

Towards Accurate SES Scores – Comparing the Socio-Economic Status of Families with Children at Government, Catholic and “Other” Non-Government Schools

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Introduction

To help inform the debate on apt levels of government funding for non-government schools in Australia, this paper presents substantive comparisons of the socio-economic status (SES) of families of students attending government, catholic and “other” (i.e. non-catholic) non-government schools. Data from the 2001 Census, supplied by the Australian Bureau of Statistics between October 2003 and January 2004, have been used to facilitate these comparisons.

The 2001 Census collected data, for families and households, on the types of schools which school students attended, and on numerous substantive indicators of socio-economic status (SES), including:

- family income levels;
- family structures and parental employment status;
- family housing tenure;
- housing loan levels for families with housing loans;
- the highest level of schooling (up until Year 12 or equivalent) completed by individuals; and
- the highest post-school qualifications achieved by people.

The Census data has school types broken down as Government (Govt.), Catholic (Cath.) and “Other”, such that:

- Government schools include all government schools, including selective public schools;
- Catholic schools includes both systemic and non-systemic catholic schools; and
- “Other” schools includes all non-catholic non-government schools.

Through cross-matching of these 2001 Census data, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) can provide specialised tables which compare families with children in government, catholic and “other” schools in terms of socio-economic indicators such as those listed above. Tables 1 and 2 below summarise these comparisons. Table 1 provides actual measures and percentages derived from specialised tables supplied by the ABS, whereas Table 2 provides measures normalised relative to “government schools only” (i.e. “Govt. only”) average figures which are set at 100.0 for all measures considered. In all tables shown, row numbers are provided for ease of reference.

Comparative Tables

Table 1: SES Levels of Families with Children at Government, Catholic and “Other” Schools – in Terms of Family Income, Structure and Employment Status, Housing Tenure and Home Loan Levels, and Parental Education Levels

Row No.	Measure, as at 2001 Census time, for Families with Children in Schools of Types Shown in the Columns to the Right Here (% = percentage, ave. = average)	Govt. only	Govt. & Cath. only	Govt., Cath. & Other	Cath. only	Cath. & Other only	Other only	Govt. & Other only	Ave. for all schools
1	FAMILY INCOME MEASURES								
2	Median family income per week (\$)	894	1,124	1,465	1,181	1,567	1,398	1,462	996
3	Median family income per year (\$)	46,668	58,627	76,425	61,634	81,758	72,925	76,271	51,956
4	% of families with nil or negative ave. weekly incomes	0.50	0.43	1.16	0.42	0.86	0.91	0.58	0.53
5	% of families with ave. incomes of \$119 per week (i.e. \$6,209 per year) or less	0.86	0.70	1.74	0.72	1.37	1.33	0.88	0.88
6	% of families with ave. incomes of \$499 per week (i.e. \$26,036 per year) or less	23.08	12.66	7.34	12.59	8.55	11.78	9.20	19.39
7	% of families with ave. incomes of \$999 per week (i.e. \$52,125 per year) or less	56.84	42.61	31.08	39.63	25.78	33.17	30.04	50.23
8	% of families with ave. incomes of \$500 per week (i.e. \$26,089 per year) or more	76.92	87.34	92.66	87.41	91.45	88.22	90.80	80.61
9	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1000 per week (i.e. \$52,177 per year) or more	43.16	57.39	68.92	60.37	74.22	66.83	69.96	49.77
10	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1200 per week (i.e. \$62,613 per year) or more	32.70	45.48	61.78	48.96	65.18	57.54	60.82	39.25
11	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1500 per week (i.e. \$78,266 per year) or more	20.27	30.25	48.46	33.49	52.95	46.12	48.44	26.30
12	% of families with ave. incomes of \$2000 per week (i.e. \$104,354 per year) or more	8.04	12.61	25.10	14.88	31.07	26.36	27.10	11.76
13	FAMILY STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT MEASURES								
14	% of two parent families with children in which both parents are employed full time	15.15	21.76	22.39	21.71	27.19	23.97	22.79	17.65
15	% of two parent families with children in which neither parent is employed	7.73	5.01	5.89	4.36	2.59	3.94	3.89	6.55
16	% of families with just one parent	26.59	16.77	12.63	16.93	12.42	16.83	13.64	23.21
17	% of one parent families in which parent not employed	13.81	6.59	5.56	5.91	4.83	6.03	5.17	11.14
18	HOUSING TENURE MEASURES								
19	% of families living in homes they fully own	24.46	31.63	38.67	34.33	40.47	38.02	37.02	28.21
20	% of families living in homes they are purchasing (i.e. which they own but haven't fully paid the loan off yet)	41.49	48.75	48.07	47.18	45.48	42.60	47.46	42.98
21	% of families living in homes they are renting	30.92	16.58	10.48	15.44	11.28	16.45	13.05	25.73
22	HOUSING LOAN MEASURES								
23	Median family housing loans per month (\$)	843	916	1,071	956	1,131	1,050	1,018	890
24	Median family housing loans per year (\$)	10,121	10,990	12,847	11,475	13,571	12,604	12,214	10,678
25	% of families with housing loans of \$999 per month (i.e. \$11,988 per year) or less	64.27	57.51	45.42	53.81	41.54	46.75	48.78	59.71
26	% of families with housing loans of \$1000 per month (i.e. \$12,000 per year) or more	35.73	42.49	54.58	46.19	58.46	53.25	51.22	40.29
27	% of families with housing loans of \$2000 per month (i.e. \$24,000 per year) or more	5.66	7.44	16.95	8.74	18.65	16.49	14.00	7.70
28	% of families with housing loans of \$4000 per month (i.e. \$48,000 per year) or more	0.86	1.09	3.05	1.28	3.32	3.23	2.36	1.24
29	PARENTAL SCHOOL EDUCATION MEASURES								
30	% of families in which no parent had gone to school	1.01	1.01	0.78	0.75	0.44	0.41	0.50	0.88
31	% of families in which no parent had completed beyond Year 8 at school (including families in which no parent had gone to school)	6.09	4.65	3.03	4.40	2.34	2.55	2.42	5.25
32	% of families in which at least one parent has completed Year 12 or equivalent	36.48	42.22	61.27	47.18	63.59	61.79	62.12	42.13
33	PARENTAL POST SCHOOL QUALIFICATION MEASURES								
34	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Trade Certificate or higher	25.27	29.59	45.94	31.90	45.60	45.99	46.97	29.33
35	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Bachelor Degree or higher	7.63	8.96	19.14	10.22	20.53	21.32	22.10	9.94
36	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Postgraduate Degree	0.72	0.57	0.92	0.66	1.67	2.29	1.93	0.90

