

SEEK THE TRUTH AND SERVE HUMANITY

WE MUST DEMAND THE RETURN OF PUBLIC ASSETS!

EDITORIAL

Privatisation has been the global economic phenomena of the 1990s. However we are becoming more and more aware that with privatisation services deteriorate, costs increase, there is less accountability, staff are undermined and it is a program that is difficult to reverse. Indeed, such was the concern of the Melbourne Unitarian Church about the impact of privatisation, that we commissioned a report called *The Blind Men and the Elephant - Getting the Picture Clear on Privatisation*.*

This report reveals that between 1987 and 2013 Australian governments of both political persuasions sold off public assets worth \$194 billion. These included the Commonwealth Bank, domestic and international airlines, naval dockyards, defence-related aircraft factories, communications satellite systems, the natural gas pipeline systems, the national railway service, serum laboratories, management of the superannuation fund for public sector employees and a housing network for ex-servicemen.

The so-called rationale for privatisation was based on the nonsense that private was more efficient than public. This of course has since been exposed and the public is becoming more and more aware that they have been sold a pup.

Recently the benefits of privatisation have been challenged publicly by Richard Di Natale, Leader of the Greens, in his *Meet the Press* address, and by other prominent community leaders such as Dr John Falzon CEO of St Vincent de Paul Society on *Lateline*, material written by Oxfam, ACCOSS and unions who recognised that the privatisation program is badly broken. And, further, that if it is to be 'mended' then there must be a whole new approach, one of which undoubtedly is to openly recognise that privatisation has been a failure for the vast majority of the Australian people at the same time as it has made the shareholders of mainly foreign countries very wealthy.

Privatisation of some of our most important assets has left us with a badly depleted public infrastructure that once served the Australian people efficiently, economically, and with a better satisfied workforce, where jobs were more secure, better paid, and workers' rights were serviced efficiently and effectively by their unions.

Currently, in the area of public transport, for example, there is a challenge from the Rail, Tram and Bus Union who give significant examples of how privatisation has failed the community and enriched foreign private companies. Contracts are up for renewal this year and the community is joining with the union to call for a return of transport to state government control. The union claims that Melbourne has become a salutary example of why privatised urban public transport doesn't work, citing that all the best public transport systems across Europe, North America, and even in Perth, remain under the control of public agencies.

A further example outlined in the church's privatisation report refers to the issue of the supply of electricity. A report from the Australia Institute outlined that from 1995–2012, the cost of electricity has increased by 170%. This increase has occurred despite the industry being subjected to privatisation and corporatisation for the past two decades – a process that promised to increase efficiency and lower prices.

It isn't too strong a comment to claim that the public has been conned into believing that privatisation is in our best interests. What it has provided is a lucrative return for private and, in the main, foreign-owned companies and a bucket of money for governments that has not translated into services and programs to meet our needs. Indeed, services and programs are rapidly deteriorating. So, we need to remind ourselves: Who has benefited from privatisation? It certainly isn't the Australian people. ✚

***The report is a must-read and available free from our church office.**

SHOULD WE BE PAYING LESS OR WORKING LESS SO MORE CAN WORK?

The decision by the Fair Work Commission to reduce Sunday and public holiday penalty rates for full-time and part-time workers in the hospitality, retail and fast-food industries will make it even harder for already low paid workers to make ends meet. In handing down its ruling, the Commission even admitted that the changes would cause hardship for some workers. The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) estimates that nearly half a million people in some of the most exploited industries would lose up to \$6,000 a year.

All this for the sake of employers suggesting that businesses would now be able to employ more weekend staff and offer extended hours to workers whose wages will be cut. But there are no guarantees this will happen and the likely result will be increased profits for business.

If the actual cutting of wages (which have virtually been stagnant for decades) is the economic panacea offered up by employers and conservative governments to deliver more jobs and workforce participation in Australia, then what other draconian neoliberal economic ideas will the Commission entertain next at workers' expense?

If the Commission really wanted to create more jobs and increase workforce participation, while addressing economic opportunity, why should it always be on the backs of workers? Why not file a serious case for shorter working hours for all, with no loss in pay. Yes, the Commission may have to admit it will hurt some employers in the short term, but it will certainly push businesses to become more innovative and productive entrepreneurs, which is the favourite mantra of our Prime Minister.

Sweden is moving towards a standard 6-hour work day, with businesses across the country having already implemented the change, leading to more jobs, increased productivity, better work/life balance and sharing available jobs.

