

SAVE OUR SCHOOLS

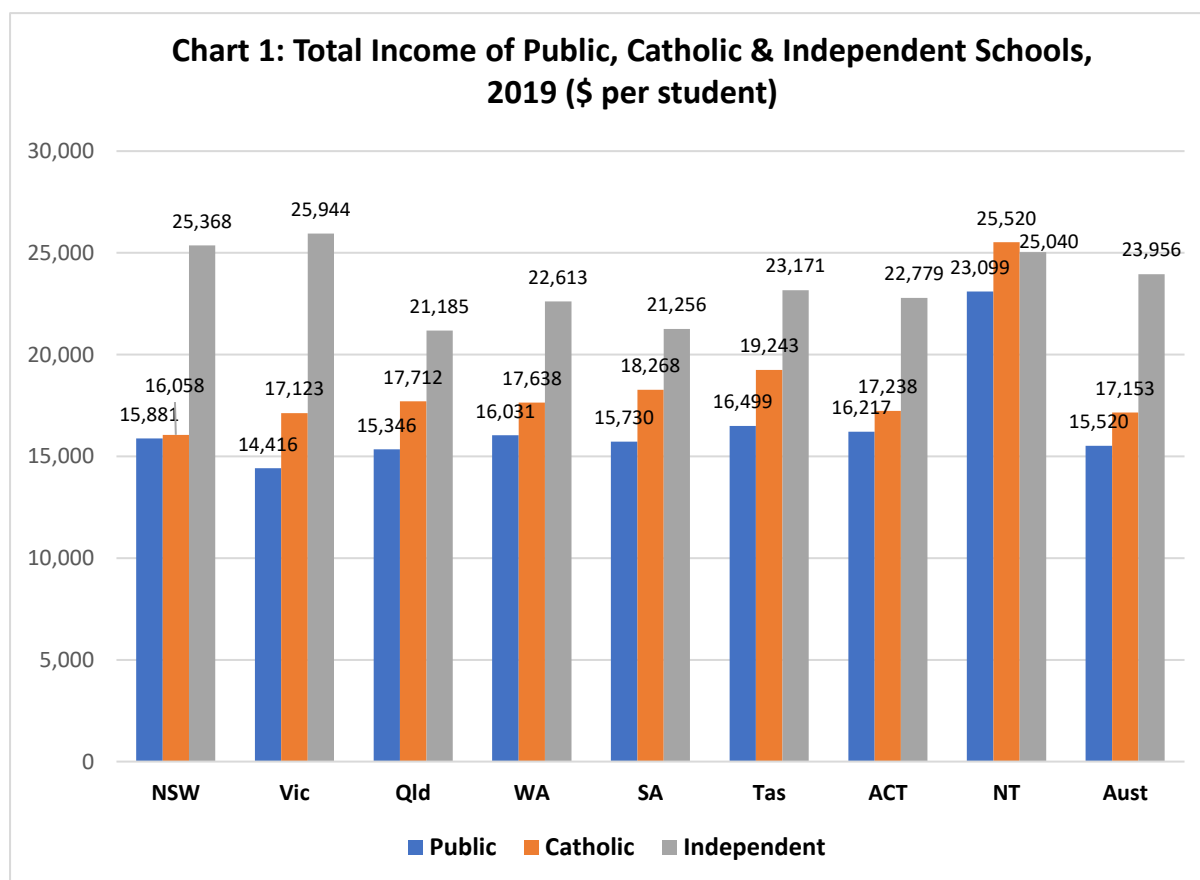
School Funding Brief

New Figures Reveal Increasing Resource Advantage for Private Schools

Figures recently published by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on its [National Report on Schooling data portal](#) show that income per student of Catholic and Independent schools is much higher than for public schools and that their income has increased six to eight times that of public schools since 2009. The increasing resource advantage of private schools is mainly due to much larger government funding increases than for public schools.

The resource advantage of private schools is projected to accelerate over the rest of the decade to 2029. Commonwealth funding for private schools will increase under special deals not available to public schools and bilateral funding agreements between the Commonwealth and the states allow the states to continue to under-fund public schools.

The income per student in Independent schools in 2019 was over 50% higher than for public schools – \$23,956 per student compared to \$15,520 per student in public schools [Chart 1]. Catholic school income per student at \$17,153 was over 10% higher than in public schools.