Table 2: SES Levels of Families with Children at Government, Catholic and “Other” Schools – in Terms of Family Income, Structure and Employment Status, Housing Tenure and Home Loan Levels, and Parental Education Levels – Relative to Government School Average = 100.0

Row No.	Measure, as at 2001 Census time, for Families with Children in Schools of Types Shown in the Columns to the Right Here (% = percentage, ave. = average)	Govt. only	Govt. & Cath. only	Govt., Cath. & Other	Cath. only	Cath. & Other only	Other only	Govt. & Other only	Ave. for all schools
1	FAMILY INCOME MEASURES								
2	Median family income per week (\$)	100.0	125.6	163.8	132.1	175.2	156.3	163.4	111.3
3	Median family income per year (\$)	100.0	125.6	163.8	132.1	175.2	156.3	163.4	111.3
4	% of families with nil or negative ave. weekly incomes	100.0	87.1	233.3	85.6	173.5	182.7	116.1	106.1
5	% of families with ave. incomes of \$119 per week (i.e. \$6,209 per year) or less	100.0	81.6	201.4	83.9	158.3	154.3	101.6	102.4
6	% of families with ave. incomes of \$499 per week (i.e. \$26,036 per year) or less	100.0	54.9	31.8	54.6	37.1	51.0	39.9	84.0
7	% of families with ave. incomes of \$999 per week (i.e. \$52,125 per year) or less	100.0	75.0	54.7	69.7	45.4	58.3	52.8	88.4
8	% of families with ave. incomes of \$500 per week (i.e. \$26,089 per year) or more	100.0	113.5	120.5	113.6	118.9	114.7	118.0	104.8
9	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1000 per week (i.e. \$52,177 per year) or more	100.0	133.0	159.7	139.9	172.0	154.9	162.1	115.3
10	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1200 per week (i.e. \$62,613 per year) or more	100.0	139.1	188.9	149.7	199.3	176.0	186.0	120.1
11	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1500 per week (i.e. \$78,266 per year) or more	100.0	149.2	239.1	165.2	261.3	227.6	239.0	129.8
12	% of families with ave. incomes of \$2000 per week (i.e. \$104,354 per year) or more	100.0	157.0	312.3	185.2	386.7	328.1	337.3	146.4
13	FAMILY STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT MEASURES								
14	% of two parent families with children in which both parents are employed full time	100.0	143.7	147.8	143.3	179.5	158.2	150.5	116.5
15	% of two parent families with children in which neither parent is employed	100.0	64.8	76.2	56.4	33.5	51.0	50.3	84.7
16	% of families with just one parent	100.0	63.1	47.5	63.7	46.7	63.3	51.3	87.3
17	% of one parent families in which parent not employed	100.0	47.7	40.2	42.8	35.0	43.6	37.4	80.7
18	HOUSING TENURE MEASURES								
19	% of families living in homes they fully own	100.0	129.3	158.1	140.3	165.4	155.4	151.3	115.3
20	% of families living in homes they are purchasing (i.e. which they own but haven't fully paid the loan off yet)	100.0	117.5	115.9	113.7	109.6	102.7	114.4	103.6
21	% of families living in homes they are renting	100.0	53.6	33.9	49.9	36.5	53.2	42.2	83.2
22	HOUSING LOAN MEASURES								
23	Median family housing loans per month (\$)	100.0	108.6	126.9	113.4	134.1	124.5	120.7	105.5
24	Median family housing loans per year (\$)	100.0	108.6	126.9	113.4	134.1	124.5	120.7	105.5
25	% of families with housing loans of \$999 per month (i.e. \$11,988 per year) or less	100.0	89.5	70.7	83.7	64.6	72.7	75.9	92.9
26	% of families with housing loans of \$1000 per month (i.e. \$12,000 per year) or more	100.0	118.9	152.8	129.3	163.6	149.0	143.4	112.8
27	% of families with housing loans of \$2000 per month (i.e. \$24,000 per year) or more	100.0	131.4	299.5	154.3	329.6	291.3	247.4	136.0
28	% of families with housing loans of \$4000 per month (i.e. \$48,000 per year) or more	100.0	126.8	354.5	149.2	385.4	375.4	274.3	144.4
29	PARENTAL SCHOOL EDUCATION MEASURES								
30	% of families in which no parent had gone to school	100.0	99.4	76.9	73.5	43.3	40.3	49.6	87.1
31	% of families in which no parent had completed beyond Year 8 at school (including families in which no parent had gone to school)	100.0	76.3	49.8	72.3	38.4	41.9	39.8	86.1
32	% of families in which at least one parent has completed Year 12 or equivalent	100.0	115.7	167.9	129.3	174.3	169.4	170.3	115.5
33	PARENTAL POST SCHOOL QUALIFICATION MEASURES								
34	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Trade Certificate or higher	100.0	117.1	181.8	126.2	180.4	182.0	185.9	116.0
35	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Bachelor Degree or higher	100.0	117.5	251.0	134.0	269.1	279.6	289.8	130.3
36	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Postgraduate Degree	100.0	78.3	127.2	91.6	231.8	316.6	266.8	124.6

Approximately 95% of all families have their children in just one school type – i.e. government schools only (approximately 66.4% of all families with one or more school children), catholic schools only (approximately 18.2%), and “other” non-government schools only (approximately 10.2%). Of the remaining 5% of families, about 2.6% have one or more children in government and catholic schools, 2.1% have children in government and “other” schools, 0.4% have children in catholic and “other” schools, and just 0.04% have children in government, catholic and “other” schools.

