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One voice for every child in public education

**Australian Council of  
State School Organisations**

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## The latest education news for the principal and parent leaders

- President's message - diversity, fairness, and the first 1000 days
- Ford Australia's driving skills program returns
- The great Phonics Debate
- Support White Balloon Day
- New Online Teen Safety Guide
- Upcoming conferences - Queensland

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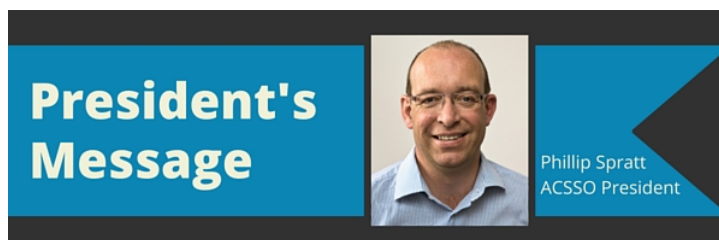
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### **Read our President's message**

*This shrill cry of entitlement is coming from both sides in what appears to be an undignified scrabble for cash from already wealthy sectors.*

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## President's message

### Australia's welcome embrace

I write this as our population passes 25 million people; in world terms a tiny nation and yet one that occupies a vast land mass that uniquely is both a continent and a country – albeit as a federation of independent nation states and dependant territories. This is a structure that brings its own unique challenges for government.

Within this we have a tremendous diversity of culture, climate and sense of community of its residents – both in that intangible sense of belonging and the ability to pull together as a collective whole. Interestingly, it's the diversity of our population and the freedoms we all enjoy that makes Australia such an attractive place to live and raise our families – and as such it exposes us all to a fascinating range of cultures from which we can all embrace our appreciation and tolerance of those with different views – even down to whichever sports team you might support.

*... the children in our nation's fully inclusive and welcoming public schools have a far deeper sense of what respectful relationships and personal wellbeing are all about...*

It's within this spirit of appreciation and tolerance within each local community where we see our fully inclusive public-school system at its very best - as a true reflection of the strengths of the families who enrol their children and the wider communities in which they are based.

What is so extraordinary of late is the blatantly xenophobic ranting of certain elected representatives. They seem to have forgotten that they themselves are here as the result of immigration into this extraordinary nation – either directly through their own actions or as the descendants of migrants. That

these out-of-touch politicians can attempt to defend their vacuous and deeply offensive comments behind parliamentary privilege is an appalling abuse of the sense of fair-go for all; a value that is an essential part of being an Australian.

There is a certain irony in the sense that the children in our nation's fully inclusive and welcoming public schools have a far deeper sense of what respectful relationships and personal wellbeing are all about, over that of certain populist politicians and their respective parties. As a point of reflection, it's interesting to note that our national symbol of the wattle is currently in flower, and as the iconic green and gold emblem of our nation's unity, resilience and the inclusive and indefatigable spirit of the Australian people it's maybe something for our politicians to take note of.

## **Feuding fiefdoms**

From all of this it seems politics and certain politicians are finding ingenious new ways of losing the respect of the people they seek to represent. There are non-government school lobby groups that seek to use their powerful political connections and influence in brazen attempts to force special deals for their peculiar advantage. An example of this has been the fallout from the release National School Resourcing Board's report on the review of the socio-economic status score methodology.

It seems the Catholic Bishops and their education commissions, whilst initially appearing to welcome the initiation of a review, are not at all happy with its findings and have launched another vitriolic campaign to seek a special deal just for them at the expense of the independent non-government schools.

The independent school sector has responded with equal vigour with letters and demands of face to face meetings with the PM and Education Minister. This shrill cry of entitlement is coming from both sides in what appears to be an undignified scrabble for cash from already wealthy sectors.

One of ACSSO's major misgivings in the review is that no account has been taken of non-government schools' access to additional sources of income and wealth that are unavailable to public schools, and not

necessarily open to public scrutiny or acquittal - a point from our submission highlighted by Professor Greg Craven's dissenting view in an appendix to the report. Peter Goss, from the Grattan Institute, offers an objective interpretation of the review's findings [here](#) that gives a deeper context to the whole debate, and one that will probably run and run.

ACSSO's long held policy position is for Fair, Simple and Transparent, and truly needs based funding agreements with no special deals. What is particularly irritating is the apparent expectation from the Catholic Bishops that failing Catholic schools should now be given additional taxpayer funding to prop up their collapsing viability.

For any non-government education service-provider that receives huge tranches of tax-free revenue in a direct taxpayer subsidy, it seems only fair that checks and measures are in place to ensure that the need is genuine, and not inflated by having to maintain extensive facilities with increasing fixed costs and collapsing exclusive enrolments; especially if those facilities have no direct bearing on improving core educational outcomes.

*Perhaps it comes down to finding a way to share the authenticity, inclusivity and provenance that public schools effortlessly display with the wider community.*

It's also worth reflecting that in the 2018-19 Federal Budget, non-government school representative bodies, including those of the Catholics, are set to receive \$42m an additional \$16-18m ongoing improvement on last year's allocation. It seems that the prospect of this additional funding is being put to very good use on their part.

