



# NEW PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT

In 1996 the Howard government abandoned the New Schools Policy. The New Schools Policy sought to ensure that any new private schools were part of planned educational provision and that they were educationally and economically viable. Now schools automatically receive Australian Government funding if they comply with state or territory registration.

In 1999, the Government introduced Establishment Grants. These give new schools \$500 per student extra in their first year and \$250 extra in their second.

This is the context within which new private schools operate.

## Number of New Private Schools 1999 – 2002<sup>2</sup>

Table 1 shows the number of new private schools opened each year.<sup>3</sup> In this table new school covers any school opening for any age range

**Table 1**

State or territory	1999	2000	2001	2002	Total
ACT	1		1	1	3
NSW	3	5	3	10	21
NT				1	1
QLD	2	4	7	8	21
SA		2	4	1	7
TAS		2			2
VIC	2	6	3	5	16
WA	1	6	5	2	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>85</b>

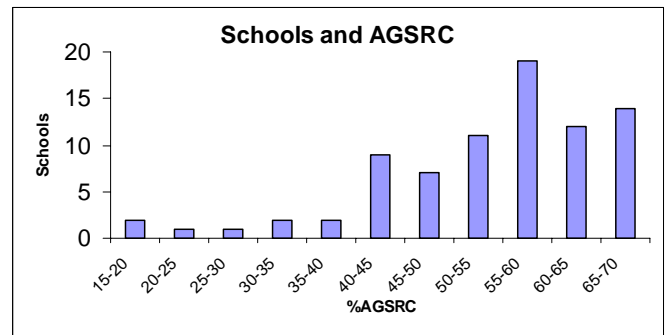
<sup>2</sup> The information on this Fact Sheet is taken from Martin, Roy, 2003, Update on New Private Schools Receiving Establishment Grants, available at <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Debates/updatestgrants2003.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Establishment Grants apply only to schools opened after 11 May 1999, therefore the figure for 1999 in Table 1 is an incomplete year.

## Per cent of AGSRC Received

Australian Government funding arrangements allocate schools to a range between 13.7% and 70% of Average Government School Recurrent Costs (AGSRC). Graph 3 shows the number of the new schools by AGSRC ranges. It can be seen that the majority are in the higher ranges, indicating higher dependence on government funding.

**Graph 3**

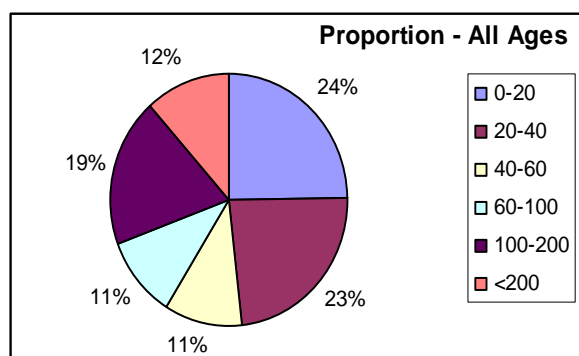


## School Size

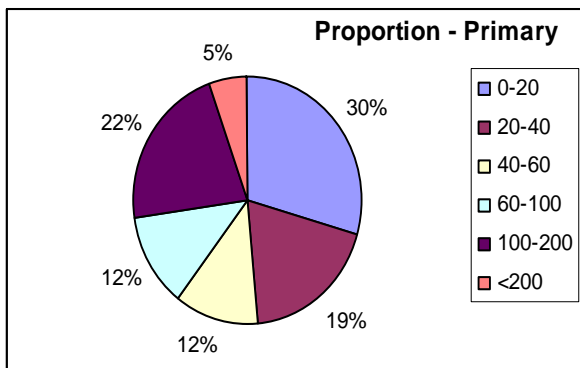
The following graphs are based on enrolments as at Census 2002. Therefore schools opened in 1999 are in their fourth year of operation, schools opened in 2000 in their third, and those in 2001 in their second.

Graph 4 considers schools across all age ranges, whilst Graphs 6 to 7 look at Primary, Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary respectively

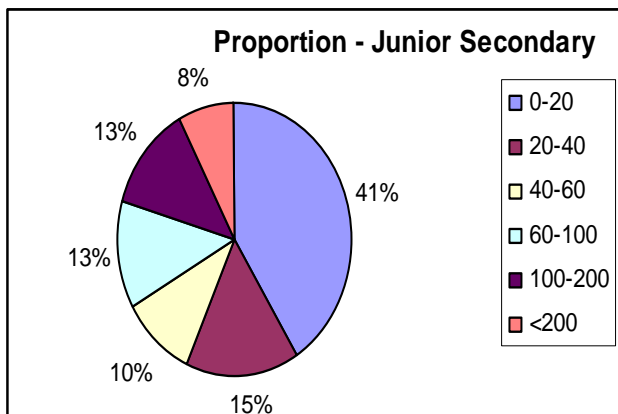
**Graph 4**



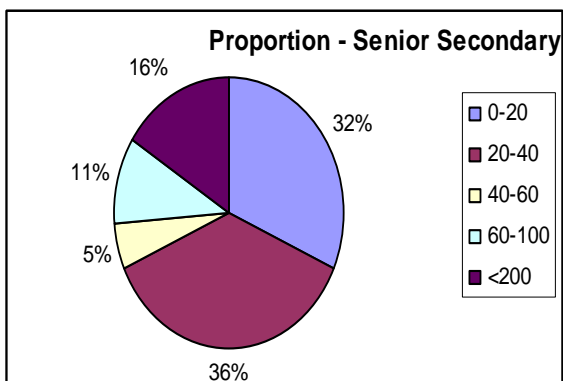
**Graph 5**



**Graph 6**



**Graph 7**



The general smallness of these schools – in some cases even four years after opening, stands out. Even when counting students across the full age ranges, over 60% of the schools have 60 or less students. Nearly half have less than forty students.

Perhaps most surprising is that at the Senior Secondary level two thirds have 40 or fewer students.

Similarly, two thirds of junior secondary students are in schools with less than 60 students in that age range. Primary schools are not much larger.

### Conclusion

The fundamental question that is raised by all this is why a government would choose to encourage the opening of small, unviable, highly funding dependent schools. This is made worse by the fact they are generally in areas where there are larger and more viable schools (probably both public and private) already in existence. Such schools are likely to need considerable assistance in the future.

Even worse, why do students who move to these schools receive an additional subsidy from the Australian Government, in the form of an Establishment Grant, whilst they are not eligible for that subsidy if they stay in their larger more viable school?

The wisdom of giving policy priority to the creation of new, small, unviable schools which will remain highly dependent on public funding and even so will be at the lower end of resource capacity must be questioned.

It would seem to make better policy sense to institute planned provision of schools to which all new schools are subject and, except in areas of population development, concentrate the limited education budget on consolidating the capacity of existing schools.

*For more detailed information on these and other issues see the other Fact Sheets in this series at <http://www.aefederal.org.au/Debates/schoolscampaign.html>*

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