

SAVE OUR SCHOOLS

Education Research Paper

Wealthy Qld Private Schools Massively Over-Funded by the Morrison Government

Queensland private schools are massively over-funded by the Commonwealth Government. Queensland Catholic education system and about one-third of Independent schools will be over-funded by \$665 million by the Commonwealth Government from 2022 to 2028.

The Catholic system will be over-funded by \$384 million and 88 Independent schools by \$271 million. Just 30 Independent schools are over-funded by \$199 million. They account for nearly three-quarters of the total over-funding of Independent schools. They include many of the most expensive and exclusive schools in Queensland. The full list of over-funded Independent schools is in Attachments 1 below. The estimates are based on official figures presented to Senate Estimates.

Under the current funding arrangements for private schools, the Commonwealth Government is responsible for funding private schools at 80% of their Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). However, many Queensland private schools are funded at well above 80% as shown in the table below.

The Queensland Government is responsible for the other 20% of the SRS target, but it has not divulged its current and future funding estimates for individual private schools and systems. On average, it is also over-funding private schools at 21.2% of their SRS.

Cannon Hill College is the top over-funded school. Its cumulative over-funding by the Commonwealth Government for 2022 to 2028 will amount to \$16.2 million. The school is currently funded at 132% of its Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by the Commonwealth Government instead of the target 80%.

Cannon Hill College is a highly privileged school. Over three-quarters of its students are from the highest socio-educationally advantaged (SEA) quartile and over 94% are from the top two quartiles. Only one per cent are from the lowest SEA quartile.

Brisbane Grammar is also highly over-funded. It is currently funded at 133% of its SRS by the Commonwealth and will be over-funded by \$12.9 million to 2028. Nearly 90% of its students are from the top SEA quartile and 94% are from the top two quartiles.

Other over-funded wealthy schools include St Margaret's School which is currently funded at 133% of its SRS by the Commonwealth and its cumulative over-funding to 2028 will be \$9.2 million. Brisbane Girls Grammar is funded at 120% of its SRS and will be over-funded by \$8 million to 2028; Hillbrook School is funded at 106% of its SRS and will be over-funded by \$6.1 million and four Presbyterian and Methodist Schools (Brisbane Boys College, Clayfield College, Somerset House and Sunshine Coast Grammar) are funded at 101% of their SRS and will be over-funded by an average of \$5.7 million each. Matthew Flinders College is funded at 106% of its SRS and will be over-funded by \$11.7 million.

Around 70% and more of students in these schools are from the top SEA quartile and 90% are from the top two quartiles. They have virtually no students from the lowest SEA quartile, not surprising given their average fees of around \$30,000 a year.

Top Over-Funded Independent Schools in Queensland

Schools	C/W SRS Share 2022	C/W Over-Funding 2022	C/W Over-Funding 2022-2028	Fees 2019	Students in Lowest SEA Quartile	Students in Top SEA Quartile	Students in Top 2 SEA Quartiles
	%	% points	\$	\$	%	%	%
Cannon Hill College	132	52	16,226,752	13,077	1	76	94
Brisbane Grammar	133	53	12,895,086	26,031	0	88	98
Matthew Flinders College	108	28	11,736,159	14,853	1	63	91
Rockhampton Grammar	98	18	11,023,410	10,361	10	36	67
St Margaret's School	133	53	9,204,664	20,695	2	70	92
Whitsunday Anglican	116	36	9,025,099	8,935	6	52	78
Brisbane Girls Grammar	120	40	7,953,111	25,201	0	85	97
Townsville Grammar	97	17	7,899,167	11,560	3	58	84
All Saints School	91	11	7,785,897	10,915	1	60	89
Somerset College	93	13	7,075,189	16,179	1	69	82
Hillbrook School	106	26	6,113,515	14,161	0	74	95
Presbyterian/Methodist (4)	101	21	5,747,806	18,938	2	69	92
Moreton Bay College	94	13	5,347,333	12,985	2	60	88
Toowoomba Grammar	91	11	5,154,930	14,547	1	50	84
Ormiston College	91	11	5,132,440	10,538	2	58	88
Brisbane Diocese (10)	89	9	4,561,551	11,414	4	47	80
Cathedral School of St Ann & St James	89	9	4,323,956	11,272	4	51	81
Sheldon College	98	18	4,036,538	12,833	2	50	85

Sources: See Attachment 3: Data Sources and Methodology.

Note: The over-funding, fees and student composition of the Presbyterian & Methodist and the Diocese of Brisbane schools are averages for the two systems. See Attachment 2 for details of the two school systems.