If Australian business leaders can't see the light, the ACTU needs to flick on the switch by mounting a national campaign and case before the Fair Work Commission on shorter working hours with no loss in pay. The time is now.

By way of conclusion, and especially given the date that this address is given, reference must be given to that satirical Australian

vernacular 'Happy as a bastard on Father's Day'. Of course, it is just a reference to not being very happy at all in a general sense, but the basis was once quite sound. With intimacy and welfare bound to the patriarchal family unit, being a bastard did indeed once mean a childhood that was far more likely to be subject to much higher levels of indifference and impoverishment. The contemporary removal of many of the legal and cultural barriers to unfair discrimination has indeed reduced such incidence – even to the point that single-parent families have raised children that can reach the heights of US president, as both Barack Obama and Bill Clinton have illustrated and, in an Australian context, as Prime Ministers Kevin Rudd and Malcolm Turnbull have shown, and with contenders such as Anthony Albanese and Penny Wong waiting in the wings. Well, with examples like that, you can be happy as a bastard on Father's Day – as long as a society is capable of providing the financial and emotional support to provide the sense of integration. This is increasingly so now, and with the changes we can expect to see, certainly and inevitably much more in a complex future.

DID YOU KNOW...

Country	Number of Americans killed by their citizens (1975-2015)	Included in Trump's Muslim Ban?
Iran	0	YES
Iraq	0	YES
Libya	0	YES
Somalia	0	YES
Sudan	0	YES
Syria	0	YES
Yemen	0	YES
Saudi Arabia	2,369	NO
United Arab Emirates	314	NO
Egypt	162	NO
Lebanon	159	NO



RESURRECTING THE PAST: ONE PEOPLE, ONE NATION, ONE LEADER

Once again we are witnessing groups which claim white supremacy, usually combined with exaggerated notions of Christian cultural superiority, demanding that 'inferior' racial groups and adherents of 'backward' religions be removed from their societies. Some of these advocates of 'superiority' openly carry the swastika, while others have some sort of modified symbol that echoes the 'crooked cross.' Some hate groups aim at subterfuge, claiming 'respectability' with members of legislatures, academics and selected clerics decorating their speakers' platforms.

In past times when there has been an upsurge of racism and religious bigotry, as at the time of the 1991 Gulf War, our political leadership, including the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the Governor General, has taken a strong public stand in defence of our inclusive democracy. This time around there is a deafening silence and members of the governing parties are taking part in public demonstrations of bigotry, such as the Sydney and Melbourne meetings of the Q Society.

It is time we began to educate ourselves and the generations which have grown up with little historical education as to what notions of racial supremacy and religious bigotry can produce.

Lord Russell of Liverpool wrote an account of Nazi crimes which was published in 1954, compiled from the evidence given and the documents produced at various war-crimes trials, and from statements made by eye-witnesses of war crimes to competent war crime investigation commissions in the countries where they were committed.

DENIAL OF FREEDOM

From 1933 to 1939 the Nazi regime prepared for its later aggression. 'The suppression of free speech including freedom of the press, the control of the judiciary, the confiscation of property, restrictions on the right of peaceful assembly, the censorship of letters and telegrams, the monitoring of telephone conversations, the regimentation of labour, the denial of religious freedom: these are the bonds with which a



UNLESS WE MOBILISE PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST THE RESURRECTION OF THIS TYRANNICAL FASCISM, WE MAY REPEAT, ALBEIT A LITTLE DIFFERENTLY, THE EXPERIENCE OF THE OLDER GENERATION.

tyrant binds his subjects.' All of these are signs of approaching tyranny and must be opposed.

As in Germany, many people today oppose this drift to tyrannical rule. How did the Nazis deal with opposition? 'It was only by fear, torture, starvation and death that the Nazis eliminated at home the opponents of their regime, and it was in this way that these organisations of oppression gained the experience and the training, later put into practice abroad with such thoroughness and brutality, that made them the nightmare and the scourge of Occupied Europe.'

ELIMINATE COMPASSION FOR THE VULNERABLE

One of the themes of Islam is that compassion is a feature of the human being, reflecting one of the attributes of God. The proponents of racial superiority, illustrated most clearly by the writings of Hitler, have a contradictory world view. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler wrote: 'A stronger race will drive out the weaker ones, for the vital urge in its ultimate form will break down the absurd barriers of the so-called humanity of individuals to make way for the humanity of Nature which destroys the weak to give their place to the strong.' As Lord Russell concluded, 'That is the law of the jungle: little wonder that it brought in its train so much misery, agony, destruction and death.'

