There is no foul, and there is no greed.

There are many ways to measure the quality of schools. An important method is by results compared to other schools. Another is the general intellect achieved by each individual student, and the parents relative satisfaction of these outcomes.

Cheers

- **Dale :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:10:37pm

  Anthony has articulated what must be common sense to most Australians. Public funding of private schools is going to move Australia towards being an elitarian society.
  How do politicians who appear to advocate an egalitarian society miss the future damage these policies will produce? My conclusion is they are being heavily influenced by those in their inner circle of friends and/or colleagues who benefit from these policies.

  This needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

- **John :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:08:47pm

  What is so different between a rich and a poor kid? Nothing, except the parents, but they are not the ones going to school, it is the kids.
  So why not fund on a per pupil base, don't they all deserve the same and the best. So here is my funding formula to give every kid the same access: A school gets $X per child less any fees charged. If an elite school wants to collect the money from its elite old school boys club, not a problem, but then the community should chip in less because in the end all kids deserve the same.
  {Oops, just fell of my soapbox]

  - **Elizabeth :**

    19 Jan 2010 1:24:48pm

    I hope you are not hurt after the fall - the country needs you

- **Chris Harries :**

18 Jan 2010 6:50:55pm

I'm afraid to say, guys, this issue is dead in the water.

It was Labor PM Paul Keating who embraced the religion of 'The Market' and set the tone for widespread privatisation of public assets.

That dogma crosses the two party divide â€“ the heart and soul of both sides now have an abiding belief that society's goods and services should be provided for, as far as possible, by The Market.

In education this means, in short, private schooling.

Labor's strong history supporting social equity makes it impossible for it to make a wholesale sell out of public education. What we are seeing, rather, is a long tortuous process of attrition. Just enough rope at any one time to stop the Education Union from going ballistic.

It's not that the private sector lobbies harder, and so gets more favours, it's just that government of both persuasion now earnestly believe in less government.

As some posters above have reported, that attrition then debases public education, accelerating the onrush of private school funding and the popularity of well resourced private schools.

It won't be too long before most of the remaining inmates in public schools will be hard cases â€“ children from dysfunctional family backgrounds and those with various learning difficulties.

- **Elizabeth :**

  19 Jan 2010 1:28:38pm

  What then - perhaps compulsory abortion, that would solve a huge problem. Except where would the slaves come from. Immigration??

- **Jack :**

18 Jan 2010 6:49:33pm

It is really quite simple. The independent schools flourish in an environment where they are permitted to be selective with their clientele while enjoying the largesse of the taxpayer combined with the fees provided by the parents.

The public system on the other hand has no opportunity to be selective and is prevented from charging school fees, relying purely on the â€˜global budgetâ€™ individually provided to schools. This budget is fixed by the government to the school population and remains unchanged, regardless of the ever increasing demands of additional programs imposed by that same government, unless there is a substantial increase in the school population. The great â€˜do more with lessâ€™ regime.

Many parents send their children to independent schools in an effort to â€˜buyâ€™ results and influence their childrenâ€™s choice of peer group, to â€˜buyâ€™ their friends so to speak.

Public schools are for the most part staffed by experienced, dedicated teachers who are forced to accept

that their classes will be partly inhabited by a small but vociferously influential group of children who have neither respect, conscience, nor any interest in learning. For them attending school is a day to day social prerogative and has nothing to do with education. Give public schools GENUINE tools to rid themselves of these miscreants instead of throwing money at their endless rehabilitation.

Then you will see a massive turnaround in students swapping systems, parentsâ€™ faith in the public system and the morale of public school teachers. Public schools will cease to be seen as proxy social-welfare agencies and return to being places of learning and personal development.

- **clancy of the undertow :**

18 Jan 2010 6:47:10pm

State schools in NSW are not allowed to charge fees.
Instead they have a system where the children are given a bill which is non-enforceable. The only time fees may be charged is where a child selects a subject which incurs a cost for materials, eg Home Science, Wood Technology, etc. many parents pay the suggested fee, because they know that the school is drastically underfunded.
I saw a poster once, which said
"I would like to see the day when public schools have everything they want and the Navy has to hold raffles to get a destroyer"

- **MC :**

18 Jan 2010 6:40:54pm

An excellent article.

Why middle and lower-income taxpayers aren't outraged by federal government funding of private schools is a bit of a mystery.

By all means permit people to privately educate their children. But don't expect me to subsidise that decision.

Government funding of private schools is simply public money for private good. If I were a low or middle income earner, with no possibility of sending my child to an expensive private school, I'd feel ripped off that my taxes were subsidising the attendance of others' children. And this is the crucial bit: when the only thing that permits those other other children to attend these elite non-government schools is the income of their parents.

That the current federal government has done nothing to address this really does speak volumes for the values Labor purports to represent.

Still, it must be hard for the government. There's the private health insurance rebate, concessional treatment of capital gains, negative gearing, deductions of all sorts...

Everywhere they'd care to look they'd see regressive government policy. What a pity they have no spine to address any of it.

  - **Oliver S :**

19 Jan 2010 7:00:06pm

Many middle class aren't outraged because they want their kids to go to private schools themselves.

The rest of us realise that it is because this is the issue that will sink any political party that tries to change it (I hate aspirational voters). And also because the political parties don't want to change it because their kids go to the private schools.

- **rishard :**

18 Jan 2010 6:37:24pm

i agree with mr ashbolt.Blind freddy can see that the federal govts of both persuasions want to privatise education along with health and whatever else to save money.Don't think privatisation improves the relevant service. It DOES NOT.

  - **Ravensclaw :**

19 Jan 2010 8:21:34am

Actually rishard, it almost always does.

Cheers

    - **Oliver S :**

19 Jan 2010 12:36:16pm

Look at Telstra after all...

    - **rishard :**

19 Jan 2010 3:33:45pm

"almost always"? How about Telstra ,QANTAS? I beg your pardon you DID say almost always.

- **Helvi :**

18 Jan 2010 6:37:24pm

Every three months or so we have these discussions about private versus public education. We can talk till the cows come home, still nothing changes.
Send your education minister to the countries that have got it right when it comes to education.
Then change your system accordingly, make your education system work for every child, give every child a chance of good education; it is their birth right.

- **Reffo. :**

18 Jan 2010 6:34:31pm

We were astonished to learn after arrival, that Australia had two sets of education, two sets of health systems, many differents sets of state laws, police forces and rail gauges.

We were made to believe we were coming to an united egalitarian society, well away from dated sets of values. In a way, those value sets are even worse as they are based on having mere money rather than ancestry.

Get rid of school identifiable uniforms and private schools will dissipate in thin air.

- **Roger of Scoresby :**

18 Jan 2010 6:26:14pm

This isn't about class envy at all, it is about choice. I have nothing against people having private education and private health insurance and wouldn't want to interfere with their choice by subsidising them with common public funds. We don't make payments to the business executive who chooses to drive his Mercedes to the office instead of catching the train. Are we really so worried about where our next batch of bumbling over-entitled silver-spooners are coming from that we have to build their white marble corridors of learning with bags of our public money? This is surely a tacky public intrusion on their privacy. I can't remember Ritchie Rich getting public subsidies for his schooling or to pay Cadbury's salary, it was all out of the old man's pocket. Rich people these days are so...cheap.

  - **GraemeF :**

    19 Jan 2010 4:07:52pm

    Actually he probably claims the car as an expense so we do subsidise the Mercedes.

  - **Oliver S :**

    19 Jan 2010 6:58:07pm

    Thats how they get so rich. Why pay for something when someone else can pay for you?

- **PSFR :**

18 Jan 2010 6:15:56pm

What woefully disguised ideological drivel.

If it is equality you truly seek, you would advocate a doubling of expenditure on PRIVATE schools, so that the amount of total public funding on education per child was the same.

Currently, children in private schools are substantially disadvantaged in terms of public funding, and parents make up the shortfall (by choice).

What you really want to do is remove choice and undermine private education. At least be honest about it.

- **clancy of the undertow :**

  19 Jan 2010 9:00:01am

  PSFR,I respect your right to be ignorant, but please don't try to make this false argument have any semblance of reality.
  For example, my children attended a local Public School and were given a well rounded education, achieving well in the HSC, and experiencing many sports.
  Just down the road, is a Private School which boasts, among other things, a swimming pool, three turf cricket pitches, a rifle range, a theatre.
  At our children's school, there was great celebration when the parents' association were able to fund a shaded area in the playground.

- **Public school teacher :**

  18 Jan 2010 6:13:46pm

  As a teacher at a public school in WA, which is almost falling down around us, I have a simple solution. The federal government should give parents a voucher for $x, for each child. Maybe one amount for primary schools, hopefully a greater amount for high schools. The parents then present this to their school when they enrol or start the year. The the states can top up the public school (i.e. pay the wages of the teachers) and the private schools can find whatever funding they can.

  - **Phedre :**

    19 Jan 2010 6:52:23pm

    I fail to understand the voucher idea that you, among others, suggest.

    How is this really any different to the sort of system we have now...except that the private schools will get a little more funding than they do now but still less than public.

    Schools are already given money on a per student basis....so kind of like the students giving the schools a voucher. Overall public schools already get more funding per student than private...so kind of like a top up.

  - **Oliver S :**

    19 Jan 2010 6:57:02pm

    That wouldn't change anything - the private schools would then just charge the same amount of fees they are now plus the amount on the vouchers. It would just be giving the private schools more (hence why the pro-private people here keep suggesting it), while shifting more money away from the public schools, and finally costing a lot more money to implement.

- **JWS :**

  18 Jan 2010 6:11:24pm

In my mind it is less of an issue of social equity or private vs. public education so much as an issue of equality of opportunity. No matter which school a child goes to, they should still be able to go as far as they want to, become a doctor, lawyer, engineer or scientist, and if we fail to allow them to pursue their dreams we are not only letting our children down, but squandering the minds and people that are our greatest natural resource.

- **Chris Grounds :**

  18 Jan 2010 6:11:24pm

  Let's see - private schools are about prestige - prestige that begets privelege - and that privelege begets the power that people who send their children to private schools want for their children. And power is not something to share - is it ? The easiest way to substantiate this is to threaten this powerbase by threatening the funding and sit back and watch the reaction, expended of course on some high moral ground !

- **harry :**

  18 Jan 2010 6:02:42pm

  Thank you ABC!

  Now will you give space for the alternative view on this subject?

  I am the product of the "State System" (30 years ago), and i've worked pretty hard to send my kids to non-state schools. I dont drive a Merc or BMW, in fact i dont even have a plasma TV!!

  - **rishard :**

    18 Jan 2010 6:30:04pm

    what alternative,harry? you've just admitted that the public school system served you well 30 years ago but you have no faith in it now by sending your kids to private.

  - **Mary Ann :**

    18 Jan 2010 6:30:53pm

    So what? You want a medal or something?
    So you want your children to mix with richer kids than you did - do you think that that will make them better citizens, richer, prettier, go to more classy parties?

  - **popehelen :**

    18 Jan 2010 6:39:09pm

    So, Harry, what was so wrong with your own education that you couldn't allow your own kids to attend a public school?

Hermit :

18 Jan 2010 7:05:34pm

Agreed. There was a time when working hard and getting good marks meant a chance for children to enter into the professions via a university education.

To those who are serious about government education, teaching children to read is the top priority.

From that point children need to be actively engaged with a wide range of challenging tasks.

School building programs come quite a long way down the list, but look what Labor has just done. It has splashed out umpteen billion dollars building school halls.

The first step in the revolution is to get the priorities right. Labor has screwed up here as well. We need to help parents to raise their children so that they do not destroy their own educational opportunities as well as those of others.

What has Labor done? Standardised testing. The very vision of bureaucracy.

When you base educational policy on some vision of ending a class war, you have got it completely wrong. Anthony Ashbolt may go down well in Labor HQ, but he is to be avoided if education is to improve.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 6:24:01pm

  Without standardised tests how do we evaluate teaching outcomes across education systems? Its funny because the right (including within the Labor party) are generally really enthusiastic about 'league tables' but yet you are now criticising something which will provide similar information...

  Furthermore, it was Mr Howard and the Libs who started making it harder for people to get into (and through) university based on academic results alone through the under-funding of universities and introduction of full fee-paying places.

  - **Hermit :**

    20 Jan 2010 8:41:57am

    Try not to see this as another left/right battle.

    The ability of children to read effectively at the early primary school level is the key point to begin an education revolution.

    Evaluating teaching outcomes across the system comes a distant second, in my book, to evaluating whether a particular child has learned to read sufficiently well to engage with other activities they will encounter in their time at school.

If a child can read and their curiosity is stimulated there is no holding them back. Tests only verify that all is well.

My reference to university education date from the time when having a degree meant that you were in a distinct minority and practically guaranteed entry into the professions. This provided a mechanism for social mobility.

