

# Public Education Voice

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## Return of “Public Education Voice”

*Peter Garrigan, ACSSO President*

Some years ago now, the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) launched a new electronic publication called “Public Education Voice” with the objective of providing an integrated national perspective on the issues of education from the perspective of, and on behalf of, the millions of parents whose some 2.4 million children attend Australia’s some 7,000 public primary and secondary schools, and those whose children are beginning their education journey via public kindergartens and preschools all over the country.

As with the nature of the Australian Federation which is comprised of eight states and territories whose synergistic combination creates a nation greater than its constituent parts, so ACSSO is a federal peak organisation which comprises the umbrella organisations for public school parent organisations and parental participation in school governance through school boards and councils, whose national unity and integration is its strength.

This structure is particularly suited to effective parent engagement with the public education system – where responsibility for the provision and operation of schools in every community is placed on the State or Territory governments, and national integration of approach, directions and priorities – and associated national funding – is managed at the federal level, through such synergistic structures as the Council of Australian Governments and the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs. At this level, the input of all states and territories is integrated to inform and structure the national agenda and to shape the implementation of the education initiatives and policies of the national government.

All the research of the past fifty years in Australia and overseas demonstrates that both the personal development and the academic achievement of young people are enhanced when parents work in productive partnerships with their school and with the education systems in action. There is scope and opportunity – and real tangible benefit for all parties – building parent engagement at each and every level – at the local school; at systemic and state or territory government level – and at the national level – in a seamless progression.

Our action research demonstrates conclusively that the building of inclusive and sustainable family-school and community partnerships provides an outstandingly successful strategy for achieving equity for Australia’s most disadvantaged children and their families and communities – and contributes towards achievement of the national goal of a cohesive and socially inclusive community within which each young person has the opportunity, incentive and support to achieve their potential.

As we address the challenges of long-overdue transformative change impacting progressively or simultaneously on every facet of schooling, that relationship of informed engagement and

productive sustainable partnership with the families and their wider community becomes a centrally important driver of positive results and mutually productive outcomes.

With the parents on board as informed and committed partners, actors and shapers of the change processes at all stages from initial inception and design through to implementation and review, the processes will be more effective, the results more successfully achieved and the cultural changes more deeply embedded and sustainable.

Though these recent years we have sought to inform and encourage an enhanced level of informed engagement and input from parents into the educational processes at all those levels through our websites and in particular through Public Education Voice and the progressively expanding array of E-Newsletters that we have subsequently developed in response to requests from school communities in all parts of the country. In recent times the emphasis has shifted more to those more specific publications and for a time Public Education Voice has been in abeyance.

Now, in response to continuing levels of interest and requests for its resumption, we are re-launching this quarterly publication – and at the critical juncture of a Federal Election that must critically concern itself with the needs of Education as the essential foundation element of nation building and of equipping our young people and our whole country for a fulfilling role in the changing world dynamics of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. So a key theme of this first edition is to provide input from each state and territory umbrella group, and ACSSO's national perspectives, as to those issues the Parents of Australia hold as important for the incoming Australian Government and its federal Education Minister to address in the next three years.

And also to launch our **National Education Conference for 2010**: the key annual event which brings together parents, principals, teachers, education researchers and others from all aspects of education to review and discuss some of these important educational issues, through a parent-oriented perspective. Now read on....

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## **Great expectations: An open letter to the incoming Minister for Education from the ACT Council of P&C Associations**

Dear Minister,

Congratulations on your appointment. As Minister, parents across the ACT will look to you to support a high-achieving, world-class system of public education that affords every child the opportunity to achieve to their greatest potential. To this end, you will need to invest in schools and provide adequate ongoing funding, implement new curricula, support our teachers and make new technology available.

Funding of government schools is a major concern for parents. In recent years, federal funding of government schools has not kept pace with the 'education inflation rate'. Parents believe that the current review of school funding should continue, and that it should try to strive for a better model and a better way to account for inflation. Future funding formulae should take into account rapid advances in technology, as students should have the ability to access any form of new technology that will assist their learning.