The total income of Independent schools far exceeded that of public schools in all states. The gap was particularly large in Victoria and NSW. In Victoria, the income of Independent schools was

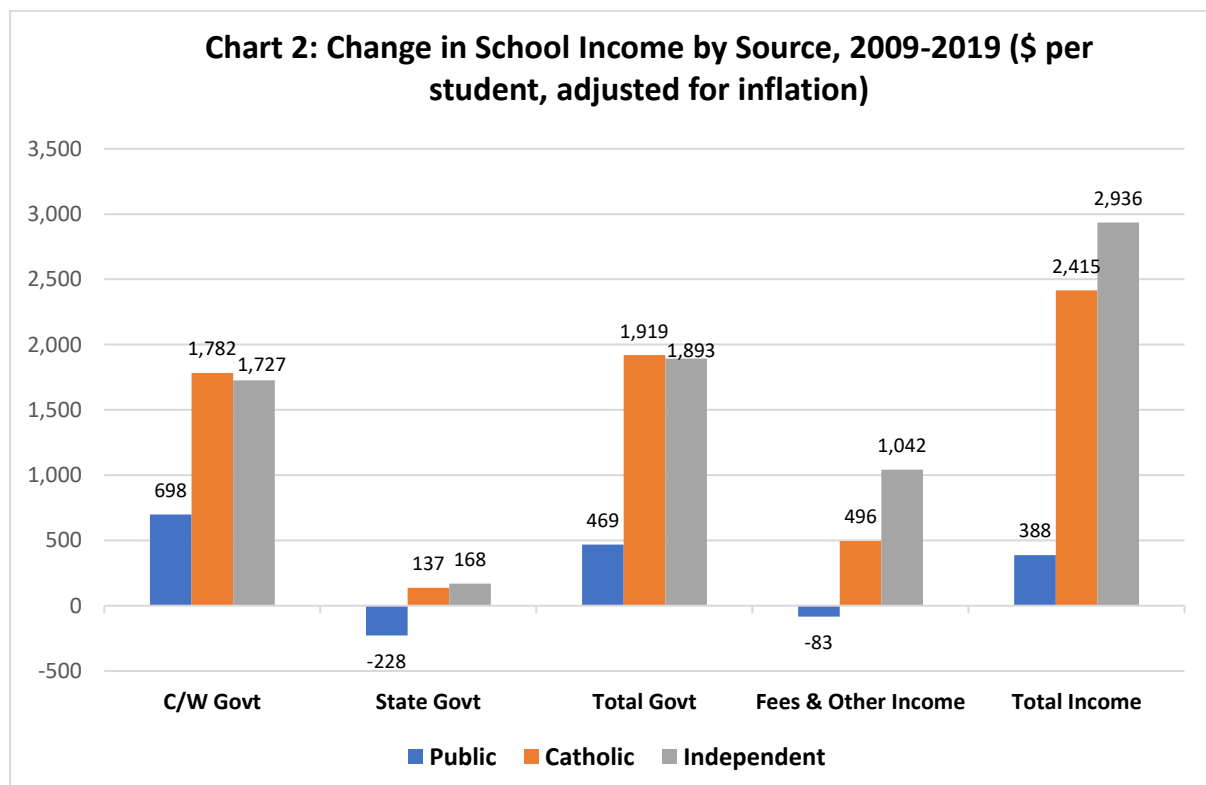
\$11,528 per student higher (or 80% higher) than that of public schools. In NSW, the income of Independent schools was 60% higher than for public schools.

The income of Catholic schools also exceeded that of public schools in all states. The largest gap was in Tasmania where the income of Catholic schools was \$2,744 per student higher than in public schools. The gap in Victoria was \$2,707 per student (19%). In the Northern Territory the income gap favouring Catholic schools was \$2,421 per student (10% higher).

The resource gaps have changed dramatically since 2009. In that year, the income per student Independent schools across Australia was 36% higher than in public schools compared to 54% higher in 2019. In 2009, income per student in public schools was 6% higher than in Catholic schools but by 2019 Catholic school income was 11% higher than in public schools.

The primary reason for this change was much larger increases in government funding for private schools than for public schools. Government (Commonwealth and state) funding for private schools, adjusted for inflation, increased by four times that for public schools. Government funding for Catholic schools increased by \$1,919 per student and by \$1,893 for Independent schools compared to only \$469 per student in public schools [Chart 2. Increased income from fees and donations for private schools completed the increased government funding.