The question now for entry into the professions is whether you have the right degree and the right marks. A very large proportion of tertiary students are there under false pretences that their hard work will get them somewhere.

Reform of the tertiary sector and credentiallism is a topic for another day.

Why though am I against standardised testing? It is necessary for some selection purposes. Otherwise it is just a bureaucratic process which takes attention away from the individual child.

By the time the child hits year 8 and can't read effectively it is too late. The child's opportunities are permanently limited. Do it early and get it right.

- **Pedro :**

18 Jan 2010 8:48:03pm

Alternative view Harry?
How about the fact that I am a product of a private school who sacrificed and worked really, really hard - and no I don't drive a Merc or BMW either as I am a genuine car enthusiast not a victim of force fed perceptions.
I actually squandered my income and life on enthusiast cars and introducing innovation and leading edge technologies into our (at the time) backward looking industries whilst my children were of school age.
My children had to go to State Schools - like it or not, and have actually achieved extremely well both personally and professionally, especially considering the criminal propping up of private schools using Public money, sorely needed by the State System.
By the criteria of wannabes like you they are right up there in their careers of choice in what are considered the most popular professions.
They also do not buy Euro cars, participate in the Eurovision song contest, buy European appliances, or will be sending their kids to private schools, as they above all are quite proud to be cool and independent achievers instead.
Perhaps Harry the State system might produce better long term outcomes for your kids as well even allowing your hard work to reward you in this life rather than the next.

- **Caesar Desist :**

18 Jan 2010 9:40:21pm

I'm with you harry. I went to a crapulous Western suburbs state school for the kids of working class losers. With pathetic resources and teachers who (with a few exceptions I could count on one hand) would not have a motivated cell in their bodies.

I miraculously made just enough quids to send my kids to a good private school.

I didn't want them to have to put up with zero discipline and clueless drop-kicks every day of their school lives. Not just the teachers, but the contemporary students at my old high school too.

Now they're in uni, I can kick back and pay off the re-mortgaged house again.

Cheers to all the others in our so-called elite boat.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 6:25:01pm

  So your kids don't have the same level of gumption to get through public schools that you do Caesar?

- **Ravensclaw :**

  19 Jan 2010 7:41:55pm

  Harry

  One only need to look down below your post at the comments to observe how toxic some are to alternative (and better) education to the public education system.

  When I attended a public high school it was the the most violent highschool in the state of NSW for 2 yrs in a row, and half the teachers didn't give a stuff about teaching.

  In a private school if a teacher had that attitude, they would be sacked. If the school had anything remotely like that type of violence, parents would take their children elsewhere.

  In addition to my public education I also paid for private tuition. I recall my maths teacher taking offense to learning this news and often refused to acknowledge any questions I had in class.

  Cheers

- **DM :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:52:08pm

  Every article I read supporting more taxpayer funding for public schools and/or less public funding for private schools uses Federal Government funding as a primary basis for its argument. Conversely, every article I read supporting more taxpayer funding for private schools and/or less public funding for public schools uses State Government funding as a primary basis for its argument.

  I would like to see a defensible argument from either side that is supported by information on combined Federal and State funding. However, I suspect that such and argument cannot be sustained because, overall, the current distribution is equitable, but nevertheless inadequate, for both public and private schools.

- **Blunt pencil :**

  18 Jan 2010 6:22:17pm

  You are right that an argument cannot be sustained but the reasoning is not due to some instrinsic fairness. The reason is the accounting figures are so badly convoluted, it is impossible to pluck out the data that makes for an easy comparison, or any comparison for that matter.

  Perhaps the next question is why has government seen to it that the general populace cannot view the accounts of the education system it pays for.

  - **Oliver S :**

    19 Jan 2010 6:25:43pm

    Its the same with all Government depts - if we can see the expenditure then they are more accountable.

- **stj911 :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:47:29pm

  Yes there should be funding to private schools but as a percentage of the total student population.Private Schools should receive nothing if basic human rights and the anti-discrimination act are not taught. As many religions fail on these points. My children go to a public state school which thinks its a christian outreach centre..a school chaplain,handing out new testaments,detention(sorry alternative to) in the library for those who don't attend religion(christian) classes etc. How about a scientology school or fascist or communist school? Everyone knows the state governments are passing the cost over to the parents and still taxing everyone more. So both forms of government need to review the federal and state funding model. And the committee should consist of parents and teachers only with public servants giving them advice. No politicians or business spin doctors allowed.

  - **Chris Pyatt :**

    18 Jan 2010 8:33:07pm

    I agree about the insurgence of the church into public schools. A good friend of mine is Buddhist by birth and nationality, and so is her daughter, but this does not stop the christian bible bashing that her daughter gets at her local state school.

    Teach the kids the 3Rs again, after all isn't that what school is about. If they want to learn from the bible then Sunday school is always there.

- **Az :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:39:13pm

  My "elite" private school (third most expensive in the country at the time) did nothing but teach me to loath authority.

Getting a detention every Wednesday, every week, for a year for refusing to bow my head for prayer was educational, but probably not the kind of education my parents thought I was getting.

It's pretty hard to get yourself expelled when you're on a scholarship, but I managed to pull it off.

So, by all means, fund more home grown seditionists, just keep a close eye on what you're funding.

- **Oliver S :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:38:16pm

  I completely agree about public vs private school funding.

  One thing that is a recurrent complaint here is the standard and ethos of teaching in public system. I think it is clear to everyone that a performance-based pay system is required to encourage teachers to rise above the mediocrity that many of them (certainly not all!) demonstrate. Also things like requiring teachers to have studied in the area in which they teach (duh!).

  The main problem as far as I can see it (and this is from a NSW point of view rather than federally) is the Teacher's Federation. They seem to have a teachers first, students last attitude (or at least an completely apathetic attitude) which is counter-productive to their own ends. If they actually considered the idea of working harder to earn more money then maybe the Governments might give them more money!

  - **Joanne :**

    18 Jan 2010 8:13:57pm

    It's clear not that performance based pay would improve teacher motivation. Attractive job prospects are needed. If you want quality teachers you are going to have to value teachers. Performance based systems encourage mediocrity: by rewarding sets of targets educating can only become more generalised.

    Teachers Federation is funded by teachers and would become unecessary if teachers were valued by society - ie. parents. Improve the schools and attitudes to teaching 1st then the teachers will come.

    - **Oliver S :**

      19 Jan 2010 1:32:18pm

      Incorrect. The current system is encouraging mediocrity. Why would I want to become a teacher when I know that the people who completed a teaching degree at the crappy local university campus and who spend their Thursday mornings in their primary school classroom on facebook while hungover (true story) will get more money than me for the rest of my career as a teacher simply because they have been doing it longer?

      Stop trying to say that because implementation of performance-based pay is difficult that it is a bad idea. That is again a salute to mediocrity (its hard so we shouldn't do it). We could be establishing innovative measures of teacher's performance in line with practical outcomes for the students AND the latest pedagogical theories.

If you want us to value teachers you need to demonstrate that they are valuable. (Incidentally I had a few really influential teachers in my schooling. The fact that they were getting paid as much {or less} than some of the useless fossils in the school is a bigger sign that the good teachers aren't valued). The teachers need to take the first steps in this regard rather than just banging on about their rights.

Get rid of the stifling constraints placed by the Teacher's Fed (re placement of teachers, unswerving support of mediocrity without the realisation that they should ONLY be protecting the interests of the good teachers etc) and then more teachers will come.

- **Blunt pencil :**

18 Jan 2010 10:59:52pm

I see a problem with performance based pay.

The local high school is one of ten worst performers in the state for Tertiary entrance. In short, they are given very little to work with. The NAPLAN data for the year nines, this year they are year 10, will indicate a very poor statistical result for this school in three years time. They are not going to jump out of their socks in any great numbers. They never do.

They can get the best teacher in the world but these kids are not going to do much. You can only work with what you have. The performance of the worlds best teacher is probably not going to be that good.

In short, if I was a teacher and given a bunch of under performers, I would be applying very quickly for another school. I would not want my pay linked to anything that happened in primary school, which is the problem of these year nine when you track them through. I would also be looking to move any child out who looked like trouble.

Also, I am not that sure that it is a requirement to teach in their area of specialty. I mean how hard is high school? Not very. High school Science, Maths and English to name three is pretty rudimentary. Surely a maths degree allows for the teaching of science and computing as well and quite possibly english.

  - **Oliver S :**

19 Jan 2010 12:39:41pm

Implementation is a problem, but I would look at something like comparison of results from the year before and at the end of the year. Of course it would still be hard to measure as some kids will improve more easily than others, but if you looked at the general level of improvement across their education then you could get an accurate measure of the child's progress in a single year.

Also you could make pay increases bigger for those teachers who do perform well with more disadvantaged students.

Yes this is simplistic, but the alternative is that teachers get paid the same regardless of whether

they are enthusiastic and commited or whether they are apathetic. That is a sure fire way of making good teachers become apathetic.

- **Markus :**

18 Jan 2010 5:36:24pm

I could easily send my future kids to a private school, years of excellent returns from stock market investment many times greater than my working wage has seen to it.

However, I will not be sending my kids to a private school. I don't believe the hype of "Greater education outcomes". It is just the usual marketing hype coming from private enterprise. I don't blame them. You don't see coke cola telling me their drink is sugar water that'll rot my teeth. They also have a charter.

But people will believe almost any tripe that grabs their attention with glossy magazines. After all, something you pay for has got to be better than something free, right? Well, if it isn't, we'll all just say it is to make ourselves feel better.
Education outcomes are largely determined by the home environment. The school actually has little to do with it. Sending my kids to a public school will have the added advantage of learning to get along with people from all socio-economic backgrounds.

Private schools are businesses (beit tax exempt?) and shouldn't get money from the public purse. If you choose to send your kids to private school you should face the consequences of paying the full amount. Don't like it? Go public.

  - **realist :**

  18 Jan 2010 8:07:25pm

  Maybe private schools are businesses, however without people paying to have their kids educated and no private schools the education budget would be much bigger than what it is. Be thankful there are people with a quid who wish to put their hand in their pocket for the benefit of their kids. Without private schools we would all be paying more tax. They do get hand outs(or whatever they may be called from the government), without them there would be many more government schools and you with your well endowed wallet would pay more tax

  - **Chris Pyatt :**

  18 Jan 2010 8:36:28pm

  Here here,, very well said. Could not agree more.

  Public hospitals vs private??

  Private money for private business, public money for public schools.

  - **Joanne :**

  18 Jan 2010 9:27:10pm

You are talking through your hat! My husband and I made sacrifices to send our children to the same private schools we went to ourselves. We are so pleased we did. There is much more discipline and a stronger moral and ethical background at these schools, definitely not found in State schools. My sons and daughters also had the advantage of attending single sex schools where they were able to concentrate on their studies at the most important time of their lives.

Worth every cent. (And we also pay our taxes!)

- **Leanne :**

  18 Jan 2010 9:40:05pm

  Dear Markus,

  I probably thought that way when my children were my "future kids". Now my children are real.
  They have all attended, or are attending, the local public primary school, which is small, and has great teachers and a good reputation.
  Those who are in high school I have chosen to attend a Private School. I can't really afford it, as I am on basic nurses wages, but I have chosen to do so because of the problems in our local public high school - if you are bright you do ok at the local high school, but the lower classes see you in with major behavioural problems, probably stemming from major family dysfunction.
  I strongly support more funding for public high schools and public education and less or none for private schools....but while funding is at it stands I have to make the best choice for my children given the current options

- **Mr Converted :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:29:01pm

  I am a teacher at Brisbane State High, we are the only state school which is in the top 30 rankings in the state. Based on the number of OP 1-3 scores. (i.e those kids who get in a worthwhile university degree e.g. Medicine Dentistry law etc.)
  We are actually ranked number 3 in the state, however there is not another state school which is within a country mile of the standard at Brisbane State High.
  Most teachers in Government schools spend there time being abused by parents, pupils and principals who are trying to blame the teachers for the low academic standard in state schools.
  In the final analysis, state schools have no real discipline, no respect for learning and are generally just a child minding service. This suits Governments well, it encourages those parents who want their children to be a success to enter the private system, AT ANY COST.....

  - **Michael :**

    18 Jan 2010 6:30:06pm

    Sir, you left out the most important thing about State High - its a selective school. Thats why its academic achievement is so high. Anyone can achieve a high percentage of high scores, just select the right raw material!

- **Blunt pencil :**

  18 Jan 2010 6:36:21pm

  My son just completed year 12 in the state system and is in the top 100 based on scaled scores.

  His calculus class had 4 kids and one teacher. What private school has that teacher student ratio?

  Chemistry had 12 kids, Physics had 8 kids.

  My view is if you are educated yourself, send them to public schools. The classes are empty and use yourself as a backup if the child is struggling. Or pay a tutor. It is still less expensive.

  Your own input is best though, you get to keep the bonds going in the difficult teenage years. Even better is when they teach you a bit to jog your memory so you can turn around and teach them. You become less of an evil parent and more of a human being.