It is important to remember that no two students are the same, and so there are no 'one size fits all' solutions to resourcing and funding. While the majority of students can be placed in a 'standard group', others cannot. These include indigenous and Torres Strait Islander students, migrants and refugees from non-English speaking backgrounds, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented students. These students require different approaches in order to achieve their optimum learning outcomes. They need to be supported by appropriately trained teachers and funding.

The continued commitment to the development and implementation of a National Curriculum is also important for our students and families. It is concerning, however, that the board of the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA) was constituted without a position for a parent representative. It is therefore important that, as a key stakeholder representative group, parents have further opportunities to view and comment on the new curriculum before it

is adopted and published.

Parents are also concerned about the shortcomings and potential for misuse of the *My School* website. The information and data on the site needs to be broadened, and the federal government must take steps to ensure that third parties do not sell on the data in other forms or publish it as 'league tables'. The site needs to be simplified so that it can be easily understood by parents of all backgrounds. Data which purports to reflect school performance must also be genuinely representative sample of the relevant school.

Students excel in their learning primarily because of skilled and engaged teachers. State, territory and federal governments must therefore work together to provide attractive career paths and pay rates. All jurisdictions should be able to pay teachers a salary commensurate with their qualifications and experience, at a competitive market rate equivalent to other industries for their skills. Otherwise, the profession will not attract skilled and dedicated would-be teachers. All stakeholders must also continue to develop and improve teacher education at Australian universities, and to make National Teacher Registration a key focus to ensure high quality teaching. All of these initiatives will require appropriate consultation with stakeholders.

Some ACT public schools have benefitted from recent investment in capital works, but these programs have not gone far enough. Some of our school buildings are old and need expensive renovations or upgrades to meet the classroom needs of the current generation. This will require continued and additional investment. So too will they need to be retrofitted to be better prepared for the impacts of climate change by reducing carbon footprints. Meanwhile, funding for solar cells to provide energy, water tanks to utilize runoff and other sustainable initiatives need to be maintained.

Elizabeth Singer  
President, ACT Council of P&C Associations

<http://www.schoolparents.canberra.net.au/>

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## Queensland Parent Perspectives

*Margaret Black, President, Queensland Council of Parents & Citizens Associations*

With so much on the current education agenda it is vital that parents be consulted about their children's future. QCPCA see the opportunity over the next three years to set firm foundations for this to happen.

QCPCA would like to see a more prominent role for parents. We are always consulted by the Queensland State Government and are proud to say that we enjoy a great relationship with all stakeholders. This pays great dividends and we are seeing positive results. QCPCA would therefore ask that the Australian Government continue to strengthen relations with national and state parent bodies.

Our number one priority for the national education agenda is therefore **Consultation**. It is only in this context that we will be able to work for the best possible educational outcomes.

**Australian Curriculum** development and implementation is a key element of the upcoming agenda. With this already well underway we would like to ensure a flexible curriculum that focuses on the basics but also allows for students to work towards their strengths. Ensuring that the VET program is provided appropriate time allocation - and also that world-renowned programs in music and sport are not overlooked.

NAPLAN testing provides a useful way to take a snapshot of school and student performance. QCPCA would, however, like to see that the government does not form an over- reliance on just one data set, especially NAPLAN testing, which has its own flaws. The issue falls within a wider area for discussion- **Collection and presentation of information**. It is appropriate for education authorities to seek performance data in order to identify strengths and weaknesses - but the release of this data needs to be controlled to avoid inappropriate use by sources such as the media. We would like to see information available for parents - but not through the

MySchool website. MySchool does not accurately reflect the whole school environment and in fact causes a multitude of problems that do not overcome the primary objective: transparency. Rather than giving parents an accurate view of school performance it gives a heavily skewed and misleading perspective.

