

The lioness's roar of passionate advocacy for public education that is Jane Caro was heard loud and clear at the recent P&C's Queensland conference. It's back to basics, forward to the future theme highlighting the essential role that parents play in the future of their children's learning, and the vibrant school communities of which we are all part. Jane's mantra that public schools are about hope struck a chord with everyone present – couple this with her inimitable wit and sense of irony and I'm sure you can imagine the energy in the room – and the ongoing celebration of everything that is great about public education that ran through the whole event. I'm sure everyone headed home truly inspired and ready to try something new in their own school communities.

The COAG Education Council Meets...

The Council of Australian Governments' Education Council meets this week and the stakes could not be higher. It will be the time for scene-setting and initial sparring in the negotiations of the post 2018 education funding agreements. ACSSO is unrelenting in its advocacy for fair, simple and transparent funding agreements that everyone can understand. We continue to meet regularly with all parties and call on all levels of government that make up our nation to focus on the needs of our children, rather than that of political aspiration – our children's future demands nothing less. We also expect the various levels of government to look objectively across all sectors and take this unique opportunity to do away with the myriad of special deals, loadings, grandfathering clauses and the like. The Australian government's current policy paper, Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes, that can be found [here](#), comes complete with this telling line:

Deals and special arrangements have damaged the integrity of the needs-based funding model

Please take the opportunity to read this paper, and share your thoughts with your local state and territory parent body representatives, as well as your local and federal MP's, and ask them what they are doing at their level to ensure that education ministers are fully aware of the need for absolute reform in education funding agreements. This has to give our children and their schools the benefit of truly sector blind needs based funding with additional provision, where necessary, for specific educational disadvantage. It resonates strongly with David Gonski's tenet that an education funding system should ensure that the differences in a child's educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power or possessions. Is it too much to hope that there can at least be a cross party consensus on this basic point..?

Evidence is everything...?

The draft report of the Productivity Commission's inquiry into the national education evidence base for school and early childhood education has been released and is available [here](#) together with an overview and quick highlights. This report has the potential to guide the collaborative development of a relevant Australian evidence base, and mechanism, which can underpin objective policy formulation across all levels of Australian governments. The report identifies a number of gaps in data – particularly at an Australian level and also recognises the need to support a bottom-up approach to explore what actually works to improve learning outcomes at a grass-roots level. It's gratifying to see attention being paid to non-cognitive skills, parent engagement and the home learning environment – so often the x-factor in growing our children's lifelong love of learning and the recognition that parents are the primary and ongoing educators of their children.

Phillip Spratt