  In terms of teachers. How hard can year 11 and 12 be? None of the material would be beyond any specialist teacher.

  As far as getting them there in the first place. Yes that is a problem. The classes are rowdy to say the least.

- **John :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:02:15pm

  Oops! Not an English language teacher I hope ...

- **dinazad :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:07:43pm

  Nor, judging by there (sic) grammar, any capacity to teach writing.

  In the final analysis, Mr Converted, you're hardly a great salesman either for the system you work in or the system you espouse.

- **Chris Pyatt :**

  18 Jan 2010 8:42:29pm

  Agreed.

  What the parents really need is a huge dose of reality. They also probably need parenting classes so that they can understand their responsibility concerning the raising of their children. School is there to give the children an academic education, not one in morality, or responsibility,, that is the parents responsibility.

Um I know that this is not politically correct to say things like this in anymore in Australia, but Huh,,, I don't live there anymore.

I emphasize with all the teachers in Australia. You certainly have a hard job to do, and I for one would never teach in Australia. Too bloody hard to deal with all the Ps and Qs.

Time to stop politically corrupting Australia's children.

- **DannyS :**

18 Jan 2010 8:43:55pm

....."i.e those kids who get in a worthwhile university degree e.g. Medicine Dentistry law etc.)".....

Gee, I pity the poor parents of kids who 'get into' un-worthwhile degrees that don't give their progeny the income potential of those you mentioned above. More fool the parent who encourages a child to obtain a degree that allows them some impact on the issues that affect broader society today and into the future.

I'll bet your Principal will be rubbing his/her hands with glee when they read your post tomorrow.

Good luck, and I hope you aren't transferred to one of those horrible child minding centres to be abused by parents and/or fellow staff!

- **Dougk :**

18 Jan 2010 9:38:54pm

Students get "nannied" through the private system but fail miserably when they are forced to look after themselves when they get to University. Have a look at the dropout/failure rate for 1st year university students. Private school students are again "right up there".

- **Annie :**

18 Jan 2010 9:57:50pm

Isn't Brisbane High a select entry school? Therefore the school should achieve very high scores.

Makes me laugh all these teachers and schools patting themselves on the back, congratulating themselves on their achievements, when in fact, many students engage private tutors to get the results they want. If you relied on teachers for an education, you would be waiting a very long time.

I'd like to see a survey of how many of the high achieving students have private tutors.

- **Tugboatannie :**

18 Jan 2010 10:19:54pm

Mr converted
It seems strange to me that you work in a state school (even recognising that BSHS is a quasi private school) and extol the virtues of your school yet are so critical of the state school system. Maybe you have previously been teaching in lots of other state schools and have the evidence to back those very broad statments you made about the government and state schools but... from my experience your statements just don't ring true. I could possibly have been convinced by your argument, if you hadn't used the wrong their/there in the sentence "Most teachers in Government schools spend there time being abused by parents..." Shame, Shame. Fancy being a teacher in one of the top schools in the state. "actually ranked number 3 in the state" and not know the difference between "their" and "there".

- **One Off :**

  19 Jan 2010 11:34:45am

  And how many of the parents have bought a cheap house or flat in Westend just to get an address in the catchment area?

- **DocMercury :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:26:07pm

  Is it still technically too early to be tinkering with subliminal (speakers below the pillow and images projected onto the retina by special specs) education and the use of selective neurotransmitters and feedback hypothalamus hormones?

  What kind of "education revolution" are we talking, something trivial or something truly revolutionary?

- **Michael :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:22:56pm

  Lets get rid of private schools for once and all. While we are at it lets get rid of private homes make everybody live in rental homes which are exactly the same as everyone elses and have a lottery system to move people in waterside and beach side suburbs and move them around every five or so years so everyone get the chance. Lets all only drive one car that is exactly the same and lets all get paid exactly the same no matter what job we do. That way there is no jealousy by others and we are all exactly the same. The end of class warfare! The socialists dream!

  - **Sue :**

    18 Jan 2010 9:17:14pm

    ITA. Better still, lets punish those parents who want a better standard of living, education and more opportunities (even though they make many sacrifices to do so) for their children.

    The whiners who constantly moan about private school funding by federal government should compare apples and apples - total tax dollars per child per annum for education - then do the sums. Imagine if every private school kid suddenly enrolled at state school.

State school parents should be grateful that 30% of parents are making financial investments in private education. It means more government money for their kids.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 6:47:34pm

  Out of interest Sue, what is your opinion on asylum seekers? I only ask because I'd bet that most of the people on your side of this argument would be against them. And they are only seeking all of the things that you mentioned for their families.

  But anyway that was a side issue. The main point is that noone is stopping you from seeking the best for your children. But just don't expect us to fund your choices in doing so. Its not punishment because it isn't your holy right to receive educational funding for your child in the manner of your choosing.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 6:53:41pm

  Better still, lets get rid of the voting rights of those who don't own, umm lets say 3 investment properties. We could perhaps give the landlords the voting rights for their tenants (so that they can look after them in the finest traditions of nobliesse oblige). I think that that would really encourage people to try really hard to gain a proper status in life (because lets face it if they aren't rich its because they are too lazy).

  Schools for the non-landowners can focus more on things that are more relevant to them (like maybe coal-mining - I think 7 or 8 is a good age to start {plus they'll be green jobs when the clean coal things starts!}). School for the landowners should of course receive the most funding, because it is really important that they be given all the opportunities that their status affords them (basic education, croquet, fox-hunting).

  Now thats the kind of country that I want to live in!

- **JB :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:20:17pm

  How about every school getting the same amount per student across State and Federal funding then parents deciding whether they wanted to send their children to the private school 'topped up' by fees or to the state school

- **Michael :**

  18 Jan 2010 6:34:32pm

  How about private schools getting no Government funding whatsoever? Thats a much better idea. Every child still has a Government funded place at school - but in a government school. If some parents decide to send their kids somewhere else they can pay the whole cost themselves. I'm

completely sick of paying for schools like Brisbane Boys College (just by way of example) being able to fund things like their rowing shed because they are being subsidised with taxpayers money. This really offends me. The new rifle range at Kings in Sydney is a similar insult.

- **PeterGM :**

18 Jan 2010 7:10:16pm

Not a bad idea, except for one thing. The main purpose of our education system, where there is compulsory attendance for most pupils, is to provide free access to all. So by all means provide funding to private schools willing to take on the task -- but let's make sure there isn't double-dipping, and there's some sort of real competition on the famous "level playing field". So let's only give public funding to schools -- public or private -- that provide education that is free to the student. It's a principle that applies in many other countries: private schools are funded to meet the basic aim of the system: free education for all. If you're a tax payer, you get exactly what other tax paying parents get: free education for your kids. If you think the private system is more effective and efficient, then your market forces should allow private schools to achieve better results without also getting extra government funds. Then they either they do without the government funds entirely, and eschew all nasty "socialism", or they meet the basic requirements a government is entitled to ask for from all schools funded with government money: free education for all.

For too long we've had institutionalised bribery in the education and health systems.

At present, if you're nicely rich, you pay money and jump the hospital queues for your bunion removal, ahead of others waiting up to 12 months or more for hip replacements.

If you're nicely rich, you pay your money and get admission to university without the normal entry qualifications.

If you're nicely rich, you pay your money and then get your kid's school funded ahead of areas of key community needs.

Purist market theorists and politicians should start to learn to live without a feed from the government teat, or just cop their chances with all the rest of us, without all the whinges.

And if "queue jumping" is wrong in immigration, why is it suddently an "entitlement" in these areas?

- **Jo :**

18 Jan 2010 8:55:43pm

I agree, JB. Surely that would end all this argy bargy. P&C's and "voluntary" contributions at state schools could pay for the finer things of education rather than having to contribute to the bare minimum consumables and relief teacher payments which we currently contribute to in (Queensland) state schools.

- **Verify the facts :**

19 Jan 2010 5:01:33pm

JB,
Each private school student receives less government funding than each public school sudent, or to put aother way, each public school student receives more government funding than each private school student.

Are you suggesting that private school funding should be increased up to the public funding per student rate?

- **OFistFullOfDollars :**

18 Jan 2010 5:16:47pm

The federal government should stop funding primary and high school education directly. Hand the problem back to the states and territories. TAFES and Universities should be the only recipients of direct federal government funding.

If this does not work then the entire education system can be taken over by the federal government.

Ideally all education would be privately provided according to a government set curriculum. Education could be provided by large, national education companies that could provide good careers and charge parents fees and subsidize other students.

  - **Doh :**

  18 Jan 2010 6:06:03pm

  If financial literacy was taught in the schools, the Liberal Party would never be elected again. Their claim to being "better" economic managers would be spotted by the electorate in an instant as the BS it is.

    - **Hermit :**

    18 Jan 2010 7:10:30pm

    ... and if clear thinking was taught in schools, contributors to these forums would never make silly statement based on nothing but personal prejudice.

    Them's the breaks!

- **Skepticus Autartikus :**

18 Jan 2010 5:16:47pm

As well as vouchers, we need to drop the state government monopoly on the curriculum. The curriculum is so shallow due to all the identity politics agendas (sugar-coated as 'critical literacy') of the dumbest people going - university 'Education' academics and AEU flunkies.

  - **dinazad :**

18 Jan 2010 7:14:54pm

So if people with PhDs in education are the "dumbest people going", who do you think should determine curriculum?

And on that note, just who would you trust with a PhD - or are they all dummies?

And if our entire university system is built on dummies, what about all the engineers, doctors, policy makers, lawyers and accountants that they have taught? And why are those with Australian degrees so sought after overseas - obviously the world is full of dummies!!

Unless, perhaps, you're wrong - no, that can't be, I must be a dummy too.

- **Stranded :**

  19 Jan 2010 9:08:48am

  Dinazad,

  You're not the dummy. Neither are the PhDs.

  - **Oliver S :**

    19 Jan 2010 6:43:28pm

    Typical right winger afraid of things that he can't understand (ie intellectual debate, meritocratic hiring processes) and lashes out with name calling.

- **Mike :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:14:05pm

  The wealthiest of my friends are those who dropped out at various stages of education, not finishing year 10, or year 12 or dropping out at Uni.

  Myself, I continue to struggle in getting ahead and paying off a mortgage, despite having 2 degrees and a masters.

  The school leavers (and several from quite low-income earning families) left and learned about hard work with real skills, and about making their money work for them, becoming streetwise, travelling interstate or OS, and learning about business and not just filling thier heads with facts or acting above the social status (pretending that seems to be alot about what it takes to get ahead in corporate life). They are the builders, bank tellers, business owners who now own multiple properties and are very well off.

  I believe you can afford anything in life. It's about "how much it will cost you" to afford whatever that thing is (education for kids, lavish lifestyle).

  This conspiracy theory about the rich trying to keep the poor downtrodden is a big lie.

  The best education you can give your kids is that their identity is not tied into what they do or how educated

they are, but who they are. This "frees" them up to make good choices that ultimately leads to whatever goals they desire.

- **Dale :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:20:47pm

  Hi Mike, I essentially agree with what you're saying but it is not as black and white as you make out. Class based societies exist. In fact, it has been the norm throughout history. If we don't protect the fundamental principles that egalitarian societies are based upon, we risk losing the social gains we have made.

  Cheers, Dale

- **joe :**

18 Jan 2010 5:08:44pm

I find myself in agreement.
An egalitarian Australia is worth the effort.

Those that can afford private schooling don't need government handouts, or at least are not in as much need as the public system that gets just about all its money from there.

From my personal perspective and experience, the difference in education quality evaporates once students are studying at the same tertiary institution anyway.

For those really seeking an elitist education - it will actually be MORE elitist to have attended a completely private-funded school.

Less of the middle class will be able to afford to send their kids to private school - maybe then they will spend their lobbying time demanding improvements in a system that benefits so many more kids. During the Howard years, most of these families realised the public system was going to be starved and degraded, and, knowing Johnny was not going to fix it they did their best to jump ship into the private schools. I cannot blame them for that, but it made the problem as a whole much worse.

Most of the ugly issues our society faces today would have been improved if the generation previous had been "edumacated a bit moar good yeh?"

My PUBLIC schooling gave me enough training to make university entrance easy enough, but what it really gave me was exposure to all the classes, all the races, all the points of view in my neighbourhood. Not just the middle and upper classes, not just those of a particular religion.

This means I can enjoy a beer with fencers and factory hands, a single-malt with businessmen and professionals, a coffee with intellectuals and artsy-types, bourbon with the tradies and even a joint with the ferals and fringers. I love them all, just not the petty "us and them" that falls to every grouping that is too insular.
And, more to the point I can see their perspectives with some clarity. Makes life in the Real World that much easier.

Any kids of mine will be educated in the public system, with extra tuition (and a bunch of P&C board agitation!) if needed.