The irony in this is that we have surging enrolments in our nation's fully inclusive public schools, as families increasingly consider the price and value quotient of education, the strengths of public education and the system most appropriate for their family's needs. This is a topic that is increasingly attracting welcome public debate and media attention. The latest of which is a fascinating two-part discussion from Kelsey Munro, on the price tag of private schooling, available [here](#) and the follow-up piece on school choice available [here](#).

Public education has long been a common good in our nation's history and with it comes the growing awareness that many of the claims made about the advantages of non-government schools apply equally and with additional strengths to our nation's public schools. It's then how to get that message across given the extensive advertising and marketing programmes enjoyed by the non-government school sector – something public schools naturally shy away from as not being part of their core business.

Perhaps it comes down to finding a way to share the authenticity, inclusivity and provenance that public schools effortlessly display with the wider community. A current state-level example of this is the Tasmanian Department's welcome celebration of 150 years of public education in Tasmania, as in 1868 it became the first colony of Australia to legislate for compulsory school attendance. There is a call for current and past students and staff to become ambassadors to help champion this yearlong celebration of public education under the theme of 'then, now and beyond'. Further details are available [here](#).

## **Early years are forever**

There is an increasingly furious debate about the value of early childhood and the vexing question of how and who will resource it. Education departments describe the early years as being technically beyond their legislated funding envelope as the compulsory schooling years are the key point of interest. This is highlighted by the heated debate around terms such as falling in international rankings of PISA and TIMSS, the flatlining of NAPLAN outcomes, Y11/12 retention, ATAR results and transitions into employment – be it via vocational or tertiary education.

As a result, it's all too easy for many politicians to think that early childhood education is just the warm-up act for the real thing – this antiquated view couldn't be further from the truth.

There are now huge swaths of research and champions of professional practice demonstrating that high-quality early childhood education is the critical foundation for future learning. The first 1,000 days of life are everything as it's this period that unlocks the latent potential in every child – regardless of background.

In policy terms it's deeply gratifying to see the Gonski panel make specific recommendations for early childhood education and the essential role of parent engagement with their children's learning at this crucial time. This is not to talk of formal education – it's play-based and social-emotional education that is the crucial element, with the support of early education teachers that are respected and appreciated as a truly unique profession with skills far beyond those that can be measured by formal assessments.

*As parents we need to engage with our local politicians and future candidates, and drive the point home about the essential value of early childhood education and the profession of early childhood educators*

The Mitchell Institute is an independent champion of early childhood education with a portfolio of research findings and reports available [here](#) that demonstrate the value of high quality early childhood education – and one that isn't necessarily down to bespoke facilities, but rather passionate and professional early educators who have to be recognised for the vital contribution they make in defining our children's future success. To quote Stephen Covey – we have to 'begin with the end in mind'.

To explore this point further we are in the middle of an ongoing debate around universal access to early childhood education – usually delivered as 15 hours per week or 600 hours in total in the year of voluntary pre-school Kindergarten before the start of compulsory full-time schooling, details available [here](#). Its value is incalculable – especially for those families that may not have the means to otherwise engage in pre-school education. What is particularly frustrating is that the scheme's funding is only funded on an annual basis – with no sign of permanency as yet. There has also been an observation that a note in this year's budget papers seem to indicate that it will cease in 2020.

Perhaps we need to look again at this whole scheme, as with a federal election due next year, now is the time to begin with the end in mind. As parents we need to engage with our local politicians and future candidates, and drive the point home about the

essential value of early childhood education and the profession of early childhood educators.

In Western Scotland, with some of the most disadvantaged communities in Europe, there is a move to 1,140 hours of universal access to early childhood education for every child – and free on the point of delivery – such is the recognition of its value in addressing disadvantage and the fiscal efficiency of high quality early childhood education on future learning outcomes.

With the Mitchell Institute's findings of the value of two-year's high-quality pre-school education we, as parents and voters, need to call on all sides of politics to re-set the paradigm so that a minimum of two-years universal access to early childhood education is the expected norm in our children's educational experience.

Our proudly inclusive nation with a sense of fair-go for all demands nothing less; especially where public education that is open to all and truly appreciates diversity is increasingly the first choice for our children's future.

### **Stop Press: A New PM**

Following a fractious few days in Canberra, culminating in a Liberal party leadership spill, this newsletter will reach you with the announcement that the Hon. Scott Morrison will be Australia's 30th Prime Minister. With the sudden voluntary departure of so many Ministers over the last few days we await the Cabinet reshuffle and position appointment process with keen interest – especially the announcement as to who will be the Education Minister in the lead up to the next Federal election; and one that could come sooner rather than later.

It's interesting to note that the new PM once had early childhood education as part of a past Ministerial portfolio; we can expect that his support and understanding of its value of this will be fulsome and generous.

ACSSO is committed to Fair, Simple and Transparent, and truly needs based funding agreements, with no special deals and expects all sides of politics to act with integrity and the best interests of the students, staff,



families and communities that support our nation's fully inclusive public schools.

The vested interests and incessant lobbying of the non-government schools for yet more money has to be resisted – it's something that all of us as supporters and champions of public education need to say loud and clear in every politician's ear.