We must be conscious of this implacable hatred and denigration of the vulnerable as one of the signs of a tyrannical mindset. The political implications of destroying the weak for the benefit of the strong was displayed by one of the Nazi leaders. Addressing a conference of German occupation authorities in August 1942, Goring said, 'God knows you are not sent there to work for the welfare of the people in your charge but to get the utmost out of them so that the German people can live ... This everlasting concern about foreign people must cease now, once and for all. It makes no difference to me if your people starve.' And starve they did.

TERRORISE THE INNOCENT

Innocent civilians, taken as hostages, were killed in retribution for acts of resistance by those opposing Nazi occupation. More than 5 million foreign workers were deported like slaves to Germany from 1941 to 1945. 'When they became too feeble or too ill to work, let them die. If they did not die quickly enough, they would be given assistance; put to death in the gas chambers of the concentration camps and their remains cremated in the camp ovens. But let there be no waste; their by-products must be utilized, their blood and ashes as fertilizer, their hair to make cloth, and the gold in their teeth to swell the coffers of the Reichsbank.'

The Final Solution of the Jewish question was aimed at fulfilling the Nazi party program that declared: '*Only a member of the race can be a citizen. A member of the race can only be one who is of German blood, without consideration of creed. Consequently, no Jew can be a member of the race.*' This was what was meant by 'Ein Volk' – one people.

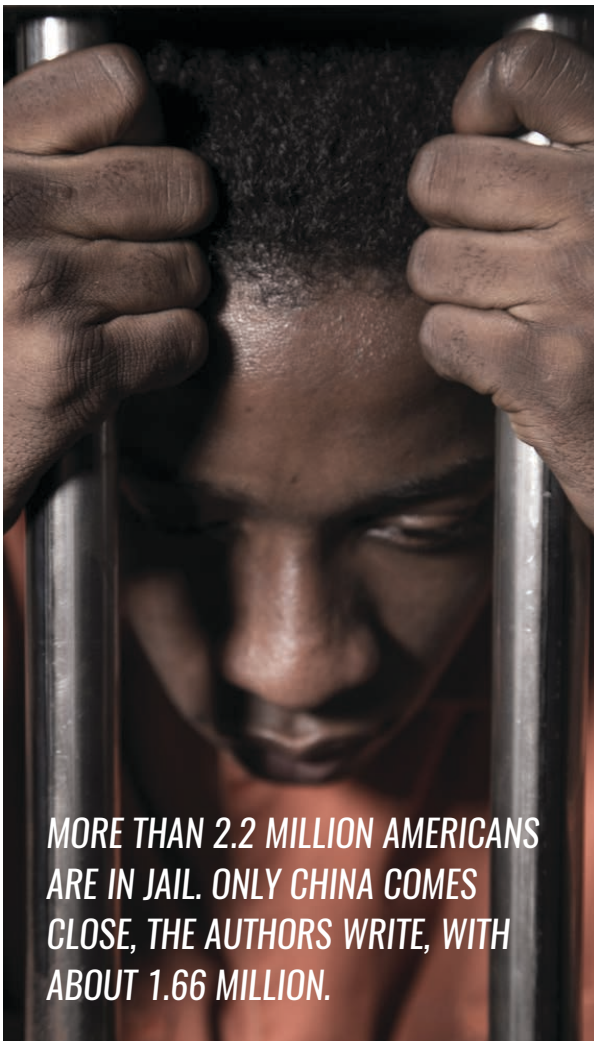
From 1933 Jewish businesses were boycotted and anti-Jewish propaganda was heightened. Julius Streicher was the spearhead of this attack. He fanned German post-war dislike of Jews into a burning hatred and he set out to 'incite them to the persecution and extermination of the Jewish race.' He was hanged after the war at Nuremberg for his crimes.

'The murder by the Germans of over five million European Jews constitutes the greatest crime in world history. That the total Jewish population of Europe was not exterminated is due solely to the fact that the Nazis lost the war before they could bring their "final solution of the Jewish question" to its conclusion.'

