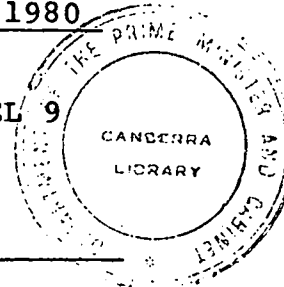


PRIME MINISTER INTERVIEWED BY PETER HARVEY, CHANNEL 9
(ON FUNDING FOR INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS)



Harvey

Prime Minister, how much funding goes from Government into independent schools?

Prime Minister

A good deal. For independent schools the recurrent payments vary from about 16% or 17% to 34% or 35% of the cost of educating children in Government schools. In one sense, it is cheap so far as the taxpayer is concerned. But the funding is very significant for independent schools. It is not generally realised that in recent years Government schools have passed the resource levels that the Schools Commission thought were necessary and desirable as minimum objectives. But a very large part of the independent school system has not reached those resource levels. In that sense, independent sectors, at least in physical resources, that is the deprived sector of education. So funding from Governments, from Commonwealth and State Governments, is terribly important to the system. Without it, a large part of it could not and would not survive.

Harvey

If this current legal action succeeds, do you see Constitutional change as essential?

Prime Minister

Well, like all litigants, we hope to win. Then there will be no problem. If we did not win, there would need to be discussions, probably with the States, with the Schools Authorities. You would need to look very carefully at the judgement to see what it was appropriate to do and what it was not: what could be done and what could not be. What I have said, if it is necessary, if it is only way that it could be done, we would be prepared to face a constitutional amendment over the issue. Now, against the background in which all political parties support funding for independent schools, in which all State Governments support funding for independent schools, I would have thought it should be possible to devise an amendment that everyone would be supporting, certainly all political parties and all Governments. But I do not think that it is the desirable course, I think it is a last resort course, but one we would not flinch from if it was the only way of achieving support for the independent system.