

New Private Schools Receiving Establishment Grants

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This paper is a brief analysis of data released in relation to Establishment Grants. One set of data looks at all schools eligible for Establishment Grants (19 May 1999 to 15 February 2002), the other looks at those approved for funding in 2001 alone. Whilst the former incorporates the latter, the two data sets do not contain exactly the same information, and so it is useful to look at both. The 2001 also provides some up to date comparison compared with the overall trend. The two data sets are referred to as “1999 on” and “2001”.

It is intended to update and supplement “Trends in New Private Schools” (R. Martin, 1999, available at <http://www.aefederal.org.au/Debates/TrendsinNNGSchools.html>).

The recent ABS Schools 2001 data is also related, and reported elsewhere.

It should also be noted that the schools eligible for Establishment Grants is itself a contentious issue, (see Jane Nichols 2001 paper available at <http://www.aefederal.org.au/Debates/PrivateSchEstGrants.html>) and it is highly debatable whether some of the schools in the list are in fact new schools. This is particularly the case with some of the larger schools. Whilst it is not considered practical to discount these dubious “new” schools, the effect on the figures here is to make growth in both schools and students look bigger, and to make the size of the schools figures higher than it would otherwise be.

1. Number of New Schools

Table 1

	Number of Schools	
	1999 on	2001
NSW	11	4
Victoria	11	3
Qld	13	7
WA	13	5
SA	6	4
Tas	2	
ACT	2	1
NT	0	0
Aust	58	24

Table 1 shows the number of new private schools established by State or Territory and in Australia as a whole. The numbers of new schools opening do not appear to be increasing – the average of just over 20 per year is actually considerably down on the numbers through the 90’s which were generally in the upper 30s.

Whereas the previous paper showed NSW had accounted for nearly half of new schools , it is now more distributed and especially large in WA and Queensland.

2. Students

Table 2

	Students	
	1999 on	2001
NSW	694	387
Victoria	640	47
Qld	1257	588
WA	1578	225
SA	677	565
Tas	29	
ACT	38	25
NT	0	0
Aust	4912	1837

As with schools, the growth in the number of students (in new schools) seems to be happening at a slightly lesser rate than in the previous years, and the State or Territory pattern has also changed as in the new schools .

3. Size of School on Opening

Table 3

	Average Students per School	
	1999 on	2001
NSW	63	97
Victoria	58	16
Qld	97	84
WA	121	45
SA	113	141
Tas	14	
ACT	19	25
NT		
Aust	85	77

Table 3 gives the average size of the new schools by State or Territory and Australia. Again, it should be noted that these figures are boosted by a few fairly large schools of questionable “newness”.

Table 4 looks at school opening size Australia wide both by actual number and the accumulative total.

Table 4**School Size - 1999 on**

Range	Number	%	Cumulative	Cumulative%
0-10	6	10%	6	10%
11-20	10	17%	16	27%
21-30	8	14%	24	41%
31-40	5	9%	29	50%
41-50	4	7%	33	57%
51-60	2	3%	35	60%
61-70	1	2%	36	62%
71-80	5	9%	41	70%
81-90	2	3%	43	74%
91-100	2	3%	45	77%
Over 101	13	22%	58	100%

(Figures for 2001 show slightly larger opening size, with 54% of schools below 50 students.)

It can be seen that the majority of schools open with low numbers of students. 57% of schools have enrolments of 50 or less when they open.

However, it should again be noted that the situation is even worse than this makes it appear. The Tables above are based on total school enrolments across all Years. Table 5, on the other hand, looks at enrolment by school age in 2001 (comparable figures for 1999 on are not available). Whilst the enrolments in Primary are in line with the figures above, Junior and Senior Secondary Schools seem to be opening with a number of students that would severely limit curriculum choice.

Table 5

School Size (2001)	School Size (2001)		
	Primary	J Sec	S Sec
0-10	3	3	
11-20	1	2	
21-30	3	1	1
31-40		2	
41-50	1	1	1
51-60	1		
61-70	2	2	
71-80	1		
81-90	1		
91-100			
Over 101	4	1	

4. SES Rating

Table 6

	Average SES	
	1999 on	2001
NSW	107	103
Victoria	99	95
Qld	94	95
WA	100	104
SA	90	92
Tas	93	
ACT	101	117
NT		0
Aust	98	99

The possible range of the SES is from 85 to 130, with a lower rating giving greater subsidy. An SES of 101 gives a subsidy of 50% of AGSRC (plus State or Territory subsidies). Therefore the average subsidy is over half of AGSRC.

5. Schools in a System

Of the 24 schools opened in 2001, 10 (42%) are systemic and 14 are not (data not available for “1999 on”). This is considerably higher than in the period 1997 to 1999, but still well below the 70% of schools that were systemic in 1995.

6. Discussion

This particular set of data does not permit analysis of all factors. In particular, it refers only to new schools and students attending those schools. It does not relate to the issue of growth in existing private schools. Therefore conclusions can only relate to new private schools, not “the drift” in general.

(A rough comparison can be gleaned by the fact that the ABS data indicate that private schools are increasing enrolments by about 20 000 per year, compared with new school enrolments of under 2 000. In other words, less than 10% of new enrolments are in schools opening that year. However, this is not a measure of “the drift”, as total number of students is increasing).

There is also no analysis of “affiliation” data, and movement between private schools is not taken account of. The controversy around Establishment Grants suggests that a not inconsiderable proportion of the students were in private schools last year.

There does not appear to be an explosion in new private schools. Indeed, it could be argued that without the extra stimulus provided by deregulation, increased funding and establishment grants, the growth of new private schools would be slowing dramatically.

The conclusions made in the earlier paper still seem to be generally true .

In particular, the role of new private schools in stimulating and maintaining the drift to private schools seems to be to increase the supply by starting small and then in some cases expanding.

This helps to maintain the steady erosion of the public school sector. Whilst the figures do not show a dramatic increase in “the drift”, they are cause for alarm in that flow is being maintained and Federal government policy, in particular, is being manipulated to ensure that this occurs and counter any natural tendency for it to slow down.