

## **AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS**

**The national voice of parents who send their children to Australia's public schools**

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### **PRIME MINISTER'S NEW VALUES UNDERMINE GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

“Parents of the 70% of students who go to government schools will be appalled to know that the Prime Minister thinks public schools do not teach traditional values. He is totally wrong!” said ACSSO President Judith Bundy in response to the Prime Minister's recent comments.

“Only in government schools can students rub shoulders with other young people from all backgrounds and beliefs. Through this early contact with others from all walks of life, the advantaged and disadvantaged, traditional Australian values of giving others a ‘fair go’ and “mateship”, despite social difference, are crystallised. For this reason ACSSO has always believed that the traditional value of tolerance in Australian society is best developed in government schools.”

“If the Prime Minister visited any government school in any State or Territory in Australia he would observe teachers instilling values of honesty, respect for others and their property, teamwork, healthy lifestyle and non-violent conflict resolution, to name but a few. Certainly, government schools cannot teach religious values – but then, when interpreted or applied in narrow intolerant ways these are responsible for much of the strife evident in today's world”.

Even more disappointing to ACSSO is the fact that the Prime Minister's statements serve to undermine public education, at a time when it should be supported.

“The narrow economic rationale that it costs less taxpayer dollars to educate a child privately shows a mean-spirited lack of leadership and vision, if that is an underlying reason for the PM's comments. We live in a society, not an economy, Prime Minister!”

“70% of young people attend government schools. They need to know from you as PM that their parents have made a good choice and that your government is committed to ensuring public schools are resourced at levels that are comparable with the non-government sector.”

“Public schools are obliged to accept all students who wish to attend, without qualification, including those rejected or excluded by non-government schools. Discipline issues are sometimes evident but schools employ a sophisticated range of strategies to ensure orderly learning environments prevail. No public school principal has the level of autocracy and lack of social accountability available to their private school colleagues. For example, an elite private school policy in Melbourne reads: “if in the opinion of the Principal it is desirable in the interests of the College that a boy should not continue any longer as a pupil he may notify the parents or either of them or guardian to that effect and remove the boy's name from the School Roll and debar him from further attendance”<sup>1</sup>.

Surely, exclusion and marginalisation of the different or difficult is not a traditional value. Or is it a preferred alternative for the Prime Minister to the ‘political correctness’, which he perceives to operate elsewhere? When the federal government encourages this kind of exclusion policy, it is evident that it has no real respect for the way that public schools operate to support students in all circumstances.”

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<sup>1</sup> Quote taken from Business Notice published on the website of the Scotch College, Melbourne.