The Diocese of Brisbane School System, consisting of 10 schools, is also heavily over-funded. It will be over-funded by \$45.6 million to 2028, an average of \$4.6 million per school. Several of its schools are highly privileged (see Attachment 2). For example, 62% of students at St Andrews Anglican College are from the top SEA quartile and 90% are from the top two quartiles. Similarly, 61% of students at St Paul's School are from the top SEA quartile and 89% are from the top two quartiles with only 2% from the bottom quartile. Both schools have only one per cent of their students from the bottom SEA quartile.

The Queensland Catholic school system is over-funded at present by the Commonwealth Government at 83% of its SRS. The Commonwealth share of its SRS will increase to 84% next year and then gradually decline to 80% in 2029. This will result in over-funding of about \$384 million for 310 schools.

The over-funding of private schools is due to end by 2029 as the Commonwealth reduces its funding share to 80% of their SRS. However, there is no guarantee this will occur. Several private

school organisations are campaigning against losing their over-funding and, indeed, want more. Their greed is unrestrained. In effect, it is a campaign against funding for those most in need.

[In its pre-Budget submission](#), Independent Schools Australia called for increased funding to support choice in education. Their demands include more funding for schools to transition to the Direct Measure of Income (DMI) methodology for calculating the financial need of private schools. This is despite receiving \$455 million over ten years from 2019-2029 under the Choice and Accountability slush fund, \$66 million in various forms of transitional assistance to the DMI approach in 2019 and hundreds of millions in JobKeeper payments in 2020. It also wants more funding for regional boarding schools and an increase in capital grants.

Not to be outdone, the [National Catholic Education Commission](#) also wants additional funding for its schools in regional, rural and remote areas and for regional boarding schools. This is despite its huge windfall of \$3.7 billion over ten years from 2019 to 2020 from the introduction of the DMI to assess the financial need of schools, \$727 million in additional funding under the Choice and Accountability Fund and \$157 million in transitional assistance to the DMI in 2019.

The [Coalition of Metropolitan and Outer Regional Schools \(COMAIRSA\)](#), which has nine member schools in Queensland is also campaigning against the planned reduction in Commonwealth funding to 80% of their SRS by 2029. It includes several highly privileged schools that are highly over-funded such as St. Margaret's Girls School and All Saints School. All of the Queensland schools affiliated with COMAIRSA are over-funded and their total over-funding will amount to \$37.6 million over 2022 to 2028 [see Attachment 2].

COMAIRSA wants yet another special deal from the Morrison Government to retain this over-funding. It is opposed to the DMI method of assessing the financial need of schools because many of its members will have less funding than under the previous model. It has called for a "zero disadvantage" clause to be adopted whereby schools do not lose funding due to the DMI model.

We can expect to hear more of these demands in the Federal election campaign.

In contrast to the over-funding of private schools, the chronic under-funding of public schools in Queensland is set to continue for the rest of the decade. Queensland public schools are only funded at 84.5% of their SRS in 2022. They will be funded at less than 91% of their SRS until 2032 because the [Commonwealth-Queensland bilateral funding agreement](#) allows the Queensland Government to defraud public schools.

Formally, the Queensland Government is only required to fund public schools to 75% of their SRS instead of 80% by 2032, with the Commonwealth providing the other 20% by 2023. However, the agreement also allows the Queensland Government to claim expenditure on depreciation and school transport up to 4% of its target share. It can also claim expenditure on the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority.

These expenditures are specifically excluded from the definition of the SRS and so allow the Queensland Government to reduce its target share to be achieved by 2032 to less than 71%. Thus, public schools will only ever be funded at less than 91% of their SRS for at least the next ten years.

This skulduggery robs public schools of billions in funding. The cumulative under-funding of public schools from 2022-2029 is estimated by SOS at nearly \$12 billion. Figures are not available to estimate the extent of the under-funding to 2032.

We are at a critical point in the future of school funding. The Morrison Government is under pressure to provide another special deal for private schools to protect their millions in over-funding. The question is not whether it will deliver to its clients, but how much in the lead up to the Federal election.

Meanwhile, public schools continue to suffer from massive chronic under-funding. The Federal election is an opportunity for Labor, the Greens and Independents to address the inequity in school funding.

Labor and the Greens must deliver on their promise to ensure that public schools are fully funded at 100% of their SRS. Shadow Minister for Education, Tanya Plibersek, has committed to this goal several times in the last few months, most recently at the NSW Teachers Federation Principals Conference.

The Commonwealth Government must play a greater role in addressing disadvantage in education. A priority should be to increase the funding loadings for disadvantaged students. Another priority is to revise the Commonwealth-State bilateral funding agreement to ensure that the states, including Queensland, fulfil their responsibilities in funding public schools.

