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EDUCATION GROUP OPPOSES SPECIAL DEAL FOR A FEW.

The action group People For State Education (PFSE) has declared its support for a claim before the Equal Opportunity Commission against Castlemaine Secondary College's proposal to set up an elite class for students from a local private school.

PFSE believe the new Steiner Annexe class proposal is unfair and discriminates against existing CSC students because its special arrangements are not available to the rest of the school.

PFSE Convenor, Julianne Barclay says the group continues to receive strong support from the community in its attempts to get the College Council to provide full information and properly consider the views of its parent community.

“There is no doubt that the College is setting up a class where a few students are going to receive preferential treatment. So far, we know that these students are getting specially trained teachers, a special and different timetable, a special curriculum, a special class management group, access to special materials, a specially set up classroom and will not be subject to the same discipline rules as other Year 9 students,” said PFSE convenor Julianne Barclay. “Parents and students can easily see that the Steiner Annexe proposal is unfair. We are concerned that this special treatment for one group and will diminish the current high regard in which our local Secondary College is held.” she said.

People For State Education are also concerned about secrecy surrounding the workings of the CSC Council Steiner Implementation Committee. Recent attempts to gain access to information from this Committee have been unsuccessful, because this committee is exempt from the provisions of the *Freedom of Information Act*. * “The CSC Steiner Committee includes members whose children don't even attend the school and yet parents of children currently enrolled are not able to access this information.” said public education supporter and PFSE member Ferenc Jakab. “Parents are being legally kept in the dark. If the College doesn't want its parents to know what's going on, it can just form a sub-committee or get the Council President to write any letters.”

“However the biggest fear we have as parents is the precedent this proposal sets for fragmentation of the public education system in order to cater to special interest groups. This can only be justified where there is a demonstrable educational value to the majority of students.” he said. “The system of Steiner education is based on spiritual beliefs, not on any scientifically researched model of child development. This proposal may open the door to many other sectional interests to enter the fray. This will lessen the strength of the public system by causing its fragmentation.”

Julianne Barclay declares that PFSE will continue to work in support of free and secular public education. “The provision of quality education with universal access is our priority and the current proposal does not meet this test” she said.

[Section 5 of the Freedom of Information Act exempts government business entities, School Councils and Royal Commissions.]*

Contacts:	Julianne Barclay	54752080
	Denis George	54705166
	Ferenc Jakab	54752777

