



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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Federal Government school funding policies exacerbate class, religious and ethnic divides

School funding policies in Australia are exacerbating class, religious and ethnic divides, said the Australian Education Union today in response to recent media reports describing a "white flight" from public schools.

"Free, secular, universally accessible public education remains the key for a vibrant, socially cohesive and prosperous Australia," said AEU Federal President Angelo Gavrielatos.

"Social cohesion and multiculturalism are brought to life in our inclusive, socially representative public schools where we encourage students regardless of racial, ethnic, religious or class background to reflect the best of themselves and strive for individual excellence for the common good.

"Federal Government funding of schools should work to ameliorate social divides.

"But, under the guise of choice, Federal Government funding policies that favour private schools and discriminate against public schools are driving dramatic shifts in school enrolment patterns and increasing segregation.

"We need to ask ourselves what kind of society will we be in 10, 20, 30 or 50 years time if we continue down the path of state sponsored segregation and education by class, religion and ethnicity?

"Public schools are struggling with the responsibility to teach an increasingly disproportionate share of the disadvantaged students, with a shrinking and inadequate share of federal funding.

"Private schools meanwhile are free to compete for the cheapest and easiest to teach students and get nearly 5 times more funding from the Commonwealth per student than public schools.

"Public schools receive barely 35% of federal funding even though they teach nearly 70% of students.

"Government research shows that public schools are underfunded by around \$3 billion per year."

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