The consultation of parent groups supports our final recommendation to any incoming government: **Recognition**. By giving parents the opportunity to more readily become involved in their child's education, the government would also provide the recognition that these groups deserve. Therefore QCPCA strongly advocate for the recognition that is due to the role of parents in the education forum.

QCPCA sincerely hopes that the Australian Government for the next three years listens to our recommendations and acts on them as a matter of priority.

<http://www.qcpc.org.au/>

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## What WA Parents of public school children expect from the incoming federal government.

*Rob Fry, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations*

A far greater emphasis on real autonomy and decision making delegated to each school's local leadership team working in partnership with their parents, families and community, must be an essential central feature of any incoming government's mandate to create the schools of the future.

There are still too many features of our schools that are informed by a centrist command-style mindset from the past, one that still sees these as passive, standardised and stylised "education delivery mechanisms" rather than the dynamic learning communities that are required to equip each and every young Australian for the challenges and opportunities of this new century and new millennium.

Long gone are the days when parents and families were prepared to sit back and wait for remote politicians or bureaucrats who cannot possibly be aware of the real issues in each school and the dynamics of each community, setting narrow constraining rules and limitations on how the funds provided will be best invested. Not should any Principal, bearing responsibility for learning leadership, be prevented from making the best decisions about the real needs and priorities of their students' learning and development by edicts that limit them to flag poles or laptops or another hall when they know of other more essential and pressing needs of their student community.

It is of course fundamentally important that governments guarantee the essential level of funding to enable each school to provide the range of contemporary learning opportunities that enable each and every child, in whatever community, to achieve their full potential and equip them for productive and fulfilling lives in the future. That is the critical and fundamental responsibility of government. To ensure that every school is properly and sufficiently resourced to be able to achieve the array of learning and development objectives set out in the "Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians" in 2008

With that funding provided, those who are best placed to most effectively determine how it will be invested, are the educational leaders – working in close consultative partnership with the parent body and their wider community.

We know that by this means the community – and the nation – will get real educational value for their money – because we have seen this approach work effectively in practice for public schools in the three-year operation of the "Investing in Our Schools" program a few years ago. Funding was allocated on the basis of detailed identification of local needs and priorities in proposals jointly prepared by principals and parents; who were then allocated the funds and took shared responsibility for its effective investment – and properly accounted for their

disbursements and the results achieved.

Responsibility, transparency and accountability are key – accountability not only to the politicians and bureaucrats – but to the parents and families of each community – and to each and every student at the school, whose future is at stake. Parents are taxpayers too, of course: and every parent is keen to ensure that every dollar is well and productively invested to get the best educational value for their children and their community.

Schools must never be subject or hostage to the vagaries of political processes and ideologies. Our children's future is our nation's future – we cannot allow this to be trivialised or side-tracked or subject to "collateral damage" from passing political fancies of the day.

We recognise that our teachers and educational leaders in each and every school must be the pivotal point of national education policy. Much more comprehensive focus must be given to the "gaining, training and retaining" of teachers, by reinforcing the professionalism and standing of all teachers and their ancillary school staff, by a career and remuneration structure that encourages the finest and best suited into the profession, and remunerates them at a level that matches the vital nation-building role they are committed to and the value of their contribution to our now and future society.

In this area also we need to be careful of superficial quick-fix political notions that may prove to be a source of problems rather than solutions. One such notion is that of bonus payments. Apart from the more obvious and immediate limitations of the sorts of schemes that both major parties have been floating, there is a reliable body of research evidence which demonstrates that such schemes fail to add any real educational value in a sustainable way.

How much simpler and more effective to pay all our teachers well in line with the value of the work they do – to attract and retain those who deeply and passionately want to be there.

