

SAVE OUR SCHOOLS

Education Policy Comment

JobKeeper Gravy Train for Wealthy Perth Private Schools

Thirty-two WA private schools raked in \$109 million in JobKeeper payments in 2020 contributing to profits of \$121 million. Every school except one made a profit with JobKeeper and increased their profits over the previous year. The top 10 schools exploiting JobKeeper got \$62 million and made \$74 million in profits. Most of them are highly privileged, high fee schools.

Hale School topped the list of JobKeeper payments with \$7.5 million as revealed by its financial report originally posted on the school website but later removed. According to its annual Information Statement lodged with the [Charities Commission](#), it made a profit of \$10.2 million in 2020, up from \$2.7 million in 2019. It also got \$10.8 million in recurrent government funding, including \$7.2 million from the Commonwealth and \$3.6 million from the WA Government.

Hale charges average fees of over \$27,000 per student and has assets of over \$100 million. It serves the students of highly privileged families. Over 70 per cent of its students are from the top socio-educationally advantage (SEA) quartile and over 90 per cent are from the top two quartiles.

Next on the list of JobKeeper payments was St Mark's Anglican School. It got \$7 million and made a profit of \$8.6 million which was an increase of \$6 million over the previous year. It also got \$15 million in recurrent government funding, including \$10 million from the Commonwealth and \$5 million from the WA Government. Fifty per cent of its students are from the top SEA quartile and 83 per cent from the top two quartiles. It has assets valued at nearly \$90 million.

Scotch College also got \$7 million from JobKeeper and made a profit of \$5.2 million which was an increase of \$3.7 million over the previous year. It also got \$8.1 million in recurrent government funding. Nearly 80 per cent of its students are from the top SEA quartile and 93 per cent are from the top two quartiles.

Christ Church Grammar got \$6.4 million and made a profit of \$12.5 million which was an increase of \$6.1 million compared with 2019. It also got \$8.8 million in recurrent government funding. Nearly 80 per cent of its students are from the top SEA quartile and 95 per cent are from the top two quartiles.

Other highly privileged schools also received millions in JobKeeper payments (see table below). For example, St Mary's Girls School got \$6.2 million and made a profit of \$7.9 million; PLC got \$5.2 million and made a profit of \$4.6 million; Guildford Grammar got \$5.2 million and made profit of \$5.8 million; St Hilda's Girls School got \$4.9 million and made a profit of \$5.9 million.

These schools also serve highly privileged families. Around 50 to 70 per cent of their students are from the top SEA quartile and 80 to 95 per cent are from the top two SEA quartiles. The profits made courtesy of JobKeeper enable these schools to increase their resources and expand their facilities for their privileged students.

JobKeeper has proved to be a gravy train for many WA private schools. Each of the 32 schools, except one, made a profit with the help of JobKeeper and every school increased their profit over that in 2019 while the other school significantly reduced its previous loss. These schools did not need

JobKeeper to stay afloat. Most had very secure financial cushions to weather downturns in revenue courtesy of their fees, other government funding and multi-million dollar assets. They should return their JobKeeper money to the taxpayer.

The greed of highly privileged schools is obscene. They grasp any opportunity to get their snouts in the taxpayer trough. Yet, they advertise themselves as having superior moral values that are central to their elitist culture. For example, Hale School prides itself on its “strong sense of community” and its values. Scotch College claims it adheres to “moral and ethical principles”. Guildford Grammar says that it promotes “Christian ethics”. If they lived up to their stated values and had any common decency, they would give the money back as some firms have done. PLC claims it has “strong ethical values”.

The Morrison Government has readily resorted to prosecuting ordinary people that may have got over payments of a few thousand dollars from Centrelink. It has been unforgiving in hounding them for re-payment. But if you're a wealthy, private school, you get away with massive over-payments. It is a glaring double standard that favours the wealthy and hammers the poor.

JobKeeper provided yet another opportunity for the Morrison Government to provide even more special funding for private schools. It is icing on the cake of a huge funding boost for private schools through a [highly flawed method](#) of determining their financial need and by special funding deals not based on need such as the \$1.2 billion [Choice and Accountability Fund](#)..

WA private schools have been [showered with funds](#) by the Commonwealth and WA governments over the past decade while funding for public schools was massively cut. Government (Commonwealth and state) funding, adjusted for inflation, for Independent private schools increased by \$2,198 per student and for Catholic schools by \$1,506 per student between 2009 and 2019. In contrast, funding for public schools was cut by \$1,527 per student.

As a result, the total resources of WA private schools far exceed those of public schools. The total income of Independent schools was \$22,613 per student in 2019 and that of Catholic schools was \$17,638 compared to \$16,031 in public schools.

The Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Anthony Fisher, has conceded that Catholic schools have “[never had it so good](#)” in terms of funding. The same can be said of Independent private schools in Perth.