Also, the money needs to be spent not on laptops, but on quality staff. These are the mentors of the next generation for goodness' sake! Anyone can buy/hire/borrow some soon to be obsolete IT stuff these days - this country is rich enough that people THROW AWAY working stuff (some of which gets renovated by volunteers and donated to low-income families).

One example of the public system needing more than it gets: I know a lady who works in "diversionary counselling" at a public school - the problem kids (and their families!) who would otherwise be destined to a life of antisocial behaviour and underachievement getting a bit of to-the-point tutoring and mentorship, showing them their own value and potential. The school could not afford to renew her contract. Many of her charges went noticeably do

- **Dion :**

  19 Jan 2010 4:06:42am

  Joe (sic)

  If you consider yourself a product of quality public education then perhaps you should ...?

  - **Stranded :**

    19 Jan 2010 9:21:02am

    Dion,

    Joe's writing reveals no deficit in education. He has clearly developed writing skill and fluency, and his piece reveals familiarity with the technical requirements of composition.

    Perhaps you're just lacking in good manners.

- **Rocky :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:53:47pm

  The elite thing is an issue - the poorer systemic systems another totally.

  Personally, I've been to both state and private schools. Learned in both and taught in both. Had kids educated in both.

  Reality - a school is as good as its principal and teachers and there are complete bogans in both.

  A.A. you're throwing out the baby with the bath water and you really don't have much of an idea about education.

  The true reality is that education is becoming very expensive across the board because technology costs a hell of a lot more than chalk.

The incredibly sad thing is that university is not free - that's where the GST $ should have gone if we want an intelligent, open and educated society.

- **Mike :**

18 Jan 2010 4:53:42pm

It's like a kind of stealthy educational apartheid. The advantaged get to retain their advantages and the rest get to know their place.

  - **dinazad :**

18 Jan 2010 7:19:22pm

And this eductational apartheid goes on to create opportunity apartheid, employment apartheid, health apartheid and, finally, child development apartheid for the next generation.

Selfishness is what it comes down to in the end - I can buy myself out of my community, and I don't care about the cost.

- **Daryl Walter :**

18 Jan 2010 4:46:03pm

Many good intentioned parents are misguided by VCE & HSC results of private school. Private schools prevent students continuing in YEAR 12 unless they are not top of class. Sadly the media fails to expose this.
Private school students can also do poorly at Uni without the threat "your parents are paying good money to make you learn".
Private schools/parents can afford large hush money to keep problems such as drugs out of the media
A decent education is fundamental right for all Australians. "It is time" for this labour party to fund the public schools properly. If people want an private schools then thats their choice but no government subsidy.

  - **Hermit :**

18 Jan 2010 7:20:26pm

The fundamental question each parent who pays school fees must consider is whether it is worth the dollars. Most parents don't seek high grades. They seek opportunity for their children to achieve and to mingle with ambitious minds.

When approaching senior secondary years, any school worth its salt will tell the truth to a student who does not have the capacity to be a brain surgeon. As a house master at a very prestigious school I routinely told parents that their children were wasting their time and their parents money. To fail to do so would be dishonest.

It is a fact that independent schools will have no qualms in taking the dollars from a struggling student, providing that is what the family wants. That is unless of course the student is holding others back or is suffering socially or developmentally.

Rather than approaching the question with malice of forethought, try thinking a bit harder.

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 6:42:10pm

  Just out of interest Hermit, what if the student that is holding others back happens to belong to a very wealthy family who would be happy to pay extra to keep the child in the school? What would happen then?

- **Michael C :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:43:48pm

  Nothing to disagree with here. The current SES formula for funding is flawed, often working to consolidate intergenerational elite power. A child's education is one of the key times when his or her life chances can be turned around. Public schools are generally where opportunities for the most disadvantaged children--those who come to school without the advantages of the middle and ruling class -- are most critical.
  How a Labor Government, which claims to be enacting an Education revolution, can continue this system of funding is an indication of how embedded Neoliberalism still is in Australian political culture.

  - **Sue :**

    18 Jan 2010 9:23:03pm

    Neoliberalism, bull. The government know they will lose the vote of the aspirational class if they don't continue funding private schools. Those votes are what keeps governments in power.

  - **Oliver S :**

    19 Jan 2010 6:40:59pm

    Also look at how many Labor politicians send their kids to private schools. And remember that it was the funding of private (catholic) schools issue that caused the DLP split and latter and post-Menzies wilderness period for the Labor party.

- **Michael C :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:43:48pm

  Nothing to disagree with here. The current SES formula for funding is flawed, often working to consolidate intergenerational elite power. A child's education is one of the key times when his or her life chances can be turned around. Public schools are generally where opportunities for the most disadvantaged children--those who come to school without the advantages of the middle and ruling class -- are most critical.
  How a Labor Government, which claims to be enacting an Education revolution, can continue this system of funding is an indication of how embedded Neoliberalism still is in Australian political culture.

  - **dinazad :**

18 Jan 2010 8:01:15pm

Yes, the "education revolution" is a laugh isn't it. I can see Rudd and Gillard standing together, each with an armed raised holding a a hammer and sickle as they look proudly in to the future.

At the bottom of this statue it reads, "Save the rich".

- **Evil Genius :**

18 Jan 2010 4:35:11pm

" The urgent requirement now is the gradual removal of public funds from elite private schools and the reconstitution of public schools as the centrepiece of our education system "

Absolutely!

In a system which charges upto $26,000 per school year for the priveledge to send your child to a private school, and that same private system turns to the Federal & state governments and DEMAND funding, is obscene.

The subsidisation of the private school sector by the tax payer must end.

Private schools are also pricing themelves out of the market with their insanely high fees. I would if they have ever heard of the econmic maxim of diminishing returns? The higher the fee is, the smaller the pool of potential students.

Sure there will always be the elite that scoff at the tuition fees but the reality is the the majority of private school pupils come from middle class backgrounds. Those parents mistakenly believe their child will recieve a superior education at the private school. Well I'll let you all in on a secret:

Only the top 20 percent [academically] of pupils at any private schools actually recieve the greater focus and attention by the educators. The rest get processed through the system like sausage meat. I know this because I went through the system.

In year 8 or 1st year high school, we were set a scaling test to determine which of the entire year group [consisting of 153 students] were the top 30. I came 33rd and my best friend 32nd. My other friends, who made the cut, were then slotted into the special program and were grooomed to be the stars of the school. The rest of us were left to fend for ourselves and be taught by half mad, sometimes psychotic old men who's cynacism and lack of educational flare would stun people today. I reall believe my parents got ripped off for the thousands they spent on sending me to that school. The ONLY things that made the place tolerable were my friends and the odd teacher who gave a crap and was actually competent.

For those interested, the school I went too is the alma mater of Heath Ledger. Its got buckets of money from endowments, trusts, bequests and foundations and why it and any other private school needs money from any level of government, is beyond me.

  - **blax5 :**

  18 Jan 2010 8:46:17pm

Often, the children are sent to a private school to make the 'right' friends, i.e. get a lift to be mobile, upwards.
I was going to comment on your spelling of cynicism, but abstain.

- **Sally :**

18 Jan 2010 4:35:03pm

A provocative article (a good thing) given the broad readership of this website. Residential (for which read postcode) location means little, other than in a few socio-economically deprived or advantaged postcodes within Australia. The rest are mixed. In terms of social justice, finding a formula for funding schools would probably pose the same problem it does for social and medical researchers in finding demographic certainties, that is, using a social research derived model of area of residence (postcode) provides no certainty. If anything, it provides conundrums, and plenty of headaches.
Perhaps we need a new funding model that addresses private school fee structures for individual students. Perhaps any student whose fees are over $x receives less in subsidy, where x is greater than a norm (another wonderful task to perform). This means moving away from funding schools to funding students (rather like tertiary institutions). But perhaps that is more equitable than the current situation?
If you battle to get your kid into a private school near you that has a great academic rating, and at great personal cost, should you receive more than your highly affluent neighbourâ€™s kid? I think so. But this is a debate. We need more ideas thrown into the arena and genuinely thrashed out on better research grounds than what we have now.

- **David :**

18 Jan 2010 4:30:11pm

Mr Ashbolt has taken a rather huge swipe at the public funding of elite private schools and I am sure the usual set of bloggers/ranters will chime in and support his view.

He strongly proposes the view that poorer schools are poor because of the lack of C'Wealth funding, elite schools should not get any funding and as usual it is all John Howard's fault.

A few reminders - first of all John Howard was schooled at Canterbury Boys High - hardly an elite private school. Secondly the funding of public schools has always been the primary responsibility of the states thus the term "State Schools". Mr Ashbolt fails to mention the Labor run states failure to support their own schools in any of his piece - A serious omission.

Lastly as some one from a poor background who attended both private and public schools my key issue has been that poorer schools are poor not because of funding but because the vast majority of kids who attend public schools are simply not interested in an academic education. They are seeking employment elsewhere and no matter how much political correctness you put into the discussion you cannot escape the fact that very few public school kids are seeking entry into university to study medicine etc because they simply do not want to or are not capable of meeting the academic requirements.

Stop blaming John Howard for everything (and no I did not vote Liberals in the last election). It has been my experience (having sent my own kids to public and private schools) that you can achieve anything you want to if you put your mind to it. Dont blame the "Guvmnt" if you are an academic washout.

  - **Marion :**

18 Jan 2010 7:00:54pm

Some children have not been blessed with parents who respect the value of education, or parents who have the time, ability or inclination to supervise their children's participation in school activities. Not all children come from homes where interesting books are available. Some come from frighteningly disfunctional homes. These children have a harder row to hoe than others. They need more help not less. It is cost effective to spend more money on the children who appear to not value an education - less money will be spent on the justice system later on.

- **The_Beverage :**

18 Jan 2010 10:23:25pm

Just on your last point. "the vast majority of kids who attend public schools are simply not interested in an academic education"... What utter crap David. That is elitest bullshit, and you know it. That one line makes me believe that you have never even seen a public school (let alone attended one), except to show your children where the plebs scurry about in pursuit of their pathetic life goals.

I have a very, very small group of friends who attended a private school, they have been blessed enough to have been given a large quantity of money from their parents so that they can invest a business of their choosing. The overwhelming majority of my friends who attended public school throughout my years with them have gone on to do a pursue a variety of careers, including but not limited to; journalism (2), nursing (3), law (2), medicine (3), theology (1), psychiatry (1), thankfully), bio science (2), politics (3) and performing arts (5, myself included). And this is just off the top of my head. We worked our arses off to get where we are, and I don't appreciate reading an offensive, broad, sweeping statement like yours on a site that normally promotes intelligent debate. Nor do I think that it's even a semi-reasonable argument against the case of reducing goverment funding for privately run schools.

No one is blaming the government for being an academic washout. Rather, they're talking about evening out a system that has obvious flaws to give families who can't afford a private school an opportunity to give their child a better education.

A final word. Get your hand off it mate.

- **pilotyoda :**

18 Jan 2010 11:19:47pm

You are kidding, right?
How does someone on median wage with 2 or more kids afford elite, or even average private schools. Kids from poorer families go to public schools because there is no choice on price, unless parents choose a low cost non-secular school. Even then they may not be able to afford anything but the cheaper Catholic option.

Are you saying that children from poorer (sorry: Not wealthy) backgrounds have no aspirations? They don't dream of being doctors or engineers? Get real. Most kids do. Without funding, they simply do not effectively compete for places in University. When most kids are expected to look up information on the internet and present attractive word-processed, computer printed assignments, those without such facilities at home or school often get lower marks and become disillusioned with the education

process.

By the way. Have you noticed how many tradespeople earn more than their professional counterparts? In many cases they are more respected and many women (and some men) are also more attracted to fit, healthy tradespeople than their chair-bound and less fit office counterparts.

- **Anthony :**

18 Jan 2010 4:29:56pm

Yes and no.

People seem so obsessed with private education these days. Ask anyone who has been through it, and they'll tell you there's a downside. From experience, I know that growing up and being educated on the upper North Shore isn't always as it seems. Pressure to perform and conform, along with unrealistic personal, peer and parental expectations can make for a difficult transition into broader society.

It is almost 25 years since I left school. Towards the end of last year I caught the train from Gordon to Hornsby in the morning peak hour and saw kids from these so called elite private schools busily making their way to school. They just looked like my friends and I all those years ago. I think of so many of those people now and what they have done with their lives and what life has done to them. Many aren't so different from the kids I've spent teaching in the NSW public system for the past 22 years.

  - **anote :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:18:21pm

  Excellent point that there is a downside, more than on in fact. Another downside is the time wasted on religion if you go to a religious private school but do not actually belive in the religion.

  Many aren't so different from some of the kids in public schools but many of the kids in public school are probably quite different in terms of having a detrimental effect on ther peers.