In the same way, we need to rethink and broaden the further development of the MySchool web site to ensure that it fulfils a positive purpose of supporting, sustaining and encouraging our schools and their teachers and leaders and their efforts to progress all aspects of the well-being, resilience, social and emotional development and learning potential of each and every student. Unlike public reporting approaches overseas that are constructed on a deficit model, resulting in narrowly-based league tables that operate like a mediaeval witch-hunt to name, blame and shame on inadequate evidence – and thus further demoralise the schools, students and families who need our help the most. The US and UK approaches have been shown to narrow the whole focus of teaching and learning in their schools, where the real breadth and depth of true education is subsumed in a rigid and blinkered teaching to the test. Rather, our approach must be to encourage, support and promote excellence through a deep, rich and coherent national curriculum

All of this is predicated upon a new funding model which recognises the needs of each and every school in its pursuit of excellence and its capacity to achieve the purposes of the Melbourne Declaration. We know from well established research that there are many, many schools that are grossly underfunded in terms of their capacities against those desired outcomes. We also know from equally valid research that there are many, many schools which are significantly and systematically over-funded – at the expense of others. This situation must be remedied as a matter of highest priority.

This has nothing to do with that cheap jibe about "the politics of envy". Rather, this is about the essential politics of fairness and equity.

<http://www.wacssso.wa.edu.au/>

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## **NSW Parent Priorities**

*Helen Walton, President, NSW Federation of P & C Associations*

There appears to be much discussion from all political parties about what they will offer as their educational policy for the next 4 years. There have been a range of promises related to the funding of initiatives including tax rebates, broadband, national assessment, support to youth

and rural and regional students as well as ongoing support to families in their endeavours to raise and educate their children. When making a decision, it is important for voters to think about what they want for their child's education and how this will be delivered. Many of the candidates across the state have been offering forums, discussions and debates in their local areas and parents have taken the opportunity to participate in these activities and question their local member on what they will provide for public education.

This election is a forerunner for the NSW State election which is to take place in March 2011. Parents have become more vocal in their involvement in political debates as they seek information on the future funding and policies of public education.

### **Ethics Program**

The Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales has worked since 2005 to lobby for an ethics course that is complementary to scripture (SRE) in public schools. In 2009, after extensive consultation with stakeholder and faith based groups (those who chose to participate), Federation lodged a joint submission, with the St. James Ethics Centre, to the Minister for Education and Training, proposing a ten week ethics pilot. This pilot was conducted this year and the evaluation process is currently under way.

Much misinformation has been voiced in regards to the motives of the ethics course. The Federation wishes to refute any claims that their intent is to remove scripture from Public Education. This could be no further from the truth. We firmly believe and support the inclusive nature of our Public Schools. What we are clearly requesting is for students, who opt out of scripture, to be given the opportunity to participate in a meaningful discussion that challenges their thinking and helps to clarify and focus their values.

### **Qualified counsellors required for every NSW Public School**

The Federation of Parents and Citizens' Association is asking all political parties to explain their policies specific to the provision of a school counsellor in public schools to deal with the increasing mental health issues being experienced by students in NSW schools. This question follows the report in the Sydney Morning Herald on August 16<sup>th</sup> 2010 that *'about one in five young Australians suffers from mental illnesses. These include anxiety, depressive disorder, anorexia and bulimia. Some 10 percent of young Australians suffer abuse or neglect while one in five have a parent with poor mental health or a physical disability.'*

In addition, an Inquiry carried out by Tony Vinson some years ago, found that *'Mental health and wellbeing issues are said to increase the risk of dropping out of school, becoming homeless or ending up in the justice system.'*

A positive and proactive approach is required that would protect a number of vulnerable students, and their families, as they struggle to cope with the diverse issues that affect them. The issue of mental health and its associated impact on the youth of today has been a major focus for many community organizations but there needs to be a concerted effort by all political parties to support ongoing initiatives.

Unfortunately, the current funding for the national School Chaplaincy program does not offer an alternative.

In NSW – and probably elsewhere also - these funds could be better utilized to employ additional trained school counsellors for our Public schools. As a continuing priority for the Federation, we will reiterate our call to all political parties to address their stance on the provision of adequate and appropriate support for adolescent mental health programs.