Whilst most rows of Tables 1 and 2 provide measures reflecting higher levels of SES, rows 4 to 7 (inclusive), 15 to 17, 21, 25, 30 and 31 contain measures generally reflecting lower levels of SES. For example, row 16 provides the percentages of families which are one parent families.

The general pattern here is that “government school only” families are seen to have *by far* the lowest values of measures reflecting high SES (see row 1, for example, where the “Govt. only” figure” is easily the lowest in the row), and *by far* the highest values of measures reflecting “low SES” (see row 16, for example, where the “Govt. only” figure” is easily the highest in the row). At the other extreme, all four columns containing “Other” schools generally show by far the highest values of measures reflecting high SES (see row 1, for example), and the lowest values reflecting “low SES” (row 31, for example). There are two conspicuous – and perhaps highly significant – exceptions to this general pattern, however, in rows 4 and 5. These two rows show that the proportion of “other” school families with extremely low incomes (\$119 per week or less) is significantly higher than for government and catholic school families, which in turn suggests that “other school families” most frequently benefit from family trusts, other tax minimisation schemes, or some other favourable circumstances which government and catholic school families less frequently benefit from.

In order to simplify and clarify the comparison here, Tables 3 and 4 repeat Tables 1 and 2, but only contain the columns for “Govt. only”, “Cath. only”, “Other only” and “Ave. for all schools”. Tables 3 and 4 do, however, contain an additional column titled “Estimate for Top 50% of Other schools”, which offers tentative estimates of each measure here for the “top half” of “other” category schools – that is, the 50% of “other” category non-government schools which are of *highest* SES. It is assumed here that the “bottom half” of “other” schools – that is, the 50% of “other” category schools of *lowest* SES – have average measures here in all cases equating to the corresponding “Cath. only” measures. So, in order to preserve the “Other only” figures, entries in the “Estimate for Top 50% ...” column in all cases need to be such that the “Other only” figure is the exact midpoint between the corresponding “Cath. Only” (= “bottom half of other”) and “Estimate for Top 50% ...” (= “top half of other”) figures. For example, in row 2 of Table 3, the “Other only” figure of \$1,398 is exactly mid-way between the Cath. Only figure of \$1,181 and the “Estimate for Top 50% ...” figure of \$1,614 (noting rounding off to the nearest whole number).

Tables 3 and 4 now follow.

Table 3: SES Levels of Families with Children at Just Government, Just Catholic and Just “Other” Schools – in Terms of Family Income, Structure and Employment Status, Housing Tenure and Home Loan Levels, and Parental Education Levels

Row No.	Measure, as at 2001 Census time, for Families with Children in Schools of Types Shown in the Columns to the Right Here (% = percentage, ave. = average)	Govt. only	Cath. only	Other only	Ave. for all schools	Estimate for Top 50% of Other schools
1	FAMILY INCOME MEASURES					
2	Median family income per week (\$)	894	1,181	1,398	996	1,614
3	Median family income per year (\$)	46,668	61,634	72,925	51,956	84,216
4	% of families with nil or negative ave. weekly incomes	0.50	0.42	0.91	0.53	1.39
5	% of families with ave. incomes of \$119 per week (i.e. \$6,209 per year) or less	0.86	0.72	1.33	0.88	1.94
6	% of families with ave. incomes of \$499 per week (i.e. \$26,036 per year) or less	23.08	12.59	11.78	19.39	10.96
7	% of families with ave. incomes of \$999 per week (i.e. \$52,125 per year) or less	56.84	39.63	33.17	50.23	26.71
8	% of families with ave. incomes of \$500 per week (i.e. \$26,089 per year) or more	76.92	87.41	88.22	80.61	89.04
9	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1000 per week (i.e. \$52,177 per year) or more	43.16	60.37	66.83	49.77	73.29
10	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1200 per week (i.e. \$62,613 per year) or more	32.70	48.96	57.54	39.25	66.13
11	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1500 per week (i.e. \$78,266 per year) or more	20.27	33.49	46.12	26.30	58.76
12	% of families with ave. incomes of \$2000 per week (i.e. \$104,354 per year) or more	8.04	14.88	26.36	11.76	37.84
13	FAMILY STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT MEASURES					
14	% of two parent families with children in which both parents are employed full time	15.15	21.71	23.97	17.65	26.22
15	% of two parent families with children in which neither parent is employed	7.73	4.36	3.94	6.55	3.53
16	% of families with just one parent	26.59	16.93	16.83	23.21	16.74
17	% of one parent families in which parent not employed	13.81	5.91	6.03	11.14	6.14
18	HOUSING TENURE MEASURES					
19	% of families living in homes they fully own	24.46	34.33	38.02	28.21	41.70
20	% of families living in homes they are purchasing (i.e. which they own but haven't fully paid the loan off yet)	41.49	47.18	42.60	42.98	38.03
21	% of families living in homes they are renting	30.92	15.44	16.45	25.73	17.45
22	HOUSING LOAN MEASURES					
23	Median family housing loans per month (\$)	843	956	1,050	890	1,144
24	Median family housing loans per year (\$)	10,121	11,475	12,604	10,678	13,734
25	% of families with housing loans of \$999 per month (i.e. \$11,988 per year) or less	64.27	53.81	46.75	59.71	39.69
26	% of families with housing loans of \$1000 per month (i.e. \$12,000 per year) or more	35.73	46.19	53.25	40.29	60.31
27	% of families with housing loans of \$2000 per month (i.e. \$24,000 per year) or more	5.66	8.74	16.49	7.70	24.24
28	% of families with housing loans of \$4000 per month (i.e. \$48,000 per year) or more	0.86	1.28	3.23	1.24	5.18
29	PARENTAL SCHOOL EDUCATION MEASURES					
30	% of families in which no parent had gone to school	1.01	0.75	0.41	0.88	0.07
31	% of families in which no parent had completed beyond Year 8 at school (including families in which no parent had gone to school)	6.09	4.40	2.55	5.25	0.70
32	% of families in which at least one parent has completed Year 12 or equivalent	36.48	47.18	61.79	42.13	76.40
33	PARENTAL POST SCHOOL QUALIFICATION MEASURES					
34	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Trade Certificate or higher	25.27	31.90	45.99	29.33	60.08
35	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Bachelor Degree or higher	7.63	10.22	21.32	9.94	32.43
36	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Postgraduate Degree	0.72	0.66	2.29	0.90	3.91

