

## A BLUEPRINT FOR TOMORROW'S SCHOOLS

ACSSO is acknowledged as one of Australia's leading education think tanks. Independence and practicality drive what we do. That is why we have spent the last two years working on the emerging blueprint of tomorrow's schools. The 2006 National Conference was the next major step.

Representative - You bet!

The National Conference in October 2006 debated what should be the key components of that blueprint. The input came from parent groups, teachers, principals, guidance officers, subject associations, education administrators, academics and other key stakeholders; the Conference was the perfect place to build a blueprint that had vision and practicality. That is why a number of Ministers and Heads of Education Departments have already asked for copies when the high level draft becomes available at the end of February 2007.

### What Shape Will the Blue Print Take?

It will be a readable high level document that will have meaning to the community. We will try to avoid jargon and turgid prose so beloved of education experts. This is a blueprint that is intended for everyone who has to make education relevant and involving for all students (and their parents and teachers).

Hon. Terry Aulich  
Executive Director

### Key issues identified in the blueprint discussion process

If Education Ministers are determined to make a difference and bring our schools into the 21st century, the National Conference Blueprint stand-out issues are:

- **Training and professional development** for
  - teachers and
  - parent representatives
- Family school **partnerships** and effective **communication** between school, parents and community
- **Curriculum and teaching methods** including effective use of **new technologies**, learning at home and in the community
- School **design** and **funding**
- Practicing and learning **values** at school and at home
- School **governance**

ACSSO will regularly report on the key issues that are likely to appear in the Blueprint. This week's issue is training and professional development for teachers and parent representatives. The précis is brief, but we hope focused, so that you can come straight to the point. Give us your feedback.

## **Training and Professional Development: for Teachers – and Parent Representatives**

The Conference and other forums run by ACSSO have clearly defined this as the key issue to be addressed. It is interesting that the need to better prepare teachers for the world in which they work is the stand-out requirement. However, if teachers are requiring and asking for better training and professional development, it is also obvious that parent organisation representatives are looking for the same opportunity to obtain training for the roles they are asked to play.

The key deficiencies identified so far include:

- A significant dearth of training opportunities at pre-service or continuing service about family school partnerships and how to make them work. Only one university has any significant course on this and teachers continue to feel uneasy about relationships with parents. Similarly, training of parents already on school councils is limited and the mentoring of a pool of parent representatives is restricted to one or two states which do it well.
- Teachers are often asked to teach outside their subject area of formal training and this and other factors such as changing curricula and the need to develop lesson material emphasizes catch-up training at the expense of planned proactive professional development.
- There are shortages of trained teachers in areas such as maths, science, technology and languages (especially Asian languages) and in terms of teaching tools, teachers feel that they are under-utilizing the benefits of information technology due to inadequate pre-service or continuing service training; principals also require at least high level managerial advice and training about the potential of improving performances through smarter, more strategic use of technology.
- In an age of low unemployment and longer working hours, the role of volunteer organisations is undergoing significant changes yet their responsibilities have risen; in many cases, parent organisations use their networks and operations to bolster or sharpen the delivery of government services at a cheaper cost and often in a way that is more acceptable to target groups, due to trust issues, mode of discourse and family friendly processes. Training and mentoring is vital, not only for those that are already on boards or school councils but for those who should be forming a pool of supporting parent members. This is a training area that requires a national drive. Part of the training is about recruiting and involving other parents in their school, working effectively with school personnel and making schools genuine community assets.

**ACSSO NOW LEAVES IT OPEN FOR YOU TO RESPOND. YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS AND COMMENTS ARE VERY WELCOME: [admin@acsso.org.au](mailto:admin@acsso.org.au)**