

## Australian schools and scholars increasingly divided, with growing numbers of high achieving students in the most advantaged schools

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New research from the Centre for Policy Development (CPD) reveals that Australia's school system is increasingly separating and dividing students by advantage and achievement.

*Separating Scholars: how Australia abandons its struggling schools* is written by CPD Fellow and former school principal Chris Bonnor. It analyses end-of-school measures of student achievement from 1,600 schools in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland to track changing patterns of enrolment patterns and achievement.

The data reveals that high achievers are increasingly concentrating in the most advantaged schools. At the same time, achievement levels for pupils in lower SES schools are falling. Instead of improving overall student achievement, the system is separating scholars according to advantage and location.

"Schools always vary in quality, but these broad trends are not about innate teacher and school quality, they are about who goes where, how this is changing and the impacts this has on the school system overall," says author Chris Bonnor. "We've long known that the results coming out of schools reflect who they enrol, but increasingly we are seeing growing clusters of high achieving students in the most advantaged schools, leaving other schools stranded."

The broad trends are consistent across the three states examined. The results are particularly stark when comparing outcomes in urban versus regional schools. More than ever, a student's level of achievement reflects the advantage and location of the school they attend.

"We need to redouble our efforts to lift our disadvantaged schools and halt the drift to an education system of winners and losers," says Chris Bonnor. "Every community deserves to have a school which will lift all its students and give all an opportunity to be high achievers."

This is the third discussion paper in CPD's series *In a Class of Their Own*, which explores different facets of how Australia's school system segregates and divides, and concentrates both advantage and disadvantage.

The full discussion paper will be available on the CPD website on 30 January 2019.

The report's author, Chris Bonnor, is available for interview.

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Link for discussion paper: <https://cpd.org.au/2019/01/separating-scholars/>