

Exclusive Brethren school given \$1m state grants

- **David Rood**
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A VICTORIAN school run by the secretive Exclusive Brethren religious sect received more than \$1 million in state taxpayer funding last year, new documents show.

An analysis of Federal Government funding for Brethren schools also shows they will receive almost \$12 million nationwide this year.

More than one quarter of that federal funding, or \$3.13 million, was received by the Exclusive Brethren's Greenvale School in Victoria.

Data obtained by the NSW Greens from state education departments show the states provided more than \$5.86 million in estimated funding last financial year.

NSW Greens MP John Kaye, a critic of the Commonwealth funding scheme for non-government schools said, based on the relative wealth of an area, state governments could no longer hide behind federal funding for Brethren schools.

"Each state government is now exposed for its role in supporting the growth of a group branded by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd as an extremist cult and sect," Dr Kaye said. He said state and federal money ought not be used to subsidise the sect's "agenda of indoctrinating vulnerable children".

Victorian Government funding for the Glenvale School, which has a dozen campuses, including in Glenroy, Lilydale and Melton, increased from \$370,419 in 2002-03 to \$1.08 million last financial year.

Brethren Church spokesman David Stewart said its schools were assessed under the same formula as other non-government schools but received less money than if the campuses were treated as individual schools.

"If each school was established as a single, standalone entity, the amount of money it would be entitled to under government-determined payments would be far greater," he said.