

## How can you have fair needs-based funding without fixing school SES scores?

David Gonski and his fellow school review members Ken Boston and Kathryn Greiner are urging the Senate to pass Simon Birmingham's education bill.

Have they forgotten their own report and its recommendations on school SES scores?

On page 81 of the Final Gonski Report they called on the government to:

*'As soon as possible develop, trial and implement a new measure for estimating the quantum of the anticipated private contribution for non-government schools in consultation with the states, territories and non-government sectors.'*

They continued on page 177:

*'The current SES measure is ... subject to a potentially large degree of inaccuracy as the students attending a particular school are not necessarily representative of the socioeconomic averages of the areas in which they live. A more precise measure of the SES of a school would be more accurate and credible. The panel considers that work should commence as a priority to develop a more precise measure of capacity to contribute to replace the existing SES measure.'*

School SES scores are the most important part in the government's funding model for most non-government schools. In fact, they are more significant than all of the loadings put together.

The simple fact is that if SES scores aren't accurate then the model isn't needs-based.

Yet current school SES scores are unfair, unjust and irrational. Why?

Here's how they treat Holy Rosary, a small parish primary school in Melbourne's inner-city Kensington, and one of the nation's most prestigious schools, Geelong Grammar.

Holy Rosary has students from the public housing tower blocks at the end of the street. Ten per cent of its students come from Commonwealth Health Care Card families and close to one in five of the pupils have educationally disadvantaged backgrounds:

	Holy Rosary (Kensington, Vic)	Geelong Grammar (Corio, Vic)
Enrolments (2016)	300	1457
Students from Health Care Card families 2016	10%	Nil
Educationally disadvantaged students (2016)	19%	7%
Fees, charges and parent contributions (2015)	\$1,287/student	\$18,823/student
School SES score	119	115

# Media Release



CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION OF VICTORIA LTD

That's right. The government gives Holy Rosary a higher SES score than Geelong Grammar.

Simon Birmingham and Malcolm Turnbull say the families in Holy Rosary are richer than the families at Geelong Grammar – and expect them to pay higher school fees.

This is not an anomaly.

Simon Birmingham and Malcolm Turnbull also insist that the families at Holy Rosary – as well as the families at almost 100 other similar, small, community-based Catholic primary schools across Australia – are richer than the families at other wealthy, elite schools in Victoria such as Haileybury College (with an SES score of 111), Geelong College (SES score of 108) and Caulfield Grammar (SES score of 117).

How can these Catholic primary schools be wealthier?

Yet that is the logic of SES scores – the measure Simon Birmingham and Malcolm Turnbull have put them at the very heart of school funding in their education package.

Government members of the Senate committee that examined the bill have given SES scores the tick too.

Their version of 'needs-based' funding evidently measures the needs of wealthy, elite schools for boatsheds, abseiling towers, heated Olympic swimming pools, equestrian centres and rifle ranges.

Haileybury College alone will receive a windfall funding gain of about \$10 million per year from the Birmingham funding model because of flaws in the way SES scores are constructed.

Meanwhile, Simon Birmingham's and Malcolm Turnbull's legislation will mean thousands of Catholic school parents will be facing threats of higher fees with over 600 – a total of 617 – Catholic systemic schools systemic schools set to receive less funding next year.

How is this fair?

How is this good policy?

How does this represent the 'needs-based funding' called for in the Gonski Report?

Most importantly, how can the Senate crossbench possibly support it?

***Simon Birmingham is dancing round the facts on funding. See the video at:***  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYoWY2wrvws&feature=youtu.be>

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