



Australian Council of State School Organisations Ltd.

One voice for every child in public education

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President's Opinion Piece

A Stinking Bishop's Deal

In the world of washed-rind cheese there is one that is well known by children of all ages – and that is 'Stinking Bishop' – the mere whiff of which revives a comatose Wallace back to life in the '*Wallace & Gromit: The Curse of the Were-Rabbit*' movie. It's hard not to sense the same sort of stench coming from the newly-minted special deal for our nation's fully-loaded private schools; in fairground parlance 'everyone's a winner!' – unless of course, you happen to be a public school.

The PM has seemingly bypassed his brand-new education Minister in a classic patriarchal attempt to deodorise the rotten stink coming from his betrayal of the tenets of Fair, Simple and Transparent, and truly needs based funding agreements with no special deals. The odoriferous miasma from this outrage to common decency is seeping into the pores of non-government school advocates, where it will be impossible for them to ever completely remove the final traces of its disgusting aroma; no matter how many times they try to wash their hands.

And yet, within all this, we see the opposition declaiming the deal saying they will pay even more. No wonder Stephen Elder has been declared as the Financial Review's most powerful person in education this year. It seems he has the Midas touch for Catholic and other wealthy private schools. Expert reaction in the media has been swift and excoriating, and with good reason.

Most of the states and territories were on the very cusp of signing new funding agreements with the Commonwealth, on the basis that they would underfund their 80% contribution to public schools by 5% whilst overfunding their required 20% donation to non-government schools; in some cases, close to half as much again. Think on this for a moment - billions of dollars are due to be squandered on an already obscenely overfunded and exclusive sector, whilst our fully inclusive public schools that are open to all and increasingly the first choice for Australian families, are being cast aside like so much old news.

Now is the time to fully revive the fortunes of our nation's superb and fully inclusive public schools, and support their surging enrolments, not with a whiff of Charles Martell's finely crafted cheese, but with proper resourcing for our artisanal educators, authentic community partnerships and that magical bit of alchemy that all public schools deliver. Our state and territory Governments need to unite and stand up to this odoriferous insult from the PM. They alone have the power to correct this offensive absurdity by insisting on additional funding for our public schools, to balance out this special deal, and at the very least choose to set their contribution to non-government schools to 15% for now and shift anything above that to our public schools where it can make a real difference. Our children, their families and our nation's future deserve nothing less.

Phillip Spratt

President,

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