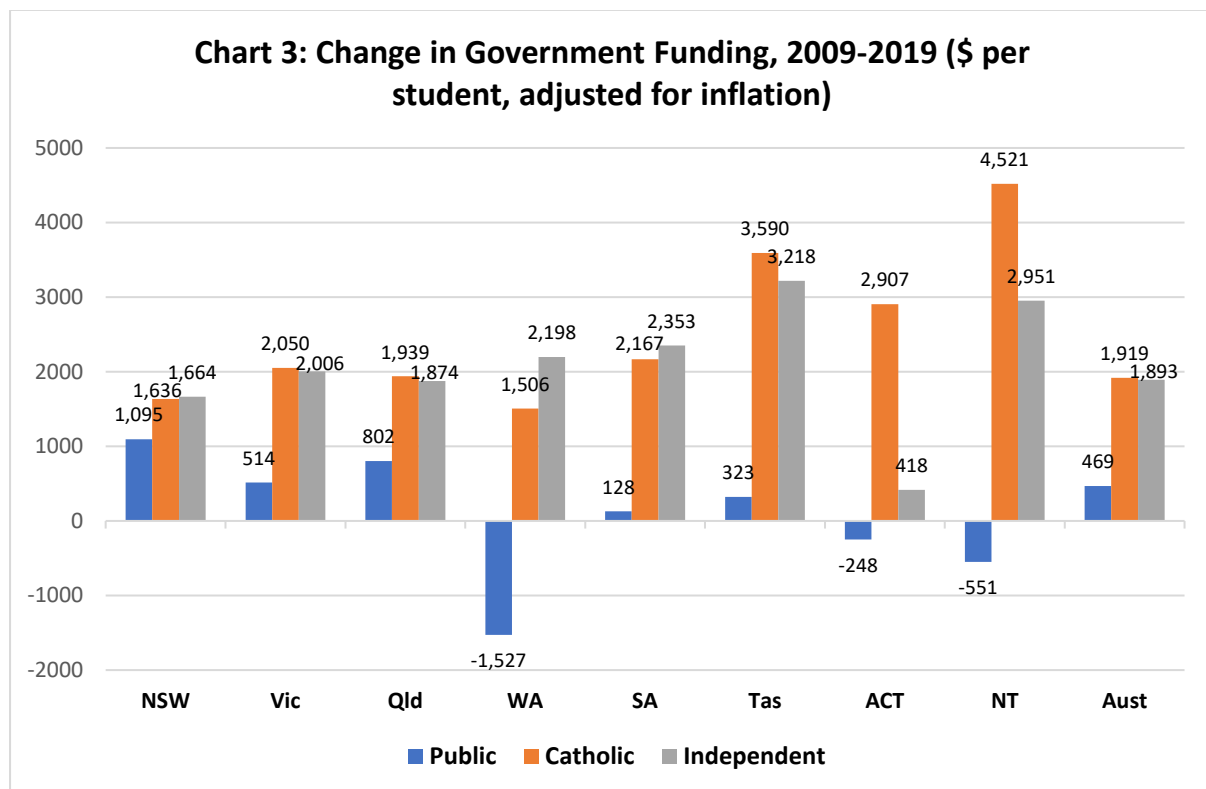
These figures differ from those recently published in the [Report on Government Services 2021](#) because of differences in the way they are compiled. However, the overall trend is the same – government funding increases have massively favoured private school since 2009.



Commonwealth Government funding increases for private schools were over double that for public schools. Funding for Catholic schools increased by \$1,782 per student, adjusted for inflation, and by \$1,727 for Independent schools compared to \$698 per student in public schools.