Wealthy private schools seized on JobKeeper with the connivance of the Commonwealth Government to extend their huge resource advantage. For example, JobKeeper provided Hale School in Wembley Downs with an additional \$4,700 per student to add to its income of over \$35,000 per student while Scotch College got an additional \$5,114 per student from JobKeeper to add to its income of \$34,000 per student. PLC got an additional \$5,202 per student to add to its income of \$33,000 per student. In contrast, nearby Churchlands High School has an income of about \$13,000 per student.

The resource advantage of private schools is set to continue for the rest of the decade under the terms of the [Commonwealth-State bilateral funding agreements](#). WA private schools were funded at 103 per cent of their Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) in 2021 while public schools were funded at 89 per cent of their SRS. Private schools will be funded at 106 per cent of their SRS by 2029 while public schools will be funded at only 91 per cent of their SRS. As a result, public schools will remain massively under-funded while private schools continue to be over-funded.

JobKeeper for wealthy private schools has compounded the vast inequality in school funding in Australia. Their ruthless pursuit of greed must be ended by thorough-going reform of school funding to ensure it is solely based on need.

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JobKeeper Payments to WA Private Schools, 2020

School	JobKeeper	Profit	Change in Profit 2019-20	Total Govt Recurrent Funding	Total Assets	Students in Top SEA Quartile	Students in Top 2 SEA Quartiles
	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	%	%
Hale School	7,450,000	10,217,654	7,515,890	10,840,826	102,706,521	71	92
St Mark's Anglican School	7,028,550	8,608,390	6,004,431	15,081,306	87,947,067	50	83
Scotch College	6,955,500	5,162,869	3,646,562	8,123,165	103,311,446	77	95
John Septimus Roe Anglican Sch	6,718,650	7,149,217	6,310,208	20,936,781	71,274,801	31	63
Christ Church Grammar	6,424,500	12,477,871	6,053,371	8,753,829	139,880,806	79	95
St Stephen's School	6,320,000	5,814,000	5,816,000	19,722,000	91,530,000	49	81
St. Mary's Anglican Girls	6,193,500	7,851,931	4,863,628	10,329,334	74,025,424	68	91
PLC	5,202,000	4,648,602	4,978,035	na	76,000,012	51	85
Guildford Grammar	5,154,868	5,775,452	4,976,445	11,755,748	150,984,143	51	82
St Hilda's Anglican Girls School	4,888,858	5,882,250	5,646,634	6,116,104	74,439,224	84	12
Peter Moyes Anglican School	4,861,800	3,095,140	3,321,686	14,212,977	61,946,053	33	69
Georgiana Molloy Anglican Schc	3,904,950	5,038,078	3,026,799	13,620,946	32,514,395	30	65
Swan Valley Anglican School	3,823,800	5,110,007	3,675,444	13,516,340	42,919,493	20	56
Perth College	3,765,000	2,870,012	2,278,757	7,976,035	93,585,062	64	88
John Wollaston Anglican School	3,709,500	2,629,573	2,231,735	11,324,311	44,148,120	25	62
All Saints College	3,457,500	4,324,557	3,485,548	10,017,092	47,257,433	69	92
Bunbury Cathedral Grammar	2,895,525	856,915	2,319,240	7,124,403	37,798,492	54	84
Tranby College	2,610,960	3,294,677	3,227,489	8,348,714	33,763,627	27	64
Court Grammar	2,380,800	3,869,420	3,877,777	9,774,744	23,431,541	11	41
St James' Anglican School	2,411,250	2,235,562	1,543,000	8,101,333	43,892,874	25	62
Rehoboth Christian College	1,852,000	2,335,456	1,217,149	8,420,542	22,795,796	50	80
Bunbury Baptist College*	1,800,000	432,613	407,237	3,602,362	4,717,725	14	41
Frederick Irwin Anglican School	1,563,000	4,106,787	1,435,843	19,062,058	60,121,082	36	71
OneSchool Global	1,402,900	1,223,134	2,035,211	3,401,078	15,170,303	2	25
St George's Grammar	1,261,500	423,713	1,191,065	3,007,862	21,054,297	64	89
Esperance Anglican School	993,750	1,772,796	1,583,137	4,197,724	13,118,984	12	44
Peter Carnley Anglican School	864,150	992,620	324,405	11,996,891	47,229,565	24	57
Quintilian School	784,000	501,224	303,421	na	7,542,415	80	98
Beehive Montessori	695,943	86,808	93,753	1,745,720	11,902,016	81	97
Learning Tree Steiner School	568,000	625,367	338,620	2,047,547	5,222,565	10	36
Margaret River Montessori	568,000	655,171	310,293	1,432,608	4,069,459	25	65
Treetops Montessori	554,499	1,973,742	265,078	1,453,349	2,681,435	28	64
Total	109,065,253	121,194,182	94,303,891	276,043,729	1,648,982,176		

Sources:

1. Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.
2. SEA: Socio-Educational Advantage. Figures are for 2019 and derived from My School.

Note:

* Large, unprecedented increase in government grants. JobKeeper estimated as the increase less projected increase in Commonwealth Government funding.