### **Unflued gas heaters in schools**

This continues to be a contentious issue in NSW with the recent release of the Woolcock Report. The government is currently funding the removal and replacement of unflued gas heaters from about 100 schools in some of the coldest areas of the state. As there are some unknown issues with relation to the removal of heaters including structural changes to the buildings, the Federation will continue to watch the process to ensure quality and safety is maintained for students and staff. We will persist with our stance on the rapid removal and replacement of all unflued gas heaters with suitable replacements recognising that no one size fits all option is available. Our schools, like our children, have their own unique attributes and

needs and this must be considered in the process.

### **Building the Education Revolution**

NSW was recently named as the dunce by a report into the delivery of the federal government's building stimulus, recording more than half the complaints, and the highest per square metre cost. NSW government schools accounted for 56 per cent of the 254 complaints, with more than three quarters concerning the value for money of projects, particularly as NSW used a centralised, one size fits all model.

The interim report did, however, praise the speed of the state's response to the stimulus program with 95 per cent of projects in NSW either completed or commenced.

From the parent perspective, there has been much praise from communities for the buildings which now grace their schools. Many have commented that - despite the frustrations over the disruptions to playground use and the costs of some projects resulting in reduced amenities - the building initiative has provided schools with additional facilities which would not otherwise have been possible. They have reported on concerts and other events being conducted in the new halls and the positive impression it has left within their communities.

### **Transport safety**

Transport safety is an issue which affects all jurisdictions and NSW parents have been working on a number of fronts to progress government policy and processes to ensure the safety of school students. The two key areas of concern are around the provision of seatbelts in school buses and the notion of one child per seatbelt. There have been problems in the past with the assumption that three young children (early school age) to one seat on a bus are acceptable. However, in the same way as a child is expected to wear a seatbelt for safety in the car, parents want to ensure that all students on school buses have access to, and use, seatbelts.

The other major concern for parents is to have a safe area in front of a school which allows them to drop their child off and pick them up of an afternoon when required. These areas, often designated 'Kiss and Drop' zones, are intended to give parents a short period during which to ensure their child is safely inside the school grounds of a morning and then picked up in a similar manner in the afternoon. Every parent's basic concern is that their child should be safe, secure, happy and healthy – the foundation of all further learning and personal development.

<http://www.pandc.org.au/>

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## **South Australian Association of School Parents Clubs (SAASPC)**

*Jenice Zerna, SAASPC President*

The South Australian Association of School Parents Clubs (SAASPC) believes that it is the fundamental right of all Australian children to have equal access to a public education of the highest quality and that

- the public school system must provide all students with opportunities to learn and develop skills to equip them to take control of their lives and to participate in and contribute to a democratic way of life
- all students irrespective of race, religion, socioeconomic status, gender, disability (physical or intellectual), geographic location and age, should be empowered through a culturally diverse education system to reach their full potential and to take advantage of opportunities to continue to learn throughout their lives
- an effective public education is predicated on planned community participation at all levels of decision making and the need for all schools/preschools to include their communities in choosing, planning, implementing and evaluating educational processes relevant to that community and its aspirations.

Over the next three years we look forward to a federal government which will begin reforms towards a real Education Revolution in Australia; one that is about more than just buildings and computers.

We will be looking for a government which is brave enough to go beyond political expediency and to look deeply at its responsibility to funding and promoting Australian public schools – and which will implement the recommendations which come out of the enquiry on funding of school education. The basement of Parliament House is cluttered with reports from costly enquiries into various aspect of education, which all too often have been ignored by governments.

We will be expecting the new government to reactivate the enquiry into school libraries and teacher librarians – and then to ensure its recommendations are implemented.

We need a government which is prepared to not just talk about gaps but to build the bridge over them. One that will look at the needs of students of Indigenous origin, from families living in poverty and in rural and remote areas, students from some LOTE backgrounds and students with disabilities and will ensure it implements policies and programs that meet those needs in the both the short and the long term.