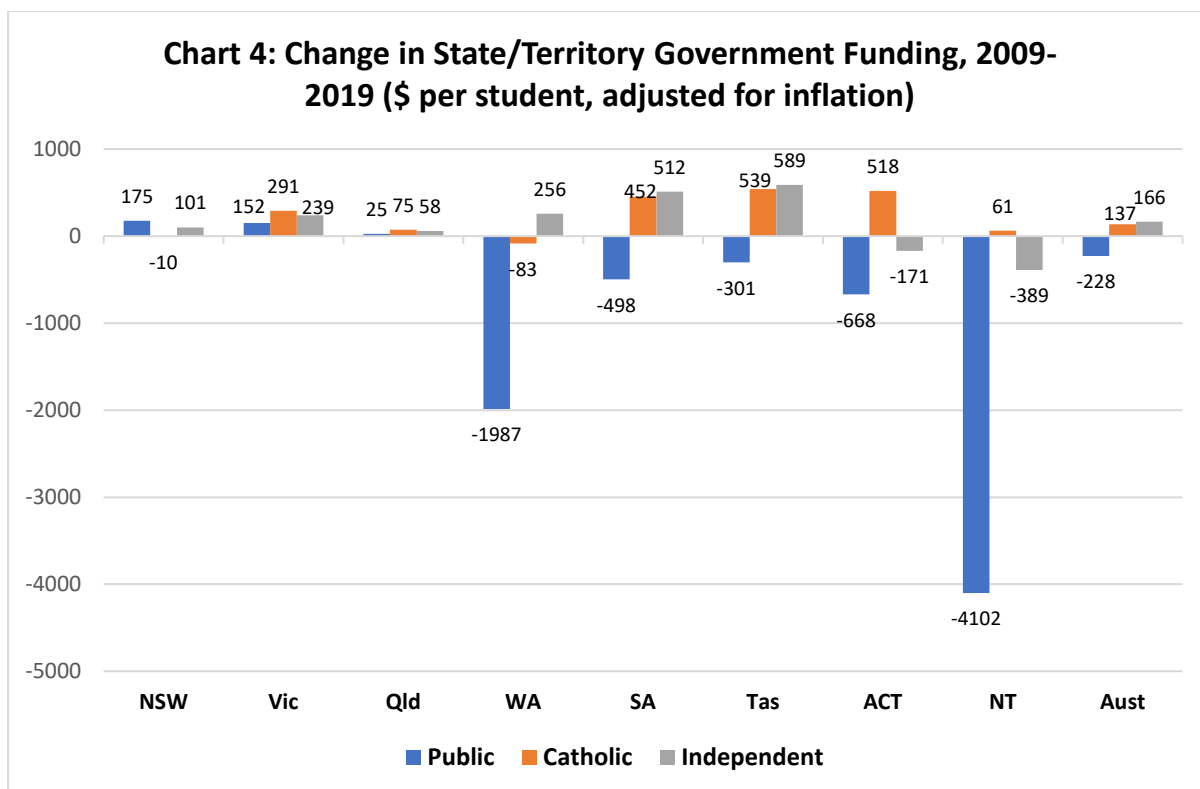
State governments cut funding for public schools since 2009 and increased funding for private schools. State funding for public schools was cut by \$228 per student while funding for Catholic schools increased by \$137 per student and by \$168 per student in Independent schools. The states are clearly taking advantage of Commonwealth funding increases for public schools to cut their own funding but continue to increase their funding for private schools.

Government (Commonwealth and state) funding increases for private schools far outstripped those for public schools in all states since 2009. Catholic and Independent schools received large funding increases in all states while public schools in NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania received much smaller increases and funding was cut for public schools in Western Australia, the ACT and the Northern Territory [Chart 3].



Five state governments cut their funding for public schools between 2009 and 2019 [Chart 4]. Massive funding cuts to public schools occurred in Western Australia (-\$1,987 per student) and the Northern Territory (-\$4,102 per student). Large cuts also occurred in South Australia (-\$498), Tasmania (\$301) and the ACT (-\$668). In contrast to their cuts to funding for public schools, the Western Australian, South Australian, Tasmanian and ACT governments increased funding for private schools by significant amounts.

The new figures show that government funding increases continue to be mis-directed to the more privileged Catholic and Independent schools. Public schools cater for the vast majority of the most disadvantaged students – low SES, Indigenous, high disability and remote area students. In 2019, public schools enrolled 82% of low SES students; 84% of Indigenous students, 76% of high disability students and 82% of remote area students.



Public schools face the prospect of being underfunded indefinitely. Under the current arrangements, Commonwealth funding increases will continue to heavily favour private schools until at least the end of the decade while the states will continue to underfund public schools, and several will continue to overfund private schools.

This will continue to condemn the large majority of disadvantaged students to a lesser education than their advantaged peers. This leads to lower school completion rates, higher unemployment, lower incomes, lower health outcomes and less access to positions of power and influence in society for disadvantaged students. School funding policies thereby contribute to the social reproduction of inequality in our society. It is an appalling social injustice, but it is also a drag on Australia's economic growth and prosperity because education is a key factor in this.

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