- **Phantobill :**

18 Jan 2010 4:29:28pm

The NSW public education system is in dire straits. Neglected teachers & neglected school resources. This means neglected students. Our public money needs to be more targeted and spent on the needy not the privileged

- **Peter Burrows :**

18 Jan 2010 4:24:41pm

Thats right and dont let those elitists buy BMWs and Merc make them buy Holden Statesmen and houses over a certain size should be banned as well. They are up themselve those rich buggars we need to bring them down a notch.

Michael :

18 Jan 2010 6:39:07pm

Whatever - I'm just sick of paying for their kids to go to a snotty school.

- **Peter Burrows :**

  19 Jan 2010 1:51:46am

  Michael, thanks for your balanced approach to this complex issue, and thanks for your support.

- **pedro :**

  18 Jan 2010 11:05:55pm

  Obviously you are not referring to the intellectually or morally elite as they generally don't have Euro cars or large houses.
  You must be referring to the pretentious perception driven " elite " whose think a Merc or a BMW is somehow special or a large house is desirable.
  It's obviously hardly necessary to bring them down a notch as they are normally bottom feeders anyway.

- **Peter Burrows :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:24:41pm

  Thats right and dont let those elitists buy BMWs and Merc make them buy Holden Statesmen and houses over a certain size should be banned as well. They are up themselve those rich buggars we need to bring them down a notch.

  - **Oliver S :**

    19 Jan 2010 6:37:52pm

    Have BMW or Merc released a hybrid car yet? Maybe there is something in your suggestions...

- **Patrick McMaster :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:17:56pm

  Most Australians, including this appalling so called Labor government should hand their heads in shame when it comes to the education system in this country. How dare we as a nation allow, and turn a blind eye to the fact that if you have money you will have by and large a better education experience than those of your fellow working class students. This appalling current government found billions of dollars when it wanted, to prop up and artificially inflate the housing sector, prop up multi-national car companies and banks to the tune of billions of dollars, yet can't find money for basic fundamental needs for many of our public schools. CHOICE what CHOICE. This is an appalling myth put forwarded by only those who send their children to elite schools. How does a single mother of 4 living in Liverpool have a choice to send her

children to King's school for example. Yet all the children who attend King's could easily choose to attend their local public school. How do we sit by and send some children to schools that resemble 5 star luxury hotels and happily send others to some schools that have had little or no maintenance in 2 decades. Here is a novel idea. Take all the funding away from so called private schools and let them raise their own funding. Distribute all the said funds back into the public sector and it's school teachers. Naturally many of the so-called private schools will close and there will be a swell into the public ranks. The additional billions of dollars not being spent on elite schools will now easily meet this influx into the public sector. To those parents who have been fooled into thinking that some how PAYING lots of money by definition will make your child better educated are fooling themselves. Public schools should be of the highest order, temples worth worshiping, filled full of only the very best highly paid teachers money can buy. Having been educated in both sectors, Elite school children mostly grow up with a sense of entitlement that makes my stomach turn. Give me a bunch of public school kids any day. Oh and to all of those parents about to reply about how you pay your taxes yada yada yada, so do the working class. Feel free to send me a copy of your last 5 years tax returns for a FULL and COMPREHENSIVE TAX AUDIT and we will really see who pays their taxes.

- **mack :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:52:06pm

  "How do we sit by and send some children to schools that resemble 5 star luxury hotels..."

  Are you talking about private schools here, or State selective schools? But I think you've hit the core of the issue - why on earth would I send my child to a local school that has "...had little or no maintenance in 2 decades...", when a private school is an option?

  The other issue is that a public school kid attracts about twice as much public funding (State plus Commonwealth) as a private school kid. If all of the current private school kids suddenly descended on the State system, we'd probably have complete melt-down.

  I think that the whole education system (end to end) and all of its components requires a systemic view. Until this happens, and real change occurs in the State system, then people like me (educated through the State system) will ALWAYS send their kids to a private school.

  - **pilotyoda :**

    18 Jan 2010 10:41:34pm

    They would not "suddenly descend" on the public system. For many parents, the thing is that the school is private and often elite, or they are Christian, Muslim, Steiner, etc. That wont change.

    As for funding, a huge chunk of the public funding goes to infrastructure, not just educational operating expenses. All private schools have a "building fund" (or equivalent) component of their fees. Take infrastructure out of the equation and suddenly you see just how underfunded the public schools are.

    If the Federal funding slice of 66% for 33% of total students who are in private schools was changed to equal amounts for all students, that is the equivalent of a 50% increase for public schools. Good value, particularly if only half of those private students went back to public

education. At least the private schools could then say they were a bit more elite

- **Oliver S :**

  19 Jan 2010 6:36:57pm

  Don't compare State selective schools with private schools. For one thing in my experience they are not any better funded than non-selective schools.

  But more importantly the State selective schools select children based on talent not on money. That is a totally different thing - it is streaming based on the educational needs (not wants which are usually what private schools focus on) of the student.

- **asterix :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:16:25pm

  I don't get it. Private schools reduce the amount governments need to spend on schooling.

  But you want to remove their funding, send all the middle class back into public system where instead of a subsidised cost per child the public system needs to pay full rate?

  And somehow by adding more burden to the schooling budgets you'll get a better result?

  By the way my private school was far less equipped than the public schools. But I do think I had a different standard of teacher.

  I checked the SES scores for the schools in my region and most were in fact the same, unless you were in a rural area (in which case you scored higher).

  - **the yank :**

    18 Jan 2010 5:04:26pm

    This is the problem...
    "By 2013 independent schools will have received $47 billion, compared to $35 billion for state schools."
    "The study says the Government would have to put $1.5 billion a year extra into education to return it to the level of funding handed out to public schools by the last Labor government."
    "Only one third of school students attend private schools."
    Quote from "Private schools get $12b advantage: union" posted on ABC's On line.

    - **Phedre :**

      18 Jan 2010 7:36:19pm

      That is Federal funding only, if you add the State figures then state students do indeed get more funding than private :)

the yank :

19 Jan 2010 7:36:03am

Sorry I don't buy that. We are talking about federal tax dollars. I don't agree that it is the responsibility of the Federal government to try and make things in their eyes even.
If the Feds handed out money to parents based on need, not on just having a child, and the parent got to use that money to help pay for their child's education I would be comfortable with that approach.
But places like Kings college do not need notr should they have, direct assistance from the government.

- **dinazad :**

18 Jan 2010 5:31:15pm

I guessed you went to a private before I got to the end of your diatribe.

Clearly, critical thinking and the link between evidence and argument was not taught ... or at least not learned.

- **Oliver S :**

18 Jan 2010 5:33:12pm

"Private schools reduce the amount governments need to spend on schooling"

Even if that is true (which I am not entirely convinced about), this shouldn't be about being cost-effective. Education is a public service provided by the Government. I happen to believe that a strong public education system is the best way to provide that service. Any who disagree should pay to have that service provided elsewhere.

- **Mark :**

18 Jan 2010 8:44:50pm

The argument that abandoning private school funding will see a flood of children into the public system is bunkum. It is used by private school lobbyists to ignore the economic argument. Taxes are scarce so we should be using opportunity cost not direct cost.

Prior to the Howard governments SES funding model private schools got very little federal funding. There were 26% of students in private schools, since the funding model has changed, this has increased by about 40% or an additional 12% of students. Now if we look at the opportunity cost associated with the SES funding model we find that we are now heavily subsidising the original 26%, that the savings associated with the reduction of an extra 12% off the public sector books is very little.

In addition, the rate of return on investment is lower in private schools then public schools, basically you get a better bang for your buck if you invest in the most highly disadvantaged. But facts, numbers and the truth are not politically desirable when suggesting to remove a cash cow from the rich.

- **anote :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:11:14pm

  Quite so asterix.

  To reinforce the point private schools provide the same public service that public schools do. The standards are set but the government system albeit that private schools may contribute.

- **rusty :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:15:24pm

  And why not have a more egalitaran tax system too ..where those that work hard and have a go pay the same amount of tax as those that don't. Then we might have governments that are aleast responsible with what they do with the tax payers money.

  - **pedro :**

    18 Jan 2010 11:14:44pm

    One famous Nazi General said " As soon as someone sits in front of me and mentions the word CULTURE I start to reach for my pistol"
    Much the same with me, as soon as someone mentions how HARD they have or do WORK so they can send their brats to a private school I have exactly the same temptation except I no longer have a pistol.

- **Mason :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:10:10pm

  I couldn't agree more with this article. People in the private system talk about 'choice', but where is the choice for those who cannot afford these schools. Do we ready want a society where there are those that can afford a 'decent' education and there are those who cannot? I shudder to think where this will lead us!

- **Skepticus Autartikus :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:08:01pm

  I'm sorry but when it comes to discussing education, grinding the tired old "the King's School" organ is the equivalent of Godwin's.

  And please spare your even more cliched invocations of the meaningless "social justice" shtick.

  There IS an excellent argument against giving these elite schools even a cent of government money. It is the same argument that transfers the choice to individual parents by giving them a voucher if they - as most state high school parents do - wish to flee the cesspit of their local high school in Mt. Druitt, Holroyd, Fairfied, Fitzroy, or wherever.

Oliver S :

18 Jan 2010 4:52:19pm

The problem with having everyone fleeing the 'cesspit of their local high school' (regardless of whether it is through a voucher system or the current system) is that it ensures that the schools decline even further. Which means that now people don't have any choice but to pay for their kids to go to a private school (and you are absolutely deluding yourself if you think that the private schools would be content with charging the amount that parents get on their vouchers under your proposed system).

There would be absolutely no difference to the current situation under a voucher system (except of course that it would cost a hell of a lot to administer the new system).

- **Hades :**

18 Jan 2010 4:05:58pm

School funding has less effect on educational achievement than socio economic background and places of residence. Schools in the Northern Territory receive the greatest amount of funding from governments and yet their students lag the rest of the country on every educational measurements.

To offer real competition to the private schools, states should emulate the NSW system of selective public schools. It works and offer genuine opportunities to those who are willing to study hard, irrespective of social background.

  - **Oliver S :**

18 Jan 2010 5:40:58pm

As a graduate of a NSW selective public school I couldn't agree more.

They should examine different educational systems which incorporate streaming - academic schools and vocational schools.

Perhaps primary and middle school together (with the streams moving apart somewhat in middle school), and then separate schools for years 11 and 12?

- **Owen H :**

18 Jan 2010 4:03:29pm

I agree with just about everything you have to say in this article. At the same time I must state that I sent my son to a private school in the '90's . The motivation/concern that lead me to that decision was not a statement about the education standard in public schools , but rather the lax discipline/standards of behaviour that were allowed in the school environment - I did not want my child to come into an environment like this at such an impressionable age and risk undoing a considerable amount of home influence . It was quickly evident that the private school I chose did pay attention to individual social

development that was fed back to the parent(s).
I would venture to suggest that many parents have (or had) similar concerns when they made the same decision .

- **JC :**

18 Jan 2010 3:58:03pm

I fully agree with the article and its conclusion however I also remember the savaging suffered by Latham when he sought to undo howards dirty work.

Talk back radio, blog posts and letters to the editor flooded in talking about some single mum who scrimped and saved so that their beloved child could make something of themselves.

It was impossible to point out that if public schools were properly funded the poor single mother would not have had to scrimp and save to achieve the same goal.

Alas that argument was too much for the rabid right to allow.And again I fear that the sensible and fair suggestions in this article would inevitably lead to another round of fear from those born to rule.

  - **Oliver S :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:54:57pm

  The problem there is that Labor just didn't spin it correctly - its quite simple: Look at comparative UAIs, look at university performance, and look at careers. Line up a whole bunch of prominent Australians who went through the public education system and made something of themselves (and I would hope that it wouldn't be too hard to find the line-up).

    - **pilotyoda :**

    18 Jan 2010 10:14:30pm

    Agreed.
    Just don't include politicians. So far they set a poor example.

- **Terry Long :**

18 Jan 2010 3:52:44pm

Part of the problem here, is, as the author has noted, the flight of the middle classes to private schooling. There is a perception that these schools will bestow upon their offspring a better education and elevated social standing, both for the offspring and for themselves among their peers. I'm an old codger with two sons. I'm probably best described as upper middle-class. Both my sons have attended public schools. One is now a captain on an international airline, after having completed a science degree. The other is 16, has spent a year in China and speaks fairly fluent Mandarin. He's considering going on to study at ANU. Our choice of school has been influenced by "nearology" - close to home and easy for the children to access from home. There's also the thought that inspriration starts at home and is only marginally influenced by the school the child attends. There is also a powerful psychological adage - children will live up to, or down

to, your expectations.

- **Phedre :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:48:38pm

  If private schools don't give a better education than public then we are best off keeping the private (and keeping them funded as not funding them will essentially kill of a lot of them) as they allow the government to spend more money on public (if you take into account all funding and not just Federal then the government spends a fair amount less on private schools)

- **dinazad :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:54:17pm

  Well said, Terry. For all of the argument about education systems, they are only a part of the learning environment of our children. Clearly, parenting is a crucial influence, exposure to different media play a part, friends, socio-economic opportunity and yes, one's school.

