

Dear Commissioner,

It has come to my attention that a proposal has been made to cut Government funding to faith-based schools & aged cares.

I have read much of the report & while I find I do not disagree with a lot of what has been written, I do believe the proposal has the potential for serious repercussions.

Should the current Government funding be ended, it stands to reason that a number of these facilities will close. Many are already finding it difficult to provide sufficient standard of care & will close under further financial stress. For some there will be financial support from parishioners, clients and community to override shortfalls for a time but when considering schools of 500+ students & aged care facilities of 300+ beds, this is not a realistic solution. Some may struggle for a time but ultimately, will close.

Should these facilities close, they will not necessarily come on the market for Government to purchase. Being faith based, the properties tend to be built using congregation funds leading to a sense of ownership by the community & I believe they will convert the buildings to other uses, rather than sell.

Therefore, new buildings will be needed to ensure there are sufficient facilities available. What is currently proven in all fields of construction, is that costs & time are much greater than they were 4 years ago & overruns will need to be factored in. This is providing land can be purchased & permits obtained, either for a complete new facility or an addition to an existing. A lot of time, effort & resources will be needed to provide these facilities & they will likely be needed quicker than they will be able to be produced.

Another consideration is that some nurses & teachers have left the public system for the better security & income that comes from private sector careers. I do not expect they will all go back to the public system, even if they are needed, but will find suitable and ready employment in new fields of similar profession or even commerce.

Should a private school manage to stay open, it stands to reason their fees will increase. With the constant increase of interest rates & the cost of living still rising, I cannot see extra schooling fees being readily absorbed into household budgets & parents will make the difficult decision to withdraw their children & send them to government schools.

The public school where my granddaughter is enrolled does well, but they are not in a position for an influx of numbers, even if more buildings & professionals are available. I understand that many other public schools are in similar, or worse situations, where extra numbers will not be readily absorbed & will in fact cause chaos leading to the degradation of the learning process.

The proposal to withdraw the current funding will not only affect the students & aged in the private sector. This decision will affect all Australian's, from the private teachers, nurses & carers who will lose their jobs of relative luxury & security, to the parents & teachers in the public schools who will have to accept an influx into their students' classes, to the councils, designers & constructors who will be under pressure to supply buildings quickly. I believe this will lead to great backlash & protests from many different fields of the Australian people.

I have not made an in-depth study of the aged care & schooling systems to write my considerations, however I have been exposed to both the private & public sectors & understand much of the limitations of both sides.

I see the outcome being young & aged on the streets, needing to go to public provisions, which are not available.

This will be a Government created crisis, without a Government solution.

I sincerely hope this letter causes the Commissioner to reconsider & continue Government funding to faith-based schools & aged care, as the current facilities are working very well.

Regards,
Russell Mead