**Phillip Spratt**

**August, 2018**

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### **Ford Driving Skills For Life**

Yes it's on again this year! Ford has confirmed all dates and locations for this year's DSFL program.

- Sunday 23rd September – Wollongong at Kembla Grange Racecourse
- Saturday 20th October – Melbourne at Todd Rd Go Kart Track
- Sunday 21st October – Ballarat at Ballarat Greyhound Racing Club
- Sunday 28th October – Toowoomba at Toowoomba Go Kart Club
- Saturday 3rd November – Brisbane at Lakeside Raceway
- Saturday 8th December – Sydney at Sydney Motor Sport Park



Registration and other updates will be released on Ford Australia's Facebook, Twitter and website in the next week.

## Phonics in context debate



**ACSSO Director Natasha Carter represents Western Sydney and submitted this report from her experience at the inaugural debate convened by The Australian College of Educators and The Centre for Independent Studies.**

**You can watch the full debate in the video link above.**

*The topic chosen was certainly topical and definitely contentious:*

***Phonics in context is not enough: synthetic phonics and learning to read***

*With approximately 500 people in the auditorium and another 1000 watching live online, there was great interest in how the arguments put forward were going to present viewpoints and whether anyone was going to change perspective.*

*I have to say that the audience definitely seemed divided based on applause and groaning however I hope that everyone left with at least the desire to explore the topic further. Social media has been quite busy with vehement discussion on the methods for the instruction of reading.*

*There are plans for more debates and I got the impression that ACE and CIS are not going to shy away from further controversial topics. I am certainly looking forward to the next one.*

**- Natasha Carter**



## SUPPORT WHITE BALLOON DAY

**7 September 2018**

**[whiteballoonday.com.au](http://whiteballoonday.com.au)**

Each year, hundreds of organisations across Australia register their support and participation in *White Balloon Day* as part of *National Child Protection Week*.

The Bravehearts organisation's message is that every Australian child has the right to feel safe and every adult and organisation has a responsibility to help protect the children in our society. With your support in promoting White Balloon Day to your school or parent organisation, you'll be helping to make Australia the safest place in the world to raise a child.

Here are some ways you can support the campaign to promote child safe communities:

- **Provide a news story on your website or within an e-newsletter** to your members about White Balloon Day
- **Participating members issue a media release to local media** - Utilise the pre-prepared media release available from our website.
- **Promote *White Balloon Day* in industry media** – Invite support for White Balloon Day and National Child Protection Week to promote your support for child safe communities.
- **Display posters in the workplace** – Download *White Balloon Day* and Bravehearts' posters featuring Bravehearts child safe messages for display all-year-round.

- **Utilise *White Balloon Day* assets across all your communications** – share on your website, newsletters, e-newsletters and social media platforms – [whiteballoonday.com.au/useful-downloads](http://whiteballoonday.com.au/useful-downloads)
- **Hold a *White Balloon Day* event for your staff** - Inform staff of the need to create child safe communities.
- **Conduct a fundraising activity** – Invite staff to wear purple or white for *White Balloon Day* and help Bravehearts continue our vital work to improve child protection throughout Australia.
- **Feature Braveheart's 'Parent Tip Sheet' on your website and distribute to members** – Feature a link to download Bravehearts' FREE Personal Safety Parents' Guide [bravehearts.org.au/personalsafety](http://bravehearts.org.au/personalsafety)
- **Promote child safe messages on your website** – Link to Bravehearts' website all-year-round to provide members with online access to Bravehearts' specialised resources and services [bravehearts.org.au](http://bravehearts.org.au)
- **Conduct Child Safe Training for staff who may work with children** - Bravehearts offers training solutions at [bravehearts.org.au/what-we-do/education-and-training](http://bravehearts.org.au/what-we-do/education-and-training).

### Keep teens safe



Internet security has no national borders, so we're sharing this resource which the American National Home Security Alliance shared with ACSSO to help schools and families educate teenagers about the issues facing them today.

*You can find the Online Teen Safety Guide [here](#).*

## Conferences



## Co-hosted Queensland conference

**7-8 September 2018**

*We are thrilled to present this exciting opportunity to connect with hundreds of Queensland volunteers and teaching leaders for our annual state conference, Every child Every chance; Parents as partners in learning.*

*For the first time in our 70-year history, this year we are working with the Department of Education to deliver a unique Queensland perspective on parent engagement in state schools.*

*Throughout the conference we will be exploring the Queensland Parents and Community Engagement Framework, and what this means for parents, teachers and principals to ensure that every child has every chance for success.*

*As one of Australia's leading parent advocacy and support groups, P&Cs Qld is pleased to be joined by many national education partners and statewide parent advocates, such as the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Secondary Principals' Association.*

*Registrations are open!*

**Contact us to list your  
conference, [mail@acsso.org.au](mailto:mail@acsso.org.au)**

*Tell us your thoughts  
about education in Australia*

**Help us to help you!**

Head over to <http://www.acsso.org.au/have-say/3-messages-feedback/> and share your opinion on

current education policies so we can present the widest possible views to decision makers.



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