Table 4: SES Levels of Families with Children at Just Government, Just Catholic and Just “Other” Schools – in Terms of Family Income, Structure and Employment Status, Housing Tenure and Home Loan Levels, and Parental Education Levels – Relative to Government School Average = 100.0

Row No.	Measure, as at 2001 Census time, for Families with Children in Schools of Types Shown in the Columns to the Right Here (% = percentage, ave. = average)	Govt. only	Cath. only	Other only	Ave. for all schools	Estimate for Top 50% of Other schools
1	FAMILY INCOME MEASURES					
2	Median family income per week (\$)	100.0	132.1	156.3	111.3	180.5
3	Median family income per year (\$)	100.0	132.1	156.3	111.3	180.5
4	% of families with nil or negative ave. weekly incomes	100.0	85.6	182.7	106.1	279.8
5	% of families with ave. incomes of \$119 per week (i.e. \$6,209 per year) or less	100.0	83.9	154.3	102.4	224.7
6	% of families with ave. incomes of \$499 per week (i.e. \$26,036 per year) or less	100.0	54.6	51.0	84.0	47.5
7	% of families with ave. incomes of \$999 per week (i.e. \$52,125 per year) or less	100.0	69.7	58.3	88.4	47.0
8	% of families with ave. incomes of \$500 per week (i.e. \$26,089 per year) or more	100.0	113.6	114.7	104.8	115.8
9	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1000 per week (i.e. \$52,177 per year) or more	100.0	139.9	154.9	115.3	169.8
10	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1200 per week (i.e. \$62,613 per year) or more	100.0	149.7	176.0	120.1	202.3
11	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1500 per week (i.e. \$78,266 per year) or more	100.0	165.2	227.6	129.8	289.9
12	% of families with ave. incomes of \$2000 per week (i.e. \$104,354 per year) or more	100.0	185.2	328.1	146.4	470.9
13	FAMILY STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT MEASURES					
14	% of two parent families with children in which both parents are employed full time	100.0	143.3	158.2	116.5	173.1
15	% of two parent families with children in which neither parent is employed	100.0	56.4	51.0	84.7	45.6
16	% of families with just one parent	100.0	63.7	63.3	87.3	63.0
17	% of one parent families in which parent not employed	100.0	42.8	43.6	80.7	44.5
18	HOUSING TENURE MEASURES					
19	% of families living in homes they fully own	100.0	140.3	155.4	115.3	170.5
20	% of families living in homes they are purchasing (i.e. which they own but haven't fully paid the loan off yet)	100.0	113.7	102.7	103.6	91.7
21	% of families living in homes they are renting	100.0	49.9	53.2	83.2	56.4
22	HOUSING LOAN MEASURES					
23	Median family housing loans per month (\$)	100.0	113.4	124.5	105.5	135.7
24	Median family housing loans per year (\$)	100.0	113.4	124.5	105.5	135.7
25	% of families with housing loans of \$999 per month (i.e. \$11,988 per year) or less	100.0	83.7	72.7	92.9	61.8
26	% of families with housing loans of \$1000 per month (i.e. \$12,000 per year) or more	100.0	129.3	149.0	112.8	168.8
27	% of families with housing loans of \$2000 per month (i.e. \$24,000 per year) or more	100.0	154.3	291.3	136.0	428.3
28	% of families with housing loans of \$4000 per month (i.e. \$48,000 per year) or more	100.0	149.2	375.4	144.4	601.5
29	PARENTAL SCHOOL EDUCATION MEASURES					
30	% of families in which no parent had gone to school	100.0	73.5	40.3	87.1	7.1
31	% of families in which no parent had completed beyond Year 8 at school (including families in which no parent had gone to school)	100.0	72.3	41.9	86.1	11.5
32	% of families in which at least one parent has completed Year 12 or equivalent	100.0	129.3	169.4	115.5	209.4
33	PARENTAL POST SCHOOL QUALIFICATION MEASURES					
34	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Trade Certificate or higher	100.0	126.2	182.0	116.0	237.7
35	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Bachelor Degree or higher	100.0	134.0	279.6	130.3	425.2
36	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Postgraduate Degree	100.0	91.6	316.6	124.6	541.6

Discussion

As was discussed previously, the general pattern here is that “government school only” families have *by far* the lowest values of measures reflecting high SES (see rows 1-2 and 9-12 of the tables for example), and *by far* the highest values of measures reflecting “low SES” (see rows 4-7, 15-17, 21, 25, 30 and 31).