We want a government which is prepared to invest in quality teachers and learning. It is teachers, not computers, who can help to cultivate the quintessentially human skills we want to see in our young people. Their importance of the inspiration, passion, commitment and joy of a good teacher in the life of a child, and their future as an adult, cannot be underestimated.

We look forward to a government which is prepared to make a real commitment to student wellbeing by funding programs that address the mental health issues and the development of resilience in all children and young people, no matter what their circumstances or where they live.

We will welcome a government which recognises the critical importance of parents in the consultative and decision making processes – not just at the classroom and school levels but also at the bureaucratic and ministerial levels.

We expect our national government will recognise that the children of this country are its most important asset and resource and that it will therefore invest in their future to ensure that all reach their potential, and Australia's educational and economic future is secured. We want a national government which will be so committed to education that Australia's public education systems will be the benchmark for education systems worldwide.

<http://www.saaspc.org.au/>

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## **Towards a National Action Agenda**

*David Knuckey, Executive Director, South Australian Association of State School Organisations*

Context, education experts say, is as important as content. In numeracy, for example, 'where' you are learning is as important as 'what' you are learning. Ask someone in Sydney and someone in Alice Springs, how long it takes to travel 10 kms and you will hear starkly different concepts of distance. The same applies if trying to 'set out the issues, which should form the National Action Agenda for Education'.

Within the states and territories, we operate 8 education systems – with a 9<sup>th</sup> federal system exerting increasing influence. As with numeracy perception, the key education issues in Sydney are likely different from those in Alice Springs. Variation with also occur within states. Before trying to distil a succinct National Action Agenda – we should ask if a true national agenda is possible.

The last twenty years has seen a two-pronged, worldwide trend in education; strengthening of standards, curriculum and assessment at the national level, while placing more decision-

making authority at the school level. Content and context managed at ends of the spectrum.<sup>1</sup>

While Australia, along with Mexico and Portugal, still has most decisions made by the state government, most of the OECD has embraced self-governing schools.<sup>1</sup> In countries such as the UK, The Netherlands and New Zealand, School Boards make over 90% of decisions. Australia remains part of the 25% where decision-making is still highly centralised.<sup>1</sup>

Why has the rest of the world chosen self-governing schools? Because research shows that Local Governance is superior to centralised governance. The numerous benefits include:

- Increased efficiency
- Improved financial control
- Reduction of bureaucracy
- Increased responsiveness to local communities
- Creative management of human resources
- Improved potential for innovation
- Creation of conditions that improve education quality.<sup>1</sup>

We see evidence of this in Australia. Recall the Investing In Our Schools initiative. Schools determined what they needed, applied and then spent the federal grants. The program was successful and popular, adding vitally needed resources at thousands of schools.

Compare this to the BER; claims of waste, skimming and price-gouging resulting in two separate government investigations. In SA, some schools are now being hit with bills for the difference between their BER grants and blowouts in the actual cost. Computers in Classrooms fared better; but in 2010, some SA schools were still to receive their computers and as recent as June, computers sat on pallets because there was no money to install them.

What is the difference? IIOS went direct to schools. BER and 'Computers' went via the massive centralised bureaucracies. Why does it make a difference? Research shows that parents and the local community are:

- More committed to their members than central bureaucracies are to their clients
- Understand their problems better than a bureaucracy
- Are more flexible and creative than a bureaucracy
- Are cheaper than a bureaucracy, leaving more dollars for actual service delivery.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike other public services, education is not a one-size-fits-all concept. Everyone from the Business Council of Australia<sup>3</sup>, to the Productivity Commission concurs that a new form of governance is needed. "Centralised decision-making works best for systems that are relatively homogenous ... But school systems are not like that".<sup>4</sup>

Across the nation, we have different governance forms. In WA they have independent public schools. In SA, we have Local Governance, but there persists a tug-of war between school Governing Councils and the education department, for control. And nationally, the