

Why demand for religious schools is growing

Victoria's low-cost religious schools are expanding almost three times faster than government schools, so what's behind the demand?

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Victoria's low-cost [religious schools](#) are expanding almost three times faster than government schools, fuelled by parents seeking a values-based education in the outer suburbs.

Schools such as Wyndham Christian College have fees of \$10,000 in year 12 and have grown enormously.

Other in-demand schools include the Minaret College in Doveton, which offers a private Islamic education for under \$3000 a year.

A Herald Sun survey of 40 low-cost Christian and Muslim schools shows 20 have returned median VCE scores at 30 or above and five have median VCE median scores of 32 or 33. This matches those of leading private schools such as Carey Grammar, Ivanhoe Grammar and Camberwell Grammar, which have fees up to 10 times higher.

The five top-scoring low-cost religious schools are St Andrews Christian College, Waverley Christian College, Donvale Christian College, Maranatha Christian College and Oxley Christian College.

The 2022 Australian Independent Schools Australia Research Report found the government sector grew 1.1 per cent nationally compared with 2.3 per cent for the private sector.

"Christian schools have welcomed the opposition's commitment to increased capital funding as this is desperately needed to try to meet continued demand," he said.

"We cannot understand why the Andrews government is making it harder to remain authentic Christian schools when parents across Victoria are voting with their wallets to enrol their children in our schools."

Christian Schools Australia director of public policy Mark Spencer said member schools had an average enrolment growth of 2.8 per cent a year over the past five years.

Wyndham Christian College principal Damian Higgins said his school was in its fourth year and reflected the huge growth around Wyndham and Manor Lakes.

"A lot of families are looking for schools with family values," he said.

"A lot are new migrants as this is a multicultural community. Many parents are looking for a private education which is more affordable. We mostly have Christian families but other faiths such as Hindu families as well."

Islamic Council president Adel Salman said the growth in Islamic schools had been "dramatic".

"Most are Muslims, but not all are Muslims, looking for a good education at a lower cost," he said.

"We have a lot of well-to-do families, it's not just about cost but values and the ethos of the schools."

A 2022 report by Cardus Education comparing US, Canadian and Australian school sectors found 145,000 Christian school students in Australia, as distinct from 600,000 in specific religious schools such as Anglican and Catholic

Religious schools with highest median VCE scores in 2021

St Andrews Christian College: 33
Waverley Christian College: 33
Donvale Christian College: 33
Maranatha Christian School: 33
Oxley Christian College: 32
Nunawading Christian College: 31
Lighthouse Christian College: 31
Hillcrest Christian College: 31
Mount Hira College: 31
Darul Alum College: 31
Islamic College of Melbourne: 31