

AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS (ACSSO)

The national voice of parents of children in Australia's public schools and their school communities

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION DIGEST

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EVENTS

ACSSO National Education Conference 2007

Darwin's Crowne Plaza Hotel, 22-23 October

As always, participants will include representatives from all areas and sectors of education: teachers, parents, principals, researchers, guidance officers, education product suppliers, academics; and representatives from Federal and State Education Departments and their counterparts in the non-government sectors, from all parts of the country.

The program currently being finalised will feature discussions and workshops facilitated by leading researchers and practitioners, with themes of making connections and building community at the local and global levels. The Conference will explore:

- Challenges of regional and remote education
- Indigenous education
- Family-School and community partnerships for well-being and resilience as the foundation for successful learning
- Linkages with Asia
- Languages education challenges and opportunities, including Indigenous and Asian.

Further details and Registration Forms will appear on our website www.acsso.org.au shortly, plus information about Darwin.

To secure accommodation at the Crowne Plaza in Darwin, call their Reservations **1800 000 867** and check the special ACSSO Conference rate.

Humane Education: A Compassionate Ethic for Animals

Griffith University and Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) present a unique national symposium on 5th and 6th October 2007.

This major event will bring together teachers, parents, academics, government organisations, community groups and animal welfare experts from across the country and around the world. Sessions and workshops will

explore initiatives and approaches to date including the Australian Government's Animal Welfare Strategy 2005;

examine perspectives across the education sectors; and
promote informed understanding of humane education in action.

Details of venue, program and registration arrangements to be published shortly.

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ACSSO ACTIVITIES

ACSSO Letter to Principals and School Parent Representatives

Re: Chaplains in Schools

Recently you will have received a letter from the Federal Minister for Education, the Hon. Julie Bishop MP, providing you with information about the National School Chaplaincy Program. This includes details about the funding available to schools which decide to apply.

As President of Australia's peak public school parent body, I am writing to you to highlight some key issues which should be kept in mind if your school decides to apply for funding.

The National School Chaplaincy Program is a Federal Government project. But ACSSO has made it plain that religion can sometimes be a sensitive issue in public schools and their communities. We therefore asked the government to include the following requirements in the scheme:

- The application must be a shared decision of the whole school community
- The application should be accompanied by documented evidence that it meets with the approval of the whole school community

Parents and principals should also be aware that the scheme operates differently from Investing in Our Schools; and does give a beneficial loading to those schools that put in some of their own funds as well. To commit the school's own funds to the operation of a chaplaincy service will require a thorough assessment of your school's priorities.

You can see the Guidelines at: www.dest.gov.au/schools/chaplains

ACSSO sits on the Reference Group which provides feedback to the Federal Government. We are therefore very interested in your feedback about the scheme, especially its design and operation.

Please feel free to contact us at info@valuesineducation.org.au

Yours sincerely

Jenny Branch, President

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ACSSO and the parents of children in public schools in all parts of Australia, strongly hold the view that values are alive and well in public education.

Of course, in a changing world, we need periodically to renew our conversation about the elements of our values base and the principles that guide us. How we can sharpen our focus and make these more explicit in what we say - and more importantly what we do - as we work together in our school communities.

ACSSO has a whole website on values education:
<http://www.valuesineducation.org.au> A new feature on the site shows how you can carry out a simple Values Audit in your school.

See how you rate at: <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/valuesaudit.htm>

Family-School Partnerships: A Journey Well Worth Taking

You will recall that in 1005-2006 ACSSO worked closely with APC and the Dept of Education, Science and Training to conduct action research in 61 school communities who volunteered to test the draft Family-School Partnerships Framework. The Results of that very successful project is currently with the Minister for endorsement and the full report will shortly be published.

The success of this projects mirrors the similarly successful take-up and operation by some 400 schools of the ACSSO-APC "**Families Matter**" initiative – resources to assist families working in partnership with their schools to support the well-being and resilience of young people. The evaluation of Families Matter was overwhelmingly positive, and endorsed the benefits of continuing this initiative. Scores of schools are keen to undertake or continue that journey in 2007.

This term's edition of the "**Virtually Healthy**" newsletter of the South Australian Centre for Health Promotion focuses on the benefits of parents, families and community working together.

This is at: http://www.chdf.org.au/i-cms_file?page=81/vh43.pdf

It includes an article by the manager of "Families Matter" drawn from a longer paper; you can read the full original text at

http://www.familiesmatter.org.au/fsp_journey.pdf.

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POLITICS

Learn and Asian Language or Flunk School

SENATOR AMANDA VANSTONE, ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL FOUNDATION ROUNDTABLE

8 March 2007:

EVERY child in Australia should learn Mandarin or Bahasa Indonesia until year 12, Senator Amanda Vanstone believes.

A cabinet minister for 11 years until January, Senator Vanstone said a nationwide language program would benefit Australia for generations.

"If I were in charge of Australia ... I would ensure that every child from year one was learning either Mandarin or Bahasa Indonesia. There would be no way around it, and they would learn it all the way through [school], otherwise they just wouldn't progress.

"[Asia] is our part of the world, that's where we sit, why can't we recognise that?"

In a speech to the Global Foundation, Senator Vanstone said all levels of society needed to do more to connect with Asian neighbours.

Read the whole speech: <http://www.acsso.org.au/NF070308.pdf>

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MISCELLANY

The Value of Our Imperilled Native Tongues

In 1973, a linguist doing field work on Aboriginal Australian languages realised he had met the last speaker of Yaygir, a language once spoken in present day northeast of NSW. The custodian of this invaluable piece of Australian culture, Sandy Cameron, was living in obscurity and had not spoken Yaygir for several years.

He was however eager to work with his university-educated guest to record and preserve his ancestral language. The linguist decided to return to Cameron's home in a couple of months to finish the recording of this national treasure. But Cameron died before the linguist returned. A region of Australia lost a large part of its heritage.

Such tragedies happened in many parts of Australia in our lifetime, and are still happening. Our nation's culture and history is needlessly impoverished.

A few years ago, my old friend Urwunjin died as the last speaker of his people's language from Barrow Point on the south-eastern coast of Cape York Peninsula.

Urwunjin's knowledge was at least recorded to a large extent. In the late 1960s and into the 70s an organised effort was made by many young anthropologists and linguists, urged by an indefatigable sponsor, Peter Ucko, then Director of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies in Canberra, to describe the country's cultures and languages before it was too late. Their salvage operation was dubbed Before It Is Too Late, or BIITL. Many of today's senior ethnographers of Australia were involved in this push.

The original BIITL preserved a large amount of information, now archived in Canberra. Much of this record is inaccessible to laymen, however. When I was a boy starting primary school, an American linguist, John Haviland, came to live with a local family two doors away from us, and in the following years he compiled a grammar and dictionary of Guugu Yimithirr – the language that James Cook encountered in 1770 and which gave the world the name kangaroo, after the Guugu Yimithirr word for a species of wallaby called *gungurru*.

Haviland accomplished an astonishing feat in his mastery of classical Guugu Yimithirr. His grammar is a great work of scholarship, that is a necessary but by itself insufficient foundation for the maintenance of your language long into the future.

It is hard enough for privileged people to learn languages. It is near impossible for dysfunctional people. Few of my people can learn anything from Haviland's published grammar, though it is an invaluable resource.

Read more: <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/pearson070310.pdf>

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