Table 4 is probably the easiest table to clearly interpret, of the four tables presented above, and its contents will now be discussed for each category of measure presented. In respect of all measures here, the main comparison is that between the figures derived directly from 2001 Census data in the “Govt. only”, “Cath. Only” and “Other only” columns, keeping in mind that the figures in the rightmost “Estimate for Top 50% of Other schools” columns (in Tables 3 and 4) are unsubstantiated estimates (though bound to be sound estimates for *some* percentage of “other” schools, if not necessarily the “top 50%” exactly, for each of the measures in each row of the tables).

Table 4 shows that “other” school families typically, and on average, have far higher incomes than catholic school families, who in turn have significantly higher incomes than government school families – with rows 4 and 5 providing the single curious exceptions, as discussed previously.

The clear overall pattern for family incomes is repeated for the family status and employment measures. Row 14 of all four tables presented thus far show that “other” school families have the highest proportion of two parent families in which both parents work full time, closely followed by catholic school families, with government school families again by far the lowest on this measure. Rows 15-17 also show that the proportions of government school families which are single parent families, or are families without an employed parent, are approximately twice that of catholic and other school families.

The housing tenure pattern is remarkably similar to that for family status and employment. The row 19 figures for home ownership are almost identical to those in row 14, whilst row 21 very closely aligns with rows 15-17. Housing loan figures are similar again – see especially rows 23, 24 and 26-28.

Measures relating to parental educational qualifications again follow the general trend here. Row 30 shows that the percentage of families in which no parent had gone to school is by far the highest among government school families, and by far the lowest among “other” school families, with catholic school families again occupying an intermediate position. An almost identical pattern is observed in row 31 for the percentage of families in which no parent had completed beyond Year 8 at school (including families in which no parent had gone to school). But for measures reflecting higher SES levels, as presented in rows 32 and 34-36, the “other” school figures are by far the highest, and the government school figures by far the lowest, except for row 36 – which shows that the percentage of families in which at least one parent has a postgraduate degree is slightly higher among government school families than for catholic school families.

To better clarify the distinction between the higher SES measures and lower SES measures presented in the preceding tables, Table 4 is re-produced in two separate

tables as follows – Table 4L for the lower SES measures presented in rows 4-7, 15-17, 21, 25, 30 and 31, and Table 4H for the higher SES measures presented in other rows:

Table 4L: SES Levels of Families with Children at Just Government, Just Catholic and Just “Other” Schools – in Terms of Family Income, Structure and Employment Status, Housing Tenure and Home Loan Levels, and Parental Education Levels – Measures Indicating Lower SES Levels – Relative to Government School Average = 100.0

Row No.	Measure, as at 2001 Census time, for Families with Children in Schools of Types Shown in the Columns to the Right Here (% = percentage, ave. = average)	Govt. only	Cath. only	Other only	Ave. for all schools	Estimate for Top 50% of Other schools
1	FAMILY INCOME MEASURES					
4	% of families with nil or negative ave. weekly incomes	100.0	85.6	182.7	106.1	279.8
5	% of families with ave. incomes of \$119 per week (i.e. \$6,209 per year) or less	100.0	83.9	154.3	102.4	224.7
6	% of families with ave. incomes of \$499 per week (i.e. \$26,036 per year) or less	100.0	54.6	51.0	84.0	47.5
7	% of families with ave. incomes of \$999 per week (i.e. \$52,125 per year) or less	100.0	69.7	58.3	88.4	47.0
13	FAMILY STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT MEASURES					
15	% of two parent families with children in which neither parent is employed	100.0	56.4	51.0	84.7	45.6
16	% of families with just one parent	100.0	63.7	63.3	87.3	63.0
17	% of one parent families in which parent not employed	100.0	42.8	43.6	80.7	44.5
18	HOUSING TENURE MEASURES					
21	% of families living in homes they are renting	100.0	49.9	53.2	83.2	56.4
22	HOUSING LOAN MEASURES					
25	% of families with housing loans of \$999 per month (i.e. \$11,988 per year) or less	100.0	83.7	72.7	92.9	61.8
29	PARENTAL SCHOOL EDUCATION MEASURES					
30	% of families in which no parent had gone to school	100.0	73.5	40.3	87.1	7.1
31	% of families in which no parent had completed beyond Year 8 at school (including families in which no parent had gone to school)	100.0	72.3	41.9	86.1	11.5

With all 11 measures presented in Table 4L above, government school figures comfortably exceed the corresponding catholic school figure. Government school figures also generally very comfortably exceed “other” school figures, with the measures in rows 4 and 5 being the only exceptions here, as has already been noted.

The difference between the catholic and “other” school measures is often quite minimal here, though it is noteworthy that among the nine measures presented in rows 6-7, 15-17, 21, 25 and 30-31, the “other” schools figure is lower than the catholic school figure in seven of these nine measures – including the two family income measures (rows 6 and 7), the home loan measure (row 25) and the parental school education measures (rows 30 and 31).

Table 4H now presents the rows from Table 4 which are indicative of higher SES levels.