We must be conscious of this recent history, less than a century ago, which led to the horrors from which we are still suffering. Unless we mobilise public opinion against the resurrection of this tyrannical fascism, we may repeat, albeit a little differently, the experience of the older generation. The rise of Le Pen, Geert Wilders, Viktor Orban, the American white supremacists, UKIP, One Nation and like-minded reactionary movements, are still opposed by the majority in most cases, but they seem to be gaining ground. †

12 SIGNS AMERICA IS ON THE DECLINE

AMERICA IS DECLINING, IN LARGE AND IMPORTANT MEASURES, YET POLICYMAKERS AREN'T PAYING ATTENTION. SO ARGUES A NEW ACADEMIC PAPER, PULLING TOGETHER PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED DATA.



**MORE THAN 2.2 MILLION AMERICANS
ARE IN JAIL. ONLY CHINA COMES
CLOSE, THE AUTHORS WRITE, WITH
ABOUT 1.66 MILLION.**

CONSIDER THIS:

- America's child poverty levels are worse than in any developed country anywhere, including Greece, devastated by a euro crisis, and eastern European nations such as Poland, Lithuania and Estonia.
- Median adult wealth in the US (\$39,000) is 27th globally, putting it behind Cyprus, Taiwan, and Ireland.
- Even when 'life satisfaction' is measured, America ranks #12, behind Israel, Sweden and Australia.

Overall, America's per capita wealth, health and education measures are mediocre for a highly industrialised nation. Wellbeing metrics, perceptions of corruption, quality and cost of basic services, are sliding too. Healthcare and education spending are funding bloated administrations even while human outcomes sink, the authors say.

'We looked at very broad measures, and at individual measures too,' said co-author Hershey H Friedman, a business professor at Brooklyn College – City University of New York. The most dangerous sign they saw: rising income and wealth inequality, which slow growth and can spark instability, the authors say.

'Capitalism has been amazingly successful,' write Friedman and co-author Sarah Hertz of Empire State College. But it has grown so unfettered, predatory, so exclusionary, it's become, in effect,

crony capitalism. Now places like Qatar and Romania, 'countries you wouldn't expect to be, are doing better than us,' said Friedman.

'You can become a second-rate power very quickly,' added Hertz.

To be sure, the debate over whether America is on the decline has raged for years. The US National Intelligence Council said in its global trends report a decade ago American power was on a downward trajectory. Others making the case say the US is overstretched militarily, ill prepared technologically, at-risk financially, or lacking dynamism in the face of influential, new competitors.

AMERICAN DOLLAR TOUCHES 10-DAY HIGH BEFORE TRUMP-ABE MEETING

Arguing decline has been exaggerated, others point to a rising US stock market, manufacturing strength, a growing population, and a domestic energy boom.

The authors collect many previously published rankings, and the picture that emerges, however, is sobering:

12 SIGNS AMERICA IS ON THE DECLINE

1. MEDIAN WEALTH PER ADULT

Rank of US: 27th out of 27 high-income countries

Americans may feel like global leaders, but Spain, Cyprus and Qatar all have higher median wealth (per capita) than America's (about \$39,000). So does much of Europe and the industrialised world. Per capita median income in the US (\$18,700) is also relatively low – and unchanged since 2000. A middle-class Canadian's income is now higher.

2. EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Rank of US: 16th out of 23 countries

The US ranked near the bottom in a skills survey by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which examined European and other developed nations. In its Skills Outlook 2013, the US placed 16th in adult literacy, 21st in adult numeracy out of 23, and 14th in problem solving. Spots in prestigious US universities are highly sought after. Yet higher education, once an effective way out of poverty in the US, isn't anymore – at least not for lower income and minority students. The authors quote studies showing, for example, that today 80% of white college students attend Barron's Top 500 schools, while 75% of black and Latino students go to two-year junior colleges or open admissions (not Top 500) schools. Poor students are also far less likely to complete a degree.

3. INTERNET SPEED AND ACCESS

Rank of US: 16th out of 34 countries

Broadband access has become essential for industry to grow and flourish. Yet in the US, penetration is low and speed relatively slow versus wealthy nations – though the cost of internet is among the highest (\$0.04 per megabit per second in Japan, for example, versus \$0.53 in the US). The problem may be too much concentration and too little competition in the industry, the authors suggest.

4. HEALTH

Rank of US: 33rd out of 145 countries

When it comes to its citizens' health, in countries that are home to at least one million people, the US ranks below many other wealthy countries. More American women also are dying during pregnancy and childbirth, the authors note, quoting a *Lancet* study. For every 100,000 births in the United States, 18.5 women die. Saudi Arabia and Canada have half that maternal death rate.

