

MEDIA RELEASE

for immediate release: Wednesday 21 July 2010

COALITION'S SKEWED SCATTERGUN SHOT AT EDUCATION TAX BREAK EXTENSIONS MISSES MARK

Peter Garrigan, National President of the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO), today noted that the title of the Coalition's release, "*Real action to help families meet school costs*" is as misleading as the contents and proposals are misdirected and ill-conceived.

"For a start this grab-bag of proposals will self-evidently do little or nothing to provide a much needed helping hand to those families who through no fault of their own are doing it very tough in their efforts to provide their children with the education opportunities that every child deserves," Peter noted.

"Most of these bits and pieces simply provide unnecessary largesse to those who can already well afford to contribute in these ways – and who quite appropriately and comfortably do so in the ordinary course of events."

"The lack of coherence and informed analysis that has gone into this assemblage becomes starkly evident if we look more closely at each element in turn."

"For example, School Fees: In most of Australia's 7,000 public schools a modest contribution is sought, mostly on a voluntary basis in terms of parent capacity – with well established arrangements in schools to adjust down or remit those contributions on an in-confidence basis where families have problems paying."

"The list omits any mention of those Subject Levies which particularly secondary public schools find necessary to charge in respect of high-cost consumables in some elective courses – for example Photography. But again schools have arrangements to reduce or remit such charges where appropriate on a local in-confidence basis."

"But in overall terms, the fatal cognitive flaw in the Coalition's proposal is that they are approaching the issues in the wrong way, from the wrong standpoint – and with totally wrong strategies."

"The real point is that all schools should be properly resourced in terms of their recurrent funding to ensure that all students have the appropriate range and quality of learning and development opportunities in these curriculum areas in order to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians."

"The emerging National Curriculum in the Arts is establishing the scope and content of required school provision in such areas as music, dance and drama – and thus the focus must be to resource all schools to teach that high-quality curriculum in a way that is accessible by all students – and with provision for extension for those who are gifted and talented."

"The Coalition would be far better advised to develop policies that will remedy the situation where some 75% of students in Australia's public primary schools do not have access to a coherent and effective music program – and nor do some 20% of young people in non-government schools," Peter noted. "That is the real issue and concern."

"The answer that seems to elude the Coalition is: to provide and resource such high quality programs in all schools, inclusively accessible to each and every student!"

Further comment, contact:

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