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PARENTS EXPECT MORE FROM EDUCATION MINISTERS

This week's meeting of Australia's nine education ministers in Perth provides a rare opportunity to establish a nationally co-ordinated approach to many of the major issues in Australian education

Of particular interest to parents is the issue of equitable school funding.

The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) notes that the Commonwealth wants to introduce an indexing mechanism that it is claimed will provide a level of certainty to government schools from year to year. In commenting on this, ACSSO President Judith Bundy said to-day, "The issue of indexation is a smoke-screen but it is still not too late for Minister Nelson is to sign up to the five equity principles of the Schools Resourcing Taskforce as his first priority. The only rationale that the Commonwealth has for rejecting equity must be its strong desire to continue with huge subsidies for the already wealthy non-government schools. Australia cannot afford a bi-polar school education system."

One of the major issues on the table this week will be that of creating greater levels of consistency across Australia's eight schooling systems, where the interests of Australia's children should be the prime consideration of ministers.

Judith said "Whilst schools must use local resources and consider their local context in the delivery of programs, the present levels of variation in curriculum and starting and leaving ages between states and territories are difficult to justify".

"What we don't want to see is a stand-off between states and territories who may want to argue that national consistency is fine, as long as it is their own model that everyone else must follow".

Judith also expressed ACSSO's concern that "education ministers seem to take a somewhat casual approach to their leadership and decision making responsibilities by only scheduling one MCEETYA meeting per year to discuss schooling issues".

"Change will not be driven through an approach that sees taskforces and committees report annually. ACSSO believes that education ministers need to meet at least twice per year".

For further information and comment
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