5. PEOPLE LIVING BELOW THE POVERTY LINE

Rank of US: 36th out of 162 countries, behind Morocco and Albania

Officially, 14.5% of Americans are impoverished – 45.3 million people – according to the latest US Census data. That’s a larger fraction of the population in poverty than Morocco and Albania (though how nations define poverty varies considerably). The elderly have social security, with its automatic cost-of-living adjustments to thank, the authors say, for doing better: Few seniors (one in 10) are poor today versus 50 years ago (when it was one in three). Poverty is also down among African Americans. Now America’s poor are more often in their prime working years, or in households headed by single mothers.

6. CHILDREN IN POVERTY

Rank of US: 34th out of 35 countries surveyed

With UNICEF relative poverty – relative to the average in each society – the US ranked at the bottom, above only Romania, even as Americans are, on average, six times richer than Romanians. Children in all of Europe, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan fare better.

7. INCOME INEQUALITY

Rank of US: Fourth highest inequality in the world

The authors argue that the most severe inequality can be found in Chile, Mexico, Turkey – and the US. Citing the Gini coefficient, a common inequality metric, and data from Wall Street Journal/Mercer Human Resource Consulting, they say this inequality slows economic growth, impedes youths’ opportunities, and ultimately threatens the nation’s future (an OECD video explains). Worsening income inequality is also evident in the ratio of average CEO earnings to average workers’ pay. That ratio went from 24:1 in 1965 to 262:1 in 2005.

8. PRISON POPULATION

Rank of US: First out of 224 countries

More than 2.2 million Americans are in jail. Only China comes close, the authors write, with about 1.66 million.

9. LIFE SATISFACTION

Rank of US: 17th out of 36 countries

The authors note Americans’ happiness score is only middling, according to the OECD Better Life Index. (The index measures how people evaluate their life as a whole rather than their current feelings.) People in New Zealand, Finland, and Israel rate higher in life satisfaction. A UN report had a similar finding.

10. CORRUPTION

Rank of US: 17th out of 175 countries

Barbados and Luxembourg are ahead of the US when it comes to citizens’ perceptions of corruption. Americans view their country as ‘somewhat corrupt’, the authors note, according to Transparency International, a Berlin-based nonprofit. In a separate survey of American citizens, many said politicians don’t serve the majority’s interest, but are biased toward corporate lobbyists and the super-rich. ‘Special interest groups are gradually transforming the United States into an oligarchy,’ the authors argue, ‘concerned only about the needs of the wealthy.’

11. STABILITY

Rank of US: 20th out of 178 countries

The Fragile States Index considers factors such as inequality, corruption, and factionalism. The US lags behind Portugal, Slovenia and Iceland.

12. SOCIAL PROGRESS INDEX

Rank of US: 16th out of 133 countries

A broad measure of social wellbeing, the index comprises 52 economic indicators such as access to clean water and air, access to advanced education, access to basic knowledge, and safety. Countries surpassing the US include Ireland, the UK, Iceland, and Canada.

‘If America’s going to be great again, we’ve got to start fixing things,’ Friedman said. ✈

Jill Hamburg Coplan is a writer and editor and regular contributor to Fortune.

Source: Fortune International

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THE DEALS DONE AS GONSKI DIED



GONSKI IS DEAD. FORGET ABOUT REVIVING IT – IT NEVER REALLY GOT OFF THE GROUND IN THE FIRST PLACE.

Disadvantaged school children will continue to be denied the resources they need because both major political parties are 'fluffing around' and made deals with the private school sector on schools funding when radical change is needed, according to one of the architects of the Gonski reforms.

Mr Ken Boston, a former director general of the NSW Department of Education and the only state school educated member of the Gonski panel, said the school funding system that has developed over the past 40 years has 'comprehensively failed', 'We are on a path to nowhere', and needs to be overhauled.

'The issue is profoundly deeper than argument about the last two years of Gonski funding or changes to the governance of Commonwealth-state relations.'

'Both the government and the opposition are fluffing around at the margins of the issue, and neither appears to understand the magnitude of the reform that is needed or – if so – to have the capacity to tackle it.'

'Neither side of politics has come to grips with what needs-based funding really means.'