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Trevor Cobbold
National Convenor

SOS - Fighting for Equity in Education

<https://saveourschools.com.au>

<https://twitter.com/SOSAust>

saveourschools690@gmail.com

Attachment 1: Full List of Over-Funded Independent Schools

School	C/W Over-Funding 2022-2028 (\$)
Diocese of Brisbane – 10 schools	45,615,510
Lutheran Church – 26 schools	37,360,847
Presbyterian & Methodist – 4 schools	22,991,225
Cannon Hill College	16,226,752
Brisbane Grammar	12,895,086
Matthew Flinders College	11,736,159
Rockhampton Grammar	11,023,410
St Margaret's School	9,204,664
Whitsunday Anglican School	9,025,099
Brisbane Girls Grammar	7,953,111
Townsville Grammar	7,800,167
All Saints School	7,785,897
Somerset College	7,075,189
Hillbrook School	6,113,515
Moreton Bay College	5,347,333
Toowoomba Grammar	5,154,930
Ormiston College	5,132,440
Cathedral School of St Anne & St James	4,323,956
Sheldon College	4,036,538
Ipswich Girls Grammar School	3,758,674
Canterbury College	3,289,059
Trinity Anglican School	3,093,230
Fairholme College	2,759,362
Uniting Church Property Trust - 4 schools	2,401,908
Moreton Bay Boys College	2,329,491
FSAC – 2 schools	2,130,355
Seventh-Day Adventist – 3 schools	1,958,680
Emmanuel College	1,742,613
Redlands College	1,666,216
Ipswich Grammar	1,246,766
A B Paterson College	1,241,991
Trinity College	1,191,206
Mueller College	982,677
Rivermount Christian College	713,094
Blackall Range School	665,243
Moreton Bay Birali Steiner School	572,595
Arcadia College	540,408
Rockhampton Girls' Grammar	513,572
Heights College	403,255
Caloundra City School	280,245
Hillcrest Christian College	159,809

St Michael's College	141,214
St Aidan's School	126,862
Faith Baptist Christian School	63,280
Angelorum College	25,333
Australian Technology & Agricultural College	5,275

Attachment 2: High Over-Funded Independent School Systems

Diocese of Brisbane

School	Fees \$	Students Lowest SEA Quartile %	Students in Top SEA Quartile %	Students in Top 2 SEA Quartiles %
Coomera Anglican College	8,478	7	30	70
Fraser Coast Anglican College	6,144	5	46	78
St Andrew's Anglican College	13,366	1	62	90
St Hilda's School	16,823	2	57	88
St Luke's Anglican School	6,108	7	42	73
St Paul's School	13,880	1	61	89
The Glennie School	11,133	4	39	74
The Southport School	18,088	3	52	85
Toowoomba Anglican College	10,174	3	52	84
West Moreton Anglican College	9,949	10	29	64
Average	11,414	4	47	80

Presbyterian & Methodist

School	Fees \$	Students in Lowest SEA Quartile %	Students in Top SEA Quartile %	Students in Top 2 SEA Quartiles %
Brisbane Boys College	22,102	1	73	94
Clayfield College	18,778	3	65	90
Somerville House	21,741	1	81	97
Sunshine Coast Grammar	13,132	2	57	87
Average	18,938	2	69	92

Coalition of Metropolitan and Outer Regional Schools

Schools	C/W SRS Share 2022 %	C/W Over- Funding 2022 % points	C/W Over- Funding 2022- 2028 \$	Fees 2019 \$	Students in Lowest SEA Quartile %	Students in Top SEA Quartile %	Students in Top 2 SEA Quartiles %
West Moreton Anglican School	89	9	4,561,551	9,412	10	27	50
St Paul's School	89	9	4,561,551	13,512	2	59	87
The Lakes College	81	1	600,477	8,891	2	49	84
Ormiston College	91	11	5,132,440	10,538	2	58	88
Ipswich Grammar	83	3	1,246,766	10,797	7	39	72
A B Paterson College	82	2	1,241,991	9,577	3	46	84
Canterbury College	85	5	3,289,059	8,643	9	31	67
All Saints School	91	11	7,785,897	10,916	1	60	89
St Margaret's Girls School	133	53	9,204,664	20,695	2	70	92

Attachment 3: Data sources and methodology

The over-funding estimates are based on data provided to Senate Estimates by the Commonwealth Department of Education for the 2021-22 Budget. Data on Commonwealth Government funding for school systems and individual schools and the Commonwealth shares of the Schooling Resource Standard were supplied in answer to a question on notice by Senator Mehreen Faruqi (2021-22 Budget Estimates, SQ21-000848).

The two sets of data were used to calculate the funding due to systems and schools at the target 80% Commonwealth share. The over-funding is estimated as the difference between their projected Commonwealth funding estimates and that at the 80% share of their SRS. The over-funding estimates ignore other sources of Commonwealth Government funding such as the Choice and Accountability Fund which operates until 2029.

Data on school fees and student composition were obtained from My School.