

President's message

The year that was and will be

I'm writing this as I look to the rapidly approaching end to the school year in what has been a tumultuous time. What an extraordinary year we have had – especially when looking back over the last six months or so; a period of time that has seen education together with its funding arrangements at the front and centre of the political agenda.

The furore appears to have calmed a little for now and we could almost be said to be in the eye of the storm of education reform. A storm that raged around the resourcing of schools and systems – the irony in all of this was that all sides agree on the principle of needs based funding and that public education needs more money – it became an argument about how and how much and who was responsible for what. The Bill made it to the statute book together with sensible additions and amendments, and increased funding over a shorter timeframe.

At the present state of play we can see that all states and territories are now signed up to the principles of the amended Education Act, the work of the newly formed National Schools Resourcing Board has started and that the conclusion of a number of education reviews is not too far away. The question when we move into the next phase is where the various review reports will be considered and how any recommendations will be enacted on the basis of the new arrangements. Like any change, it could well take a couple of years for the possible alterations to settle into established best practice, and for systems and schools to feel confident that the needs and strengths of public education are truly at the forefront of our nation's priorities and thinking.

In the meantime, in public education our principals, their staff teams, students, parents and the communities that support them will all be doing their very best to give our children the chance to be the best they can be – whatever their background, social connections or opportunities in life. Such are the values that surround public education that will continue to be fully inclusive and truly reflective of the strengths of the communities that surround and embrace them.

The road less travelled

Please take the time yourself to pause and consider what's ahead of us all – a future that is so often defined by past initiatives and our own lived experience. It's when we apply that learning to the coming year that our intuition can resonate with our core values in a way that political conjecture and spin has yet to find an adequate riposte.

We are currently in a whole period of election cycles across the nation – sometimes it feels as though this is the new constant. There are a few already done, with newly minted governments starting their terms, and others still to go to the polls and in full electioneering mode.

In all of this there will be warriors and peacemakers, and we have all seen far too many warriors in the marriage equality debate. For me personally it has been deeply gratifying to see our proud nation, and finally our politicians, embrace a true sense of equality and fair-go for all. It's also seen the warriors fail in their aggressive, exclusive and partisan approach, whilst the peacemakers have capably made their case in a fully inclusive and respectful manner.

Perhaps it's a lesson we can all learn in the work of establishing ground-breaking political reform. Principled, resolute and reasonable advocacy can and does win the day; our legacy is not in the headlines that rapidly fade into obscurity, but in the policy that's in place when we pass on the baton...

With the wind down for the end of the year there's also the chance to catch up with family and friends over the summer break; a time that I'm very much looking forward to. Whatever your arrangements are, we at ACSSO wish you the very best for your summer break and look forward to the year ahead with everything that will come our way.

Phillip Spratt

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