  Parents who value education in its broadest sense - and I don't mean some pathetic tests of literacy and numeracy - tend to create children who value the same.

- **lorek :**

  18 Jan 2010 3:42:08pm

  Let's be clear-when you say 'elite' you mean 'expensive'; any moron can send their moron child along provided they can get them into a uniform and pay the fees. An elite school would select on the grounds of talent or capacity. There is an argument for the existence of such schools, both publicly and privately funded, but today is not the day for it.

  Part of the increase in numbers at these schools is likely fed by parents who (like me) went to uni for free, the first members of their family to do so. Education gave us opportunities, which we took. Taking them gave us choices, which we exercise.

  Of course state schools should be better; they should be palaces, with teachers paid proper professional salaries to do a great job teaching all children, not just those who want to learn, or whose parents want them to learn. On that basis, schools in lower socio economic areas should be the best of the best-where children want to come because they have worlds open to them and have a great time. Which is pretty much what the private system offers my children.

  I don't kid myself that the schools will open doors for them-indeed, in the elite environment of my workplace (where we are chosen for brains and ability) hardly anyone under 30 comes from a so called 'elite' school. Maybe the ones who don't are hungrier.

  I think it is fair enough that private schools get at least some of the government money that comes with a child's enrolment. After all, the state system is relieved of the obligation to educate them-but more than that, they should not get.

Paladin :

18 Jan 2010 3:39:36pm

I was once in a discission with a person seconded by the then federal gov. for his expertise.
My position was that public schools were not listening to the parents concerns. He replied they certainly did.
I gave the example of mutliplication tables not being taught as they used to be, His response was havent I heard of calculators to which I replied havent you heard of brains.

Finally those basic concerns are being addressed after years of wasted money on public education during which time, hordes were taking their children out of the failing public system to private schools. Then huge monies were required to provide remedial education to all those who ended up without a basic education.

re this article, To suggest it's for the elite is rubbish unless you call couples elitists, if both work to pay for their childrens education. Rather it's points like the ones i raised that drive them out of the public system.

Also an inequity is raised by not addressing the obvious question, "Why should the parents of children in the private system have to pay the same tax to support other children in the failed public system, as well as give their children a near decent education in the private system?

I wonder what it would cost the taxpayer if all private schools closed, anyone any idea?

- **Oliver S :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:02:56pm

  Rubbish argument paladin. Your taxes are not a fee that you pay for public services. Your taxes are the fee you pay to be in the society in which you have been given your opportunities to live and earn.

  The Government is mandated to provide education for all. It does that through the public education system. If you choose not to avail yourself of that then you should bear the costs.

  You might as well say that in the event of an invasion I will be a collaborator with the invaders so I shouldn't be forced to pay taxes for a defense force which I won't need.

  Lastly, perhaps if you weren't working so hard to afford the additional private school fees you could take an active interest in your children's education and a) Lobby the Board of Studies to change the curricula which you felt deficient or b) Provide the education for your children yourself in those areas that you felt it was lacking.

- **atomou :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:12:47pm

  Paladin, your simplistic question didn't go so far as to ask why were the multiplication tables being taught in exactly the same way in your fanciful "Private" school?

  There's nothing "private" about an organisation that is funded by the public purse.

Roger :

18 Jan 2010 5:17:12pm

I think this is a very good article and from a person who was in a position of insight.

As far as the last sentence, thats easy, all the 'Private Schools' would become public schools overnight. People think there would be a massive immigration from one sector to the other. I'd suggest there is nothing further from the truth, just look what happened when ABC Kindergarten went bust, like the banks, the government[s] couldn't allow this to happen.

- **pilotyoda :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:03:58pm

  Actually, they could allow it to happen with the banks, but stuffed that process up. At least the US took equity in the banks when they bailed them out. In the EU, many banks were nationalised.
  As for ABC, employers would have screamed if 1/3 of their staff did not show up for work because there was no child care. Now the community holds a bigger stake in child care.

  However. If anyone receives public money, be it big business or private schools (same thing, really) then they should be fully accountable and the books open to public scrutiny. No exceptions as allowed by our hallowed minister.

- **Jack Sumner :**

  18 Jan 2010 3:38:58pm

  I owe most of my current wellbeing to the excellent public education I received from Primary school in 1945 through to university graduation in 1962. My support of UK Labour and Australian Labor stems from gratitude to the 1945-51 Attlee government for making this possible for a child of parents who both had to work in shop or office until retirement.

  As a member of the ALP, I strongly supported the Latham policy to drastically cut government subsidy to private schools and am disappointed that the Rudd government has chosen poll expediency over principle in retaining the Howard education allocations. I am not opposed to private education or for that matter private health but those who chose this option should pay fully for what they see as a privilege.

  I agree entirely with the views expressed in Anthony Ashbolt's "Socially screwed".

  - **Lorraine Parsons :**

    18 Jan 2010 5:03:12pm

    Well said, Jack.

    I agree with you wholeheartedly. Like you, I received an excellent education at a public school during the 60's and 70's but have observed, with dismay, the public education system being allowed to 'wither on the vine'.

The governments first and foremost obligation is to provide excellent, first-class public education to all students. If people wish to send their children to a private school, for whatever reason - it's their choice, which I fully support, but they do so at their own cost.

It is grossly unfair for working parents on low or middle incomes to be effectively subsidising wealthy parents, or struggling middle-class parents, sending their children to private schools.

- **Hermit :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:33:18pm

  Education is indeed a means to social mobility.

  What is more grossly unfair than monetary cross-subsidisation is the absence of any means of social mobility through education.

  Articles such as this one which seek to engage in class and political warfare are starting from the wrong place.

  The real question is how to provide opportunities for children to better themselves if they want to.

  Hint to Labor: it is not about building school halls and putting up signs.

  - **Jack Sumner :**

    19 Jan 2010 9:22:26am

    I'm sorry I didn't note any engagement in class and political warfare in Ashbolt's article. Whereas your hint to Labor ------?

    What alternative solution would you proffer in order to better "provide opportunities for children to better themselves?

  - **Hermit :**

    19 Jan 2010 1:21:36pm

    Labor are in government and they have spent enormous amounts of money building school halls and made lots of announcements and appearances in hard hats along the way. The very name of the project "Building the Education Revolution" is a complete misnomer. It has nothing to do with education.

    The short answer to providing opportunities for children to better themselves is make it top priority that children be taught to read in the lower primary grades. From that point, they need constant exposure to a range of activity designed to stimulate their interest. Finally, every child deserves to have access to qualified teaching of specialist subjects in the senior secondary years.

Dion :

19 Jan 2010 3:58:01am

Hello Jack - a good post, but who determines the curriculum (what is taught) for schools? Marxists like Mr Ashbolt or governments or communities?

- **Jack Sumner :**

  19 Jan 2010 9:29:14am

  Thank you Dion.

  Democratically elected governments must determine and evolve curricula, forever mindful of community concerns but never hostage to populism.

  I suppose you have some basis of fact for labelling Ashbolt, a marxist?

- **Hubert :**

18 Jan 2010 3:34:37pm

It s indeed a splippery slope that public education in Australia is on... I read in another article today that enrollments in Private SAchools have been increasing, and how some have used this as an argument that therefore funding to private schools should be increased. What rubbish. More parents are choosing Private Schooling as the public system has been getting worse. Why ? Because the previous government increased the proportion of funding to Private Schools. Less money for Public Schools = worsening public education standards = more enrollments in private schools.

This has to stop.

The federal government's primary concern is education should be to public schools. Some funding to private schools may be appropriate, especially not-for-profit schools, however 70% of federal funding to 30% of students is absolutely shameful. There's the argument about state level funding disproportionately leaning towards public schools, but maybe this is a reaction to the federal funding model ?

The ideology that throwing money into the private sector to relieve strain on the public sector is a furphy. That strain wouldn't be there if the money was put into the public system instead.

- **Oliver S :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:05:12pm

  No I think the federal funding model came in the Howard years and was in place after the state funding model. But nevertheless it seems pretty stupid that they felt that an imbalance of public funding between public and private school was a problem that needed to be addressed. Of course it won them lots of votes with the middle class...

- **atomou :**

18 Jan 2010 5:07:48pm

Spot on Hubert!

- **souwester :**

18 Jan 2010 3:34:02pm

What a diatribe. The vast majority of non-government schools (including the author's much hated catholic schools) struggle to make do. They primarily rely on the good will and support of their parents and community (a concept the good government controlled Mr Ashbolt would despise).

Interestly non-government school stillteach basic values and respect. Again a concept foreign to Mr Ashbolt; and to many of his education union dominated state schools.

And tellingly, the furphy of funding. Education is still constitutionally a state responsibility. why doesn't the ABC report on the combined funding (Commonwealth + State) to give a true picture.

Finally given there is no acknowledgement of who Mr Ashbolt is. We can only asume he is an ABC employee and this 'opnion' piece is actually a formal position of, and supported by, the ABC.

  - **Oliver S :**

    18 Jan 2010 5:11:25pm

    Perhaps you aren't aware of this, but money given to Catholic schools by the government is actually given to the church body who then allocates the money to the school. If the school is struggling financially then perhaps someone needs to examine the church's books? Also if schools affiliated with one of the richest organisations on earth (the Catholic church) are struggling, perhaps that says something about the organisation?

    As for teaching values: 1) Whose values do the schools teach (not all of us find all of our values in one book). 2) Ummm... how about trying to teach you child values yourself?

    Does the combined funding (state and federal) somehow show that private schools are not receiving any public money? Because the arguments still remain if it doesn't.

    It says a lot about your education if you can't figure out that clicking on the author's name takes you to a short bio of the author.

  - **Dr Pompy :**

    18 Jan 2010 5:26:59pm

    Dr Ashbolt's bio is attached to the article:

    "Anthony Ashbolt is a Senior Lecturer in Politics in the School of History & Politics at the University of Wollongong. He has published widely in the fields of American history and politics, cultural studies, political theory and education. He is an editor of the labour history journal Illawarra Unity."

As someone who went to an elite private school and completed a PhD, I agree entirely with Ashbolt.

But then, what would I know?

- **Blunt pencil :**

18 Jan 2010 5:57:35pm

I think you are too harsh and perhaps shielded from a part of the picture.

Firstly, I would imagine the ABC would love to report on the full funding to both sectors. The problem there is they use different accounting methods and different accounting periods. If you try to research this you will find the lament of Authors of Commissioned Reports is the system is so convoluted that it is just not possible to provide a proper comparison.

For my part, I conclude it is like this and not going to change anytime soon because government does not want the public to know the true figures.

Secondly, in my locality the public system is the fall back. Our local school had a number of private school rejects sent to them last year, and the year before, and the year before, and so on. Being rejects they are resource intensive. Our school had to put at lot of effort into such children only to see them move into the criminal justice system. The resources put into these children are obviously taken away from those who are trying to generally do the right thing.

It does work the other way around. A token public school does not expel a student and then send him or her on to the private system.

Thirdly, League tables are an issue. An elite private school will dump a kid if he or she looks like stuffing up their position on a league table. This is not a private public issue as the child will end up at a less salubrious private school rather then public.

My personal view on this is the public system should be funded to a greater extent then the private. I do not know how much greater as that depends on the extra resources required to cater for the children that the private system refuses to take.

If the private system changed its thinking and carried an equal burden in terms of troubled children then yes, they should be entitled to equal funding, or more funding if they chose to punch well above their weight.

Funding should not be reduced to private schools just because parents want to supplement the education of their children. I struggle to see that as a fair thing.

Lastly, click on the persons name and you will find this,
Anthony Ashbolt is a Senior Lecturer in Politics in the School of History & Politics at the University of Wollongong. He has published widely in the fields of American history and politics, cultural studies, political theory and education. He is an editor of the labour history journal Illawarra Unity.

If that is not enough then search him. If he is indeed published widely there will plenty of hits for you to look at.

- **pilotyoda :**

  18 Jan 2010 9:50:23pm

  Yes, B.P.
  I have also tried to find out the amount spent on education in this country.

  It was easy to find the out the Federal funding for non-tertiary schools. It was also easy to calculate the relative spending between Public and Private schools (but more difficult to work out the per-capita funding).

  When it came to identifying State government funding things went pear shaped. It was impossible to locate data showing how much was spent in Victoria on education, other than the budget total. (Can anyone out there help with the stats and put them up here?)

  Regardless of the split between Federal and State funding, the base rate total per student should be the same regardless of the school. No taxpayer money should go to private infrastructure and the only extra funding (both per student and for special staff and facilities) should be on a needs basis only. If any private school wants to take on difficult students and those with disabilities then they can get the same extra that public schools get. No more!