Table 4H: SES Levels of Families with Children at Just Government, Just Catholic and Just “Other” Schools – in Terms of Family Income, Structure and Employment Status, Housing Tenure and Home Loan Levels, and Parental Education Levels – Measures Indicating Higher SES Levels – Relative to Government School Average = 100.0

Row No.	Measure, as at 2001 Census time, for Families with Children in Schools of Types Shown in the Columns to the Right Here (% = percentage, ave. = average)	Govt. only	Cath. only	Other only	Ave. for all schools	Estimate for Top 50% of Other schools
1	FAMILY INCOME MEASURES					
2	Median family income per week (\$)	100.0	132.1	156.3	111.3	180.5
3	Median family income per year (\$)	100.0	132.1	156.3	111.3	180.5
8	% of families with ave. incomes of \$500 per week (i.e. \$26,089 per year) or more	100.0	113.6	114.7	104.8	115.8
9	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1000 per week (i.e. \$52,177 per year) or more	100.0	139.9	154.9	115.3	169.8
10	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1200 per week (i.e. \$62,613 per year) or more	100.0	149.7	176.0	120.1	202.3
11	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1500 per week (i.e. \$78,266 per year) or more	100.0	165.2	227.6	129.8	289.9
12	% of families with ave. incomes of \$2000 per week (i.e. \$104,354 per year) or more	100.0	185.2	328.1	146.4	470.9
13	FAMILY STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT MEASURES					
14	% of two parent families with children in which both parents are employed full time	100.0	143.3	158.2	116.5	173.1
18	HOUSING TENURE MEASURES					
19	% of families living in homes they fully own	100.0	140.3	155.4	115.3	170.5
20	% of families living in homes they are purchasing (i.e. which they own but haven't fully paid the loan off yet)	100.0	113.7	102.7	103.6	91.7
22	HOUSING LOAN MEASURES					
23	Median family housing loans per month (\$)	100.0	113.4	124.5	105.5	135.7
24	Median family housing loans per year (\$)	100.0	113.4	124.5	105.5	135.7
26	% of families with housing loans of \$1000 per month (i.e. \$12,000 per year) or more	100.0	129.3	149.0	112.8	168.8
27	% of families with housing loans of \$2000 per month (i.e. \$24,000 per year) or more	100.0	154.3	291.3	136.0	428.3
28	% of families with housing loans of \$4000 per month (i.e. \$48,000 per year) or more	100.0	149.2	375.4	144.4	601.5
29	PARENTAL SCHOOL EDUCATION MEASURES					
32	% of families in which at least one parent has completed Year 12 or equivalent	100.0	129.3	169.4	115.5	209.4
33	PARENTAL POST SCHOOL QUALIFICATION MEASURES					
34	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Trade Certificate or higher	100.0	126.2	182.0	116.0	237.7
35	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Bachelor Degree or higher	100.0	134.0	279.6	130.3	425.2
36	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Postgraduate Degree	100.0	91.6	316.6	124.6	541.6

In all 19 measures presented in Table 4H, government school figures are less than the corresponding “other” school figures. And in all measures here besides that of row 36, government school figures are also less than the corresponding catholic school figures.

When one works down Table 4H from row 8 to row 12, one row at a time, it is clear that “other” and catholic school measures exceed government school measures by increasing extents as the measures refer to increasingly high SES levels – in this case on the basis of family income. A similar trend is observed moving down from row 26 to row 28 for housing loans, and from row 34 to 36 for parental post school qualifications, though the catholic school figures in rows 28 and 36 buck the trend here – especially those in row 36. Significantly, these trends demonstrate that families are increasingly likely to have children in “other” category schools as their SES levels increase towards extremely high SES levels.

The figures in row 20 display a different pattern to that evident in the other rows in Table 4H, though this row does not of itself provide a very specific indication of SES. The main purpose of row 20 here is to provide an indication as to the proportions of families for which the housing loan figures in rows 23-28 are applicable.

Improved SES Scores

The comparative measures presented in the tables herein provide accurate indications as to what competent, honest, even-handed SES scores should look like – at least in terms of averages across catholic and “other” schools relative to government school average benchmarks. The tables which are normalised relative to government school averages, set to 100.0, most directly indicate the magnitudes of competent SES scores for schools here – that is, Tables 2, 4, 4L and 4H, though Tables 4, 4L and 4H only will be discussed henceforth in order to clearly distinguish between the three separate school sector categories under comparison here.

The family income measures in rows 2 and 3 of Tables 4 and 4H are arguably the clearest and most comprehensive indicators of SES of all those provided here, in that they reflect averages of *all* families in each respective school category. Measures in many rows here are not fully comprehensive measures, because they only represent a fraction of all families in each school sector category. In row 32, for example, the measure overlooks those families in which no parent has completed Year 12 or equivalent. Less than fully comprehensive measures can still, however, be highly significant indicators of SES levels. Furthermore, it can be seen that such figures in rows 9, 14, 19, 23-24, 26, 32 and 34, for example, show a remarkably similar pattern to that evident in rows 2 and 3. To emphasise this regularity of pattern, and high correlation among measures, Table 4P (P for “pattern”) provides just those measures in rows 2-3, 9, 14, 19, 23-24, 26, 32 and 34 of Table 4H, as follows:

Table 4P: Selected SES Levels of Families with Children at Just Government, Just Catholic and Just “Other” Schools – in Terms of Family Income, Structure and Employment Status, Housing Tenure and Home Loan Levels, and Parental Education Levels – Measures Indicating Higher SES Levels – Relative to Government School Average = 100.0

Row No.	Measure, as at 2001 Census time, for Families with Children in Schools of Types Shown in the Columns to the Right Here (% = percentage, ave. = average)	Govt. only	Cath. only	Other only	Ave. for all schools	Estimate for Top 50% of Other schools
1	FAMILY INCOME MEASURES					
2	Median family income per week (\$)	100.0	132.1	156.3	111.3	180.5
3	Median family income per year (\$)	100.0	132.1	156.3	111.3	180.5
9	% of families with ave. incomes of \$1000 per week (i.e. \$52,177 per year) or more	100.0	139.9	154.9	115.3	169.8
13	FAMILY STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT MEASURES					
14	% of two parent families with children in which both parents are employed full time	100.0	143.3	158.2	116.5	173.1
18	HOUSING TENURE MEASURES					
19	% of families living in homes they fully own	100.0	140.3	155.4	115.3	170.5
22	HOUSING LOAN MEASURES					
23	Median family housing loans per month (\$)	100.0	113.4	124.5	105.5	135.7
24	Median family housing loans per year (\$)	100.0	113.4	124.5	105.5	135.7
26	% of families with housing loans of \$1000 per month (i.e. \$12,000 per year) or more	100.0	129.3	149.0	112.8	168.8
29	PARENTAL SCHOOL EDUCATION MEASURES					
32	% of families in which at least one parent has completed Year 12 or equivalent	100.0	129.3	169.4	115.5	209.4
33	PARENTAL POST SCHOOL QUALIFICATION MEASURES					
34	% of families in which at least one parent has completed a Trade Certificate or higher	100.0	126.2	182.0	116.0	237.7

