

President's message

Spring is almost sprung

The true diversity of our nation can often be reflected in the variety of climates we enjoy at this time of year – from the delicious warmth of the dry season of the top end down to the bracingly chill mornings of our southern states and warming log fires. For those of us in the cooler climes there is the hope of spring with its warm sunshine and longer days that encourages our children to spend more time outdoors.

The value of physical activity and sport has long been recognised as giving a greater sense of wellbeing, improving health and helping to grow lifelong friendships. What is becoming increasingly apparent is its value in improving learning outcomes in the classroom and beyond. In a move to support this there has been an increased funding allocation to the sporting schools programme that gives our children the chance to try out different sports as an after school activity in both primary and secondary schools. If your school has yet to get involved, or you would like to know more click [here](#).

Additionally, with the coming of spring The Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) is organising its National Health and Physical Education Day 2017 on September the 6th with a focus of 'Good for Children' with a range of activities and opportunities to encourage our children to embrace the great outdoors. More information and resources are available [here](#).

Learning beyond our urban areas

Whilst we can acknowledge the pressures on the delivery of education in our urban areas where the majority of our population live, there are equally pressing matters to address in the delivery of education in the majority of our land mass- that is in our regions outside our cities. With only 18 centres of population of 100,000 people or more in Australia and over a million school aged students outside of these in regional, rural and remote areas there are some highly complex issues to address. Within this there is also a need to acknowledge the strengths, challenges and opportunities in education delivery outside our cities.

It is to this end that the Independent Inquiry into Regional Rural and Remote Education has been established. Lead by Emeritus Professor John Halsey it is due to report in March 2018. ACSSO has had the opportunity to meet with Professor Halsey a number of times and engage in an open dialogue with him and his team. I strongly encourage you to read his discussion paper, available [here](#), where he frames the inquiry with a number of themes and accompanying questions that you might want to consider. Submissions are invited from all and can address as many or few of the points he raises. Equally there is the opportunity to frame any submission in your own terms to address your own points. The closing date for submissions is set as the 29th August so there is still ample time to have your say on such a vital topic

Conference fever

As well as approaching the end of winter we also look to the start of our state and territory (S&T) member's conference season as a celebration of the year's activity, together with a look to the future of what we can all do more of for the benefit of our schools and communities. The opportunity to gather with fellow parents and volunteers always has great value – as has the time we give as volunteers to improve the life chances of our children.

We can think of a school as just a place or set of buildings but it is the people within it and in the wider community that makes a school what it is as a centre point of community. It's where volunteering is founded by parents with a passion to help each other, the staff and most of all the

children that are the school. Within these strengths there is also the need to look beyond our communities and be aware of the learning we need to grow our own best practice.

This is where the S&T peak parent body in your jurisdiction comes in; all work in partnership with grass roots parent bodies in local schools in an advocacy and supporting role. The annual conferences are a showcase of what is going on locally mixed with thought provoking speakers and relevant workshops. They are also wonderful places to meet fellow parent volunteers and to learn what works, what doesn't and what's coming in a collaborative environment. If you haven't been to one before I encourage you to check out your S&T body and go to its conference either this year, or next.

The first choice for your child's future

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with Pam Kent, the President of the South Australian Primary Principal's Association and its Promotion of Public Education Reference Group. It's a unique development that sees a group of passionate educators looking to the strengths of public education and how we can all work together to promote an appreciation of its value. A fabulous starting point is the paper 'Public Education in South Australia', written by Alan Reid, and available [here](#), that could offer inspiration to all our states and territories; especially if we approach the topic from the perspective that public education is absolutely the first choice for your child's future...

Phillip Spratt