  Having taxpayer money to fund a student's education does not then preclude those with the wherewithal to spend extra on private education. But those parents should not expect better funding or further subsidies or deductions. If the school wants to teach differently, be "elite", or provide "better" values, or religious instruction, or sporting prowess, and charges parents $1,000 or $100,000 then parents are free to choose. This would at least ensure that the private schools properly compete with each other and make them work to attract students (or rather the parents) from the public system.

  That choice should not be because public schools are seen to be inadequate in any way.

  - **Blunt pencil :**

    19 Jan 2010 12:22:29am

    I am on our school board and wanted the funding data to give the minister an earful.

    I could not find it. I did find some reports where the authors stated it is impossible to provide comparative data due to the accounting variations between schools and school systems.

    I am afraid I cannot offer any information in regards to the true funding discrepancies between private and public. Hopefully someone will call by who can.

  - **VoR :**

    19 Jan 2010 12:11:19pm

    That's part of the culture of secrecy in the Education system. Comparisons are deemed odious; the result: the lazy and hypocritical are safely hidden.

- **Verify the facts :**

19 Jan 2010 1:12:44pm

According to the intenet:

http://www.aisnsw.edu.au/Main/LinkClick.aspx?link=InfoCirc%2FOctober+09+Information+Circular.pdf&tabid=350&mid=1232

The Federal 2009 Average Government School Recurrent Cost rates (per capita funding) are Primary = $8,380 & Secondary = $10,646.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/RecurrentGrants/NonGovSchools/Pages/2009GazetteofNonGovernmentSchools.aspx

Independant schools recieve between 13% and 70% depending on SES score.

http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/reports/financial/2009/vol9/pdf/08_fa1094_department_of_education_and_training_volume_9_2009.pdf

Average annual funding of non government education by NSW Government (average for all normal & special schools in the non-government sector) is Primary = $9,851 & Secondary = $12,142, Average = $10,816.

http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/publications/reports/financial/2009/vol9/pdf/08_fa1094_department_of_education_and_training_volume_9_2009.pdf

Cost of funding Non-Government school Education by NSW DET in the form of a per capita allowance and an interest subsidy scheme (average for all normal & special schools in the non-government sector) - Primary = $1,791 & Secondary = $2,276, Average = $2,033.

I have asked NSW DET and DEEWR to confirm that these figures are correct.

I can't find any proof whatsoever on the internet that any private schools recieve more per capita than public schools and so if anyone has this proof please, please give us all the web addresses.

- **Verify the facts :**

19 Jan 2010 11:25:54pm

TERRIBLY SORRY FOLKS! THE PARAGRAPH THAT READS "Average annual funding of non government education by NSW Government (average for all normal & special schools in the non-government sector) is Primary = $9,851 & Secondary = $12,142, Average = $10,816."
SHOULD NOT HAVE "NON" IN IT AT ALL. (I RUSHED THIS GOOGLE RESEARCH IN DURING MY MY LUNCH BREAK.)

THESE FIGURES ARE FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING IN NSW.

- **VoR :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:09:13pm

  "An elite private school will dump a kid if he or she looks like stuffing up their position on a league table."
  In the general case, blunt pencil, that is simply untrue. I understand that it is your personal experience. But my personal experience is the exact opposite. It comes down to the culture at individual schools.

- **Super Opinion :**

  18 Jan 2010 3:32:54pm

  Whilst I agree a very small minority of private schools do not need funding increases, Government funding should not be withdrawn from any school. Public education is the centrepiece, it receives the vast majority of funding, and yes it needs more.

  What worries me in these debates though is the constant murmur that if you send your children to private schools then you must pay 100% of the cost. This is ridiculous, all parents are taxpayers, and education should be given to all. Most parents could not afford 100% of the costs necessary to educate a child. If the 30% of children educated in private schools entered the public system, it would not cope.

  The dual public/private system we have allows for a differed education for those wanting it, taking pressure off the public system and providing this 30% at a reduced cost to a publicly educated child. Removal of funding will only lead to increased strain on the public system and increased demands on education funding.

  - **atomou :**

    18 Jan 2010 5:06:17pm

    "If the 30% of children educated in private schools entered the public system, it would not cope."
    And therein is the myth perpetuated by the private school industry.
    Of course it could cope. It copes in every other country on the planet. What's so unique about Oz?
    The money would be allocated to building more schools, better classrooms, fewer swimming pools and fewer footy and soccer grounds. Better equipped science rooms, libraries, fewer students per class...
    But then all this requires a sense of egalitarianism not elitism.

    - **Dion :**

      19 Jan 2010 3:52:38am

      Atomou, the difference lies not in swimming pools or tennis courts. In the 1960s, teachers regularly taught classes of 40, 50, or 60 pupils. Since teaching became so 'professional', with class sizes reduced to c.25, disciplinary options were withdrawn, wages failed to keep pace

(which is all related) and teachers have struggled. What planet do you live on? If current class sizes were increased by 30%, public school teachers would be obliged to strike under OHS rules. Wake up!

- **atomou :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:54:38pm

  Dion, I must admit that, even thjough I'm a retired teacher of English, I have no idea what you're talking about.

  This is planet Earth. Where are you?

- **Oliver S :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:16:48pm

  "This is ridiculous, all parents are taxpayers, and education should be given to all"

  No. Education IS provided for all. You choose whether to avail yourself of it or to pay for it yourself.

  "The dual public/private system we have allows for a differed education for those wanting it"

  Please re-read the article - it is talking about the effects of the loss of the middle class from the public system and the overall detriment that will have.

  "Removal of funding will only lead to increased strain on the public system and increased demands on education funding"

  Which may actually encourage Governments to prioritise education.

  - **Super Opinion :**

    18 Jan 2010 6:46:57pm

    I maintain that putting all the private school kids into the public system is doomed to fail. There was a strike at a Catholic School in Goulbourn at about 1963ish over funding, the Catholic school kids were all put into the public school and it could not cope. The Government was forced to relent on funding cuts and the Catholic School reopened. Imagine this happening on a National Scale and then tell me its a myth.

    Parents who educate their kids privately are happy to pay the extra for the additional benefits they seek, but we should not ask them to bare the entire burden given they are doing the economy and education system a favour.

  - **A :**

    18 Jan 2010 9:33:18pm

A child educated is a child educated, and although many independent schools do not need government funding, some do to maintain operation at a reasonable cost to parents.

My high school education costs roughly 6-7k per year. It isn't a fancy school; rather it is reminiscent of my state school in semirural QLD. The school has a standard of high academic achievement (the 2009 graduates had 3-4 times the number of English VHAs than the average across the state), something rather exemplary fro a school that takes all-comers regardless of prior academic success.

The reason the school does so well academically can be traced back to alternative teaching techniques used from year 8 to 10 (law dictates that grades 11 and 12 revert to the practices used by state schools) and (as much as I'm loath to say it) the vision of the principal to provide the best education possible.

I would very much like to complete my studies there this year, and I despise those who suggest all independent schools are rolling in cash and think that my parent's tax money should only be sent to the inefficient teenager holding pens that are public high schools.

Of course public schools need more funding, but they also need a fundamental rethink of teaching practices to remove the rigidity of the current system that leaves many students apathetic, something which no amount of government funding can fix.

"Do not train children to learning by force and harshness, but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each." â€“ Plato.

- **GraemeF :**

  19 Jan 2010 4:46:50pm

  If the 30% went from private to public, the wealthy and influential would lobby for better conditions in public schools and they would get better funding.

- **Peter from Mitcham :**

  18 Jan 2010 3:32:36pm

  Well in our case our child went to a private school because we want her to have the best chance possible. As it turned out she was never going to be an academic student but the school still gave her a musch better education than state schools ever could. Oi, by the way, mate. If you want to go and see big black BMWs and Mercedes cars picking up their kids from schol go to the local state primary or secondary school. It really irks me to think that we have also paid for someone else's child's education as well as our own. Dream on Anthony.

  - **Oliver S :**

    18 Jan 2010 5:18:05pm

    "but the school still gave her a musch better education than state schools ever could"

But how do you know?

- **will_r :**

18 Jan 2010 3:32:32pm

This article has ignored four extremely important things.

1. Government schools are hostage to BS 'egalitarian' doctrine that states all students' backgrounds are equal. Therefore, high standards of traditional deportment, diction and presentation are verboten. (Stuffy and classist, you see.)

2. Government schools cannot expel students. Kids who don't apply themselves to the best of their ability and maintain high standards of behaviour should be expelled from any school -- they are a terribly bad influence. Government schools can't even expel actively violent kids, let alone vulgar slackers with bad attitudes.

3. Further to (2), private schools are socially selective -- the students are likely to be from a background where everyone values education and learning, *not* just vocational training.

4. Government schools have dreadful staffing procedures. The new grads are sent to dusty wasteland postings with schools full of criminals or dullards who think turning up to class constitutes hard work, and whose parents agree. Way to lose people who can do much better in enterprise.

I once thought the same as this author. Now that I'm teaching, it's clear I was naive.

  - **Mason :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:06:28pm

  OMG!!! Your statements are so abhorrent and 'clasist' that I am not sure if you are trying to actually argue against private schooling! If these are the views private schools develop then they are truely a blight on society!

  - **dinazad :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:24:07pm

  What planet do you teach on, Will?

  1. No, state education does not say that "all students' backgrounds are equal". Actually, they do the opposite, emphasising the many differences in backgrounds and, in my experience, valuing that difference. What they DO say is equal is the value of those backgrounds i.e. that all humans are intrinsically of equal value, regardless of colour, religion, background and wealth. I don't see a problem there - do you?

  2. Wrong again. I've lived and worked in 4 states: they all have had schools or learning programs for students which are simply too disruptive. Usually, extra funding is provided for extra staff in a classroom to assist a student into a normal classroom because this is in the long term interests of the student. Yes, it places stress on the teacher and the better behaved students, but education is about

how we accept and care and respect each other in our community - do you have a problem with that?

3. I agree, private schools are socially selective - it is divisive, socially exclusionary, promotes elitism based on class, undermines the principle that humans are intrinsically equal and a host of other discriminatory assumptions - if you don't have a problem with that, I hope you are not teaching my child.

4. Yes, I agree, staffing is a problem. Poor pay, poor infrastructure, lack of opportunities for promotion, ridiculous bureaucracy, lack of support, politically enforced assessments which lack pedagogical credibility... I could go on.

Someone has to teach the criminals and dullards. You might like to think why they exist in the first place.

- **will_r :**

  19 Jan 2010 4:12:20pm

  Same planet as you.

  1. Nope. No problem with what you said. There is, however a problem with its corollary: that the curriculum and its presentation must ensure that everyone can get the same value out of schooling. Can't and won't ever happen. All that happens is kids with loads of Western cultural capital *might* fulfill their potential in spite of school.

  2. Disagree emphatically. Firstly, those special schools take only the worst of the worst. The just plain worst stay in the mainstream. This is due to inclusive rhetoric backed by government reluctance to spend money. Secondly, there are never enough aides to serve all the problem kids. No budget + poor compensation = classroom nightmares.

  3. Humans being intrinsically equal is true, but only fundamentally (and even that's arguable). The sum of his/her choices weighs on the value of each person. Most parents wouldn't give that idea much thought, but that just means the bulk of middle class opinion lies in elitism.

  4. Glad we agree on something :)

  I'm not against government schooling. Far, far from it. I am against the system we have, which will *never* improve. Most middle class parents agree with me. Hence, tiered education.

  - **Special schools are not Elite :**

    19 Jan 2010 10:05:54pm

    Thanks will_r. â€œThe worst of the worstâ€□, â€œproblem kidsâ€□, eh!
    The teachers at Kingsdene Special School refer my son and his peers by their names followed descriptions of their desirable characteristics, skills and behaviours. When necessary the teachers refer to â€œchallenging behaviours" and use other similar non judgemental terms.
    Your description of the students that â€œthose special schools takeâ€□ as â€œthe worst of the worst" and â€˜problem kidsâ€□ is exactly why the public system (you do teach in

the public system, don't you?) is completely inadequate for Severely / Profoundly Intellectually Disabled Students.
Special needs teaching is all about supreme teaching skill, attitude and respect and only a small percentage of teachers are so â€œgiftedâ€□.

- **Oliver S :**

18 Jan 2010 5:25:39pm

1. While I agree that there should be set standards regardless of the student's backgrounds (something for the kids to strive for isn't necessarily bad), too much of a focus on presentation and diction can make it hard to engage with many students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Engagement in the process is the aim, and I think it should remain so, with the strict standards being secondary.

2. There are some public school which are made for 'problem' students. Perhaps there needs to be more of them. But what would happen if 'problem' students could be easily expelled? 12 year olds not going to school are almost certain to end up in gaol or on the dole without any prospects.

3. This point kind of muddies the water when it comes to comparative educational outcomes between private and public schools (ie how much is because of the school and how much is because the parents care). But I can assure you that in most cases if you care about your kids going to school and learning they will too.

