

What a fascinating election this has been with the narrowest of victories to the Coalition and a Senate result that has still to be finalised; a process that could yet see the loss of some significant education advocates. Even more fascinating is that the pollsters appear to have got it right much to the surprise of politicians and pundits alike. To my mind it suggests that no one single party has truly inspired the voting public to fully embrace its policies over those of their rivals. Does this leave us in limbo? Maybe for a while as we survey the election battlefield. However, it does give us all, as parents and natural advocates of public education, a significantly stronger voice and far greater ability to lobby for the best outcomes for our children.

Looking to the future and the new education landscape ACSSO would like to congratulate Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham in his continuing role as Minister of Education and Training together with the appointment of the Hon. Karen Andrews in the role of Assistant Minister for Vocational Education and Skills. Following the appointment of the shadow cabinet we would also like to welcome the Hon. Tanya Plibersek as the successor to the Hon. Kate Ellis in the role of Shadow Minister for Education and Training. ACSSO would also like to thank the Hon. Kate Ellis for her powerful advocacy for public education in the last Parliament and welcome her appointment as the Shadow Minister covering Early Childhood Education and Development, TAFE and Vocational Education.

School funding and educational outcomes

The incredibly complex web of funding agreements that strangle objective education provision is an ongoing point of concern for ACSSO. Each political party has its own view of how this can be managed, and in light of the less than overwhelming election result ACSSO asks that the parties look again at what will deliver truly sector blind needs based funding for education; funding that must be truly fair simple and transparent. Peter Goss, as a Director of the Grattan Institute, in a recent article published on 'The Conversation' website discusses potential areas of education outcomes improvement which can be found [here](#). One of his suggestions resonates strongly with John Hattie's mantra of a year's learning gain for a year's teaching input – a point that is a powerful benchmark for all sectors of education – together with the resources that can make this happen. I also note that Peter makes a comment on the Government's Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes [paper](#) that it will need state and territory agreement to go anywhere – it is reassuring to have heard the Minister state at the recent Education Nation conference that he will be seeking a conciliatory and collaborative approach in these discussions. I suppose that in light of the election result the broader question may necessitate a further review that looks at the core of needs based funding – a review that has to strip back

the layers of vested interest. Dare we hope that there could even be cross-party support for such a process..?

The current funding system for education is highly complex and I challenge any politician, academic or public servant to simply explain the supposed 27 separate funding agreements laced with an unknown number of additional models, special deals and partisan arrangements. ACSSO will continue to lobby for fair, simple and transparent education funding agreements that everyone can easily understand. Our children's future demands nothing less.

Small imaginary creatures and other activities

I don't know if it's the same in your house but the capture of small imaginary cartoon creatures has grabbed the interest of my children. Pokémon Go is a high tech phenomena that seems to have delivered a whole new angle on hide and seek. Commentators are still analysing what it means, how it has grown so rapidly and what the implications might be for the personal safety of those involved. I'm sure the app will inspire a number of academic studies. Steve Biddulph, with his strong interest in family wellbeing, posted this [link](#) on his Raising Boys Facebook page which might be of interest, with the comment that it was a thoughtful and generally upbeat piece about Pokémon Go. For my part a recent family bushwalk in the Cradle Mountain National Park discovered hordes of them, even on the snowiest peaks - so they appear to be everywhere.

The success of this app in drawing people outside in an active pursuit must come as something of a delicious irony to the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), with its strong interest in how we can work collaboratively to encourage a lifelong interest in sport and physical activity in our children. One ASC initiative that has recently received additional funding, and an extension until the end of 2018, is the Sporting Schools program that gives primary school children a chance to try out a range of sports at no cost. Now in over 5,000 schools check out its [website](#) for more information. Whichever way our children choose to get up and about it is good to remember that physical activity is a key positive wellbeing factor for both children and us as parents. Perhaps we might even see high tech activities such as Pokémon Go as part of the ASC's future scope?

Volunteer and be heard

Each state and territory has a peak parent body with local regions and areas that are devoted to supporting the school communities in their jurisdiction; support that is always there and freely available when you need it. Please bear in mind that we are coming up to prime AGM season with conferences and other activities to celebrate public education with its essential community

support and partnerships. There is also the ongoing opportunity to get involved at a level beyond your school. One of public education's key strengths is the legions of volunteers, made up of parents and the wider community, that freely give the best of their abilities and most of all their time for the benefit of our children and their schools. Please consider your own role in this and the opportunity to step up – the rewards in terms of personal growth and a sense of accomplishment are extensive and widely known. You will also deepen your own knowledge and expertise that will ultimately benefit your own school and personal growth.

ACSSO takes a national perspective on education policy informed by its members come the peak parent bodies in your states or territories. There is a direct and fluid connection so please feel free to channel your thoughts through to your organisation; the AGM/conference season is a timely opportunity to reflect on the past year and have those conversations that will steer parent priorities for all of our organisations for the coming year and beyond.

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