

The exclusive and excluded

13/10/2008 9:43:00 AM

WE can't afford to send our children to those very elite and costly schools.

They are called 'exclusive' because they are limited to people with lots of money, but we still have access to one of the best educational systems in the world.

But there are other 'exclusive' schools that are a bit of a worry.

A news report said that schools run by the secretive exclusive Brethren religious sect receive more than \$18 million in government funding, including \$2 million from the State Government.

These schools are really exclusive, their children don't mix with other children.

The level of funding they receive is, to say the least, most unusual. It is on a level usually reserved for schools in severely disadvantaged areas. There have to be questions in Parliament as to how and why this strange allocation of money was made.

If it is true that the Brethren are not allowed to vote because God should decide the leaders, wouldn't it be logical that God, not the elected government, should provide the funds for their schools?

There are lots of questions that need to be answered.

While the children attending wealthy schools are limited to those who can afford to pay, it appears these schools isolate their students from the outside world. If it is true that students are 'excluded' from using computers or watching television or reading newspapers or mixing with children outside their faith, how can they be educated to survive in the real world?

It can be argued that the growth of so many private (which are really government-subsidised) schools has the potential to create divisions in our society.

This certainly happened in the old days when children went to either public or Catholic schools and often some jobs were available only to those who were of the 'right faith'. We don't want that to happen again.

Happily, today, this 'difference of religion' no longer exists and to make sure it never happens again, surely we need questions in Parliament about how and why so much government money was allocated to these 'exclusive' schools.

It's not an argument about parents being able to choose the school they believe would be most suitable for their child, it's ensuring that all children receive an education that will enable them to survive in the real world.

I could argue that books and newspapers sometimes print articles of a sexual nature or something else I wouldn't like my children to read, but that doesn't mean I should deny them the skills of reading and writing.

We could use the same argument against schools that deny their children an understanding of modern communication, such as the use of computers.

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