Ken Boston has identified the problems, but is not yet willing to say why we are in this crisis. This is because of the deals that have been made between the political class and the two main players who are benefiting from the current crisis – the Catholic Education Office and Independent Schools Australia.

He says: 'The outcome has been that the funding allocations to independent schools, state Catholic commissions and the state government systems are arrived at without any agreed and common system of addressing real need at the level of each individual school.'

and ...

'The current arrangement for block funding of Catholic and government school systems based on an average measure of their socio-economic status rather than the aggregated socio-educational disadvantage of each individual Catholic and government school must be replaced.'

But neither of these things is on the table, to be changed in the near future. So how did we come to this pass?

CASE STUDY OF HOW TO KILL GONSKI: VICTORIA

STEP ONE: POLITICAL PRESSURE

Care of the ABC Friday 28 Nov 2014, 10:20 am

The Victorian Catholic Education Office has sent letters to parents at Catholic schools in Melbourne's inner city, advising they should not vote for the Greens in Saturday's election.

The letters were circulated in seats where the Greens are expected to poll well – Melbourne, Brunswick, Richmond and Prahran – and questioned the Greens' commitment to funding Catholic schools if the party held the balance of power.

In the letter, executive director Stephen Elder said while both the Labor and Liberal parties would legislate on funding arrangements for the first time, the Greens wanted to create a body to determine whether the schools deserved any money.

'We are most concerned that the need of a school community could be measured through the value of its land and not the needs of its students,' Mr Elder wrote.

'The Greens do not distinguish between Catholic schools and other non-government schools.'

'This approach is likely to adversely affect many Catholic schools.'

Victorian Greens leader Greg Barber said the party had always stood for increased education funding based on equity and the needs of students. 'It's a last-minute scare campaign, there'll be a few more of those, they're not based on fact,' Mr Barber said.

'But if you look at education, everybody from community-based childcare to the tertiary education union has given the Greens top marks for our education policies.'

The Catholic Education Office told the ABC the letter was sent to principals on Wednesday and most likely distributed to about 5,000 families on

Thursday. The two major parties have said funding for Catholic schools would be linked to the cost of educating a student at a government school, which Mr Elder said would alleviate the need to increase fees. The parties have also dedicated \$120 million for facility and building upgrades at Catholic schools.

STEP TWO: THE FINANCIAL REWARD

in *The Age* 16 March 2015

Directly after being elected, and under pressure, the state government caved in to the Catholic Education Office and now both are killing Gonski's basic principles.

Victoria's new Labor government made a very bad start in the key area of school funding. The government has both committed itself to needs-based funding 'completely in line with the tenets of Gonski' and carried into legislation a guarantee that it will provide non-government schools with not less than 25 per cent of whatever it provides for government schools.

The scheme would work like this: students in need are disproportionately enrolled in government schools; so following the tenets of Gonski the government will provide disproportionately extra funding to government schools; then following the 25 per cent guarantee it will provide extra funding to non-government schools, not because they have a high proportion of needy students – to the contrary – but because the government schools do. It is a bizarre arrangement, a funding scheme at war with itself.

The government has compounded that blunder by subsequently refusing to commit to Years 5 and 6 (2018 and 2019) of Gonski funding – the years in which that extra funding is scheduled to be sharply increased.

On both these scores Education Minister James Merlino is shamed by his conservative (National Party) counterpart in NSW, Adrian Piccoli. Piccoli has explicitly rejected any attempt to modify or constrain the Gonski principles in the interests of any sector, and has given a commitment that if re-elected, his government will provide full Gonski funding for 2018 and 2019.

Please note that private schools in Australia are given the majority of their ongoing funding and capital grants by the federal, not the state government, the extra state money is on top of federal money and parents' contributions.

STEP THREE: SPEND THE MONEY IN A HIDDEN BUREAUCRACY AWAY FROM PUBLIC EYES.

As reported in *The Age* 9 March 2016

Most private schools can't prove they spend government funds appropriately:

The state's financial watchdog, the Victorian auditor general, has lifted the lid on the



THE ABSENCE OF CLEAR, APPROPRIATE GOVERNANCE BY [THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT] HAS LED TO POOR GRANT ADMINISTRATION, INCLUDING INADEQUATE MONITORING ... OF WHETHER GRANTS ARE USED AS INTENDED.'

government's method of funding private schools, warning there is little evidence that millions of dollars in government money is being used appropriately.

Hundreds of millions of dollars in education department grants are being given to private schools with no measures to track how the money is being spent, an auditor-general's report has found.