Table 4P and other earlier tables indicate that if government school averages are used as a benchmark – competent, even-handed SES scores should average out to about 130 or so for catholic schools and about 150 or so for “other” non-government schools. These estimates are vastly higher than the SES scores that have actually been assigned to non-government schools for the purpose of determining the levels of funding they receive from the federal government. Systemic catholic schools have been assigned SES scores of 96 throughout Australia, except for the Australian Capital Territory where scores of 100 have been assigned. Independent schools have been assigned SES scores ranging from 57 to 133, averaging out to approximately 102.9.² These SES scores assigned to systemic catholic schools and independent schools alike are clearly much too low to provide meaningful indicators of SES levels relative to government school average SES levels.

The absurdly low scores presently in place for Australian non-government schools arise due to several methodological deficiencies, perhaps the most prominent of which is the simple fact that SES scores for independent schools are based largely on families *other than* the actual families of the actual children at actual schools. Trinity Grammar in Sydney, which charged annual tuition fees of over \$14,000 in 2003, is one very high fee school which has received considerable media attention in recent times, on account of being due to receive \$5 million in federal government funding in 2004 on the basis of its assessed SES score of 112.³

To be competent, SES scores for particular schools should obviously reflect SES levels of these actual schools themselves, and the actual families of the actual students at these actual schools. But the actual families of the actual students at Trinity Grammar, for example, only contribute a very small fraction towards Trinity’s SES

score of 112. This 112 arises largely on account of the SES levels of the many other people who, yes, live in the same Census collection districts as families with kids at Trinity, but who are typically, and on average, of vastly lower SES than Trinity families, and whose school children – if they have any – attend public or systemic catholic schools. The system of determining SES scores for independent schools is squarely within the “too absurd to be true” category, and is invariably likely to generate scores which systematically underestimate the true SES levels of schools – with the extent of underestimation likely to be the greatest for the schools whose children come from the families with the highest substantive SES levels – and in particular, very high fee schools. This is apparently why the public outcry – even from within non-government school circles – has been the greatest with respect to the many millions of dollars in federal government funding that has gone to the highest fee private schools whose students are typically, and on average, from families of extremely high SES.⁴

When comparing the government, catholic and “other” sector figures in the tables here, it is also important to recognise the presence of significant intra-sector variations, especially in respect of schools at the higher SES ends of the three school sector categories here.

Public schools operate in geographical locations ranging from Australia’s highest SES suburbs in Sydney and Melbourne to the lowest SES areas in Australia – which are generally found on urban outskirts and rural areas. Students at public schools that are selective or situated in wealthy or otherwise advantaged locations are likely to be in families whose SES levels approach or even surpass those of many families with children at catholic and “other” schools.

Whilst the bulk of catholic schools in Australia are systemic or parish schools with fees typically in the order of \$1000 to \$2000 per child per year, a significant minority of catholic schools charge fees around the \$10,000 per child per year mark – approaching the fee levels of the most expensive schools in the country.⁵ Most expensive catholic schools are non-systemic ones, but several Melbourne catholic schools charging annual tuition fees of around \$10,000, or more, are actually systemic catholic schools.⁶ It is clear, then, that a significant minority of catholic schools – systemic and non-systemic alike – are more or less as advantaged, in terms of SES levels, as the wealthiest and most advantaged among “other” non-government schools.

Whilst non-systemic catholic schools are generally classified as “independent schools”, such schools are likely to fall within the catholic school category here, given how the 2001 Census questions dealt with these school sector distinctions. So schools classified as “other” here will in general be non-catholic schools generally classified as independent schools. Such non-catholic independent schools range from very low fee Aboriginal community schools – which serve students from very low SES backgrounds, through many other mainly (thought not always) religious schools charging varying fee levels, up to 100 or so independent schools which charge annual tuition fees in excess of \$10,000 per child (based on 2003 figures). These 100 or so very high fee schools make up approximately 11% of Australia’s 885 “other” (non-catholic) independent schools.⁷ And the SES levels of families with children in these very high fee schools (\$10,000 or higher) are obviously generally significantly higher

than the average SES levels of families across *all* “other” category schools – many of which charge fees below \$5000 per child per year (see note 5 again, which provides that independent school fees averaged \$5267 per student in 2001). For example, row 32 of Table 3 shows that 61.79% of families with children in “other” schools have at least one parent who has completed Year 12 or equivalent, but among schools charging fees of \$10,000 or more, this 61.79% figure might well be 95% or even higher. As has been stated previously, the estimates in the rightmost columns in Tables 3 through to 4P above, whilst not precise, are certainly meaningful for *some* fractions of “other” category schools (though not necessarily exactly 50%, and probably a different fraction for the different measures in the different rows), but even these figures would almost certainly still significantly underestimate the SES levels of most or all “other” category schools – and indeed some catholic schools as well – which charge annual fees of \$10,000 or more.