4. Completely agree. This is the fault of the teacher's fed. Which should be abolished.

- **mack :**

18 Jan 2010 6:01:35pm

Ha Ha Ha!

Two years ago I spoke with my niece, who had just completed six months of "prac teaching" at a number of schools. Her description of a small private school was to be expected - "everyone is so nice; the teacher's room has a big microwave; they assigned me a buddy to keep an eye on me; etc.". Her comments on her expereince at a public school in south west Brisbane? "It's a war-zone out there - the kids are rude, and sometimes violent; the parents are worse; the teachers don't care; etc".

She now teaches in a private school.

- **anote :**

18 Jan 2010 9:59:34pm

Good for you will_r

Item one could have been better expressed but I know where you a coming from and I am with you.

5. The system support mechanism is part of the problem. It is all very well to be well meaning but when you get repeated slaps in the face for you efforts from the people you are trying to help (kids,

parents and employer) then it is time to think twice.

- **will_r :**

  19 Jan 2010 4:19:20pm

  You're right - I think the meaning was obscured by the flames.

  will_r needs to practice argument structure or he'll bomb out in the exam...

- **billie :**

  18 Jan 2010 10:47:27pm

  absolutely agree with your comment that actively violent children should be removed from normal classrooms. Its absolutely dangerous for the other children in the class and doesn't provide an environment that's conducive to learning.

  Teachers can't be held responsible for parenting failures if they don't have the authority to impose discipline on the brats.

  - **Verify the facts :**

    19 Jan 2010 10:29:06pm

    Billie, What do you suggest be done with or to these children? How would you make them disappear, Billie?

- **Dion :**

  19 Jan 2010 3:41:04am

  Will - kudos to you. As usual, realist practioners are abused by the usual suspects. From my experience, I know that violent and dysfunctional students are freely permitted to demoralise their teachers and fellow students - and by and large, nothing is done to discipline them or remove them in order that the great majority can learn. Perhaps if each of the normal students and their teachers were allowed to sue State governments for intimidation we would see a major change in attitudes towards reason and excellence.

- **Chris Goudkamp :**

  18 Jan 2010 3:31:59pm

  I don't hold out much hope that things will change under a Rudd Government. Julia Gillard has been such a disappointment as education minister. There is to be a review of government funding to schools before the end of the current four year funding arrangement which the Rudd Government has kept in place despite its obvious flaws.

  Unless the public education community lobbies very hard to have the funding arrangements changed

nothing much will happen. The private school lobby is very powerful, influential and well organised.

Governments find it extremely difficult to withdraw or lower funding to private schools. For instance, the current funding arrangements ensure that no private school loses funding even if their circumstances change. Catholic School systems reap the most benefit from the current model as many of them are funded well above their entitlement using the SES model.

By the way, does anyone know of any polititians from either of the major parties that send their children to public schools?

- **Hermit :**

  18 Jan 2010 7:39:54pm

  Labor could always have put the money splashed on building school halls into education.

  The arithmetic is straightforward.
  $1m = 10 teachers for a year (including on-costs)

  If it made any difference Labor could have then made an argument for diverting funds from all those pampered private schools.

  Now, we will never know, but you can bet your last dollar that the school hall will do nothing to address anything educational.

- **Stranded :**

  18 Jan 2010 3:29:53pm

  Your article (and argument) holds NIL.... ZERO ... and ZILCH credibility whislt you don't mention Teachers Unions as being part of the problem within State provided Education.

  Until then, the flight to quality will continue, whatever the cost !

- **JBG :**

  18 Jan 2010 3:28:47pm

  A tired and predictable argument from a tired and predictable union hack. When are the unions going to offer viable solutions instead of whingeing about how hard done by they are? My belief is never - nothing can please these people.

  - **atomou :**

    18 Jan 2010 4:53:23pm

    When are the corporate thugs stop stealing from the poor and pretending they're not unionised?

  - **dinazad :**

18 Jan 2010 5:10:19pm

I don't belong to a union, but I agree with his thesis.

Can you make an argument for your position, or only "play the man"?

- **Mike :**

18 Jan 2010 3:28:43pm

Absolutely spot on.

I have no problem with private schools, but the funding should be private, not at the expense of the taxpayer (note that I have no problem with making school fees, public and private, tax deductible) but direct government subsidies to private (including religious) should be anathema to a society that prides intself on egalitarianism

- **John Brigge :**

18 Jan 2010 3:28:33pm

Another ABC troll thread. From the first statement to the last - it is devoid of fact and replete with class envy. However, one point is agreed - public school funding should be changed - to a voucher system where the parents may choose to sent their children to a public school or a private school. It is inappropriate for these parents to pay twice- by taxation to fund public schools and their own income to fund their children's private school fees.

However - even if that were to occur, I suspect the stampede of children to private schools would continue - Why? because the values taught in public schools, compounded by the dead hand of teacher unionism - make the decision of private/public schooling for children an easy one.

  - **atomou :**

  18 Jan 2010 4:51:56pm

  I think you'd find that it's the dead hand of rabid anti-unionists, comfortable in the board rooms of their their anti social "societies" with their total control of media and the strangulation of truth who create and promote this dual system.
  It's not class envy, john Briggs, it's class hatred.
  But it would take a mind less lazy and more adequately nourished with facts to realise this.
  Your Moet is getting warm, darling.
  Cheers!

  - **dinazad :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:09:18pm

  Well, speaking of opinion over fact... thanks for that, John.

  The paranoia (from the myopic right) is that somehow 'the left' or 'political correctness' has captured

our children and indoctrinated them. Of course, this is garbage: despite decades of state-based education, voters continue to vote about 50/50 between labour and coalition. (And given that, if anything, the left and right has moved to the right, one could mount an argument that the right has indoctrinated our society.) So much for your first furphy.

Then there's that strawman - unionism. How you could argue, when labour and the coalition have funded private education at the expense of state education, that the unions are being listened to? Most workplaces have a the choice to join a union - is there something wrong with that? Are you against choice?

Or are you only against choice when you can't socially engineer to your liking, like the spurious "choice" of vouchers?

- **Oliver S :**

  18 Jan 2010 5:30:20pm

  Funny you should mention class envy - most of the middle class who send their kids to private schools do so to help their kids move up the social ladder.

  "It is inappropriate for these parents to pay twice- by taxation to fund public schools and their own income to fund their children's private school fees."
  I am pretty good with a shotgun. I can protect my own family and my property. I shouldn't have to pay taxes for a police force.

  Its funny how all of the people in favour of vouchers are also in favour of private schools. It won't make it any cheaper for you - the private school will simply raise the fees by the same amount as the vouchers (thats what happened with the first home owners grant).

- **OFistFullOfDollars :**

  18 Jan 2010 3:28:29pm

  On what basis do parents choose to send their children to private schools? Perceived advantage for their children?

  - **atomou :**

    18 Jan 2010 4:44:04pm

    Misconceived educational advantage but correctly perceived social-networking advantage; which is to say, the perception that if you want your child to be able to collude in thievery then it's a good idea to build a den of thieves.
    Dickens pointed this out most luminously a couple of centuries ago.

  - **mack :**

    18 Jan 2010 6:08:54pm

In my case is involved a highly intelligent ten year old son experiencing learning difficulties.
His local State school did not have the skills (or probably the time) to deal with him on a one-to-one basis. So after an entrance test, and a very frank meeting with staff, we gave him to the Jesuits at Milsons Point. Six months later he was a different kid, and has turned out to be a fine young man...
Could I have used the money his education cost? You bet! Did I do the right thing in going to a private school? Do doubt in my mind what so ever!

- **Juvenal's maid :**

  19 Jan 2010 12:40:55pm

  I have 2 children one attended a government school for their entire schooling -- a wonderful school. My other child has severe intellectual and multiple disabilities, no speech and poor fine motor skills which makes even sign-language difficult.

  Despite all the wonderful teachers and every best effort at the government school my child attended- his aggressive violent behaviour escalated so much that my child was a danger to himself and to others particularly his parents and sibling. We then enrolled him in a small charity-operated school that has provided him with a transformative education. His disability remains severe and multiple but he has learned so much and gained so many skills, in the company of peers with similar disabilities, and with teachers and carers some with 20-30 years experience to help him moderate his behaviour, he is now ready to go to the next step in his life much better able to cope with a world that is often challenging, frightening and confronting.

  That's why I chose a small charity-operated school, a private school, not for the architecture, not because the public school was full of bogans, not because of the rugby, or music or debating program but because I knew that school would maximise whatever potential my son had, where he could be the best he could be.

  Yet this wonderful school will now close because the government will not fund the students at small charity-operated schools on a like-for-like basis, that is, on the basis of their educational needs not on the basis of the educational setting and at a small fraction of the funding of a student with similar disabilities in a government school bearing in mind that disability does not recognise those sector divides nor socio-economic boundaries.

  - **Special schools are not Elite :**

    19 Jan 2010 7:57:34pm

    While I'm writing this I can her that Gillard selling her precious 'My school?' website on the 7.30 Report. She just doesn't get education and children in general so what hope is there that she will ever understand the needs of severely and profoundly intellectually disabled students?

- **Murray Fletcher :**

  18 Jan 2010 3:22:13pm

  Great article. I myself went to a public school in rural Queensland, and then was fortunate enough to stay at an 'elite' uni college, while studying. I think it is one of the greats con's of the last decade or so, that 'private' schools get government funding! Of course to some degree this could be acceptable, but not

when so much tax payer money is going to a school that people choose to pay to send their kids to.

- **dinazad :**

18 Jan 2010 3:21:11pm

What is particularly striking about this story is that, while the peddlers of private education argue that the system is fair, it is in fact ultimately divisive.

It is divisive because, once the wealthier have removed their children to the private system, the state one becomes stigmatised by being for "poor" people. Like a private health system and user-pays systems which the whole community needs, hierarchies of wealth become entrenched at the expense of the poor.

It is always the rich who want to maintain the status quo... I wonder why.

- **dk :**

18 Jan 2010 3:20:20pm

that's all fair enough (and i totally agree), but how do you propose a political party (presumably labor) could sell it to the electorate? there's not much point saying what to do without suggesting how to do it

  - **alan :**

18 Jan 2010 5:49:00pm

I agree dinazad - i went to school in Ireland and 97% of kids go to government schools - one of the best systems in the world. Australia's system is divisive because of the subsidy provided to the rich to send kids to private schools. If you choose to send your kids to a private all very well, pay for it but the taxpayer should not contirbute. I teach at a government school and we get about $6000 a year for each kid - guess what private schools get about $6000 for each kid from the federal system on top of the exorbitant fees they charge - just come to Ballarat and see the divide between Grammar and College with their beautiful buildings compared to the poor old government system. It is disgusting in a so called "egalitarian" country

    - **Brian :**

18 Jan 2010 11:25:29pm

I also agree Alan - and putting aside the equity or lack of, in a two-tiered system, I think a signficant proportion of people who send their children to private schools, do so largely as some sort of status statement. I would like to recount a conversation I overheard between two thirtyish mothers during n/shift at a Ballarat manuf' plant regarding sending their kids to one of the private schools you mention & the main reason for doing so was that the local state schools were full of bogans! this coming from a couple of Cath & Kim stereotypes- the mind boogles!!

  - **Hermit :**

18 Jan 2010 7:48:05pm

The first problem is that the federal government has all the dollars and the state governments have all the responsibility.

Federal Labor (or Liberals for that matter) cannot improve school education because state Labor will just continue to make a mess of it and waste whatever funds they are given, like everything else they touch.

The second problem is that so many people who want to change the system are simply interested in producing a generation in their own image.

- **Woodee :**

  19 Jan 2010 9:09:57am

  At the last elections both Federal and the Victorian State government promised additional funding for Technical education. Our school received $20,000 and no strings attached. It was well spent on items we normally can't afford. Much apreciated and well used. The federal government offered money but it had to many strings attached. We are yet to see any benefit from the federal government in this area. As a technical teacher it is interesting to see the promises made at election time compared to the reality in the classroom.

  - **Hermit :**

    19 Jan 2010 9:49:51am

    Increased emphasis on technical education would be a boost to many students who are just filling in time doing a watered down academic course.

    A solid introduction to trade subjects and an early start in the trades is far better for a large number of students than completing 12 or more years of watered down pseudo-acedemic study.

    The idea of making kids hang around for 12 years and then demanding they take a TAFE course before competing for the few available apprenticeships is positive punishment.

  - **Woodee :**

    19 Jan 2010 9:57:20pm

    What makes you think that technical education is just for non academic students. I have three year 12 physics students in my furnishing class this year. If we are going to have any revolution in education then perceived divisions such as academic and non academic will have to change.
    The first policy item of Kevin Rudd's election campaign speech was about the education revolution and the first thing that he mentioned was Technical education in every school. I would like to see a report card on Kevin Rudd's commitments to the Australian public especially the first one about technical education.