The state's financial watchdog has found little evidence that the money (estimated to be \$676 million this year) is being used appropriately by the schools.

State education minister James Merlino says the government is strengthening reporting and accountability requirements for private schools. In a scathing report, acting Auditor-General Dr Peter Frost said the education department had 'weak' funding agreements with the schools, no performance measurement or targets, and that the schools were unable to prove funds were spent as they were intended.

'My audit found that there is limited assurance that grants are used for their intended purpose or are achieving intended outcomes,' Dr Frost said in the 'Grants to Non-Government Schools report', which was tabled in Parliament on Wednesday.

'The absence of clear, appropriate governance by [the education department] has led to poor grant administration, including inadequate monitoring ... of whether grants are used as intended.'

In a sample audit of 22 schools, none could prove that their funding was not used on capital works, which is forbidden. And only 20 per cent of

schools receiving student disability grants could prove that they were used for the purpose that they were intended.

In his opening remarks, Dr Frost launched a blistering attack on the Catholic schools' administrative arm, the Catholic Education Commission Victoria, which accused the watchdog of conducting a biased report. The audit revealed that due to a funding model that relates only to Catholic schools, some wealthier Catholic schools received substantially more in government grants than they would have under the department's funding arrangement, while poorer schools received less. Which leaves us in the crisis we are now in.

WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE GONSKI?

Most of Australia's private schools are on the verge of disappearing. In funding terms they can no longer be considered to be private. The majority are essentially funded by governments, most commonly at 90–95% (2014 figures) of the funding going to similar public schools. Their private income takes their total resourcing to levels well above similar public schools.

This raises long-forgotten questions about differences in the operation and obligations of what are now virtually two publicly funded sectors. This question was never addressed in the past, not least because it was considered that rather than costing governments, directing public funding to support the running of private schools actually saves money.

The amount saved is variously claimed to be between \$4 and \$9 billion each year. This analysis takes a closer look by asking what would be the recurrent funding cost to governments if they had to fully fund the education of all school students? It uses My School data to model several scenarios. We show that the cost is, at most, around \$1.9 billion.

But for a combination of reasons the actual cost would be around half that amount and even less. School funding – described by Gonski as uncoordinated, divisive and unnecessarily complex – has reached the point where the claimed savings created by funding private schools may not exist.

We can't create a better conversation about the future relationship between the public and private school sectors until we deal with current realities. The near-full public funding of private schools, and its implications, is one of those realities. ✦

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Nominate potential subscribers for three free monthly copies without ongoing obligation! (Try before you buy.)

from our readers



DEAR BEACON

Enclosed is my subscription for the *Beacon* from August 2016 until August 2018. Any leftover can be considered a donation.

I get much enjoyment in reading the articles in the *Beacon* – probably because they are similar or the same as my own thoughts and beliefs on peace and humanity.

Keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely

T Wilson, Vic

DEAR BEACON

This is indeed a wonderful magazine!

D Atkinson, SA

DEAR MUPMC

Further to my phone conversation regarding my sculpture 'Nationalism', I am attaching two photos in case you find it of interest.

The work was done in 2007, at the height of John Howard's nationalistic 'fly more flags' campaign and all his overseas military adventures.

My observation is that the more we wave the flag, the more militaristic we become, and this work aims to express that idea. The fluttering flag has an array of armaments growing out of it, the apparently innocent symbol of nationhood leading to something ugly and deadly.

I am not asking for payment for the use of this image. I just thought, after reading the leading piece in your February newsletter, that it was rather appropriate.

Kind regards

Michael Meszaros

(The maker of the lettering on the front of your church)



Our church is a public and usable asset with portable seating and excellent conference, meeting and function facilities. We welcome its use by those who support our motto 'Seek the Truth and Serve Humanity'. Interested individuals or groups can contact the church office – we would be delighted to speak to you. A donation is payable.

WE ACKNOWLEDGE

Traditional owners of the Kulin Nation, past Warriors, Elders past and present.

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IN THIS ISSUE:

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MELBOURNE UNITARIAN PEACE MEMORIAL CHURCH

110 Grey Street, East Melbourne 3002
Email: admin@melbourneunitarian.org.au
Website: www.melbourneunitarian.org.au

Monthly journal of the Melbourne Unitarian Peace Memorial Church
Est. 1852

Registered by Australia Post

Post Print Approved
100003043

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