The empirical evidence presented herein suggests that SES scores for all non-government schools charging fees of \$10,000 or more (whether systemic catholic, non-systemic catholic, or non-catholic) would need to be approximately 200, or even more than 200, in order to competently and even-handedly reflect the true SES levels of families with children at these very high fee schools. As things presently stand, the 100 or so independent schools which charged annual tuition fees of \$10,000 or more in 2003 had SES scores ranging from 103 to 133, with an average of approximately 118.⁸ As the data presented herein demonstrates, SES scores of just 103 to 133, averaging out to 118, are clearly far too low to be competent and even-handed indicators even for catholic schools, let alone “other” category schools on average, and these figures are not possibly anywhere near as high as they’d need to be in order to accurately and honestly reflect real SES levels of the most expensive 11% of independent schools in Australia which charged annual tuition fees of \$10,000 or more in 2003.

Conclusions

Whereas systemic catholic schools presently receive federal funding on the basis of assessed, or agreed, SES scores of 96 throughout Australia except for the ACT, and 100 in the ACT, the substantive comparisons presented herein indicate that competent, even-handed and honest SES scores for systemic catholic schools ought to be in the vicinity of 120 to 130 or so on average, and probably about 200 or more for those systemic catholic schools which charge annual tuition fees of \$10,000 or so or more (such as those listed in note 6 following). SES scores of 200 or so or more would also appear to accurately describe non-systemic catholic schools charging annual fees of \$10,000 or more.

And, whereas Australia’s 885 or so non-catholic independent schools presently receive federal funding on the basis of assessed SES scores ranging between 57 and 133, averaging approximately 103, the substantive comparisons here indicate that competent, even-handed and honest SES scores for these non-catholic independent schools ought to be in the vicinity of 150 or so on average, and probably about 200 or more for the 100 or so non-catholic independent schools which charge annual tuition fees of \$10,000 or so or more.

If competent SES scores were applied to Australia's non-government schools under otherwise unchanged federal government funding arrangements, most or all non-government schools would receive significantly less than their present levels of federal government funding. Current funding arrangements are at best an exhibition of incompetent public administration and wasteful economic mismanagement, and, at worst, nothing short of fraudulent on the part of those schools and others who have lobbied hard and succeeded in gaining significant financial advantage – especially for the wealthiest highest fee schools – on the basis of SES scores which are low to the point of being manifestly false, misleading and deceptive.

Notes and Sources

1. All details of derivations of the comparative measures provided herein are available via email at markld@ozemail.com.au, normal postal mail at 5 Loddon Street Kaleen ACT 2617, or phone at 02 6255 0772.

2. These figures of 57, 133 and 102.9 are shown on pages 5 (the 57 and 133) and 1 (the 102.9) of a graphs compilation found at the (Commonwealth) Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) website at <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/ses/graphs.PDF>.

3. This \$5 million grant to Trinity Grammar has been reported in several newspaper articles including:

‘Taxes help elite school to rebuild’, by Linda Silmalis, on page 7 of the Sunday Telegraph, dated 4 January 2004; and
 ‘School fees up but drift gathers pace’, by Linda Doherty, on page 1 of the Sydney Morning Herald, dated 5 January 2004.

4. See for example, the article ‘Why the new funding system for schools is a scandal’, by Tony Keenan, the secretary of the Victorian Independent Education Union, which appeared in the Melbourne Age on 16 June 2003 (see at <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2003/06/15/1055615673363.html>), which includes the following extract:

Under the old formula, the wealthiest schools received the least amount of money, the poorest, the most. Under the new formula, each school receives funding on a per student basis, depending on their SES score. Unlike other forms of means testing, the SES model does not assess the socioeconomic status of individual families, rather the socio-economic status of various geographic census areas.

Catholic schools stayed outside the SES system and essentially have not received any new funding increases under this new model, other than cost of living increases.

The result is that the new funding model has delivered significant funding increases to well-resourced non-government schools but little or no increase to the poorer schools.

5. Table 26 of Appendix 1 (the Statistical Annex) to the 'National Report on Schooling in Australia 2001 (found online at http://online.curriculum.edu.au/anr2001/pdfs/2001_Statswithlinks_15_9_03.pdf) shows that systemic catholic schools received an average of \$1421 in fees per student, compared with \$5267 for independent schools.

6. For example, the following fees for 2003 have been obtained at the Melbourne's Child Schools Directory at http://www.melbourneschild.com.au/melbourneschild/alpha_schools_directory.asp:
 Genazzano FCJ College, Kew, Girls only, Yr 12 fees \$10,392;
 Loreto Mandeville Hall, Toorak, Girls only, Yr 12 fees \$11,010;
 Sacre Coeur, Glen Iris, Catholic Independent Girls School, Yr 12 fees \$10,056; and
 St Kevin's College, Toorak, Catholic Independent Boys School, Yr 12 fees \$9550.
 All four of these schools have been assigned SES levels of 96 – as is the case for all systemic catholic schools Australia-wide, except those in the ACT where the systemic catholic schools are assigned SES scores of 100.

7. According to Table 1 on page 7 of ABS Cat. 4221.0, titled 'Schools Australia: 2002', there were 966 independent schools in Australia in 2002. An Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) publication titled 'Independent Schooling in Australia 2003' (edited by Caroline Taylor-Steele, published 2003), refers to this 966 figure, on pages 1 and 17, and also states that this 966 includes 81 catholic independent schools. It hence follows that there were some 885 non-catholic independent schools in Australia in 2002 (i.e. 966 minus 81). Finally, the author has confirmed that approximately 100 independent schools charged annual tuition fees of \$10,000 per student or more in 2003, and 100 is 11.3% of 885.

8. These figures of 103, 133 and 118 are obtained from the SES scores as published in the document titled 'Funding for Non-Government Schools 2001-2004' (at <http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/ses/table.pdf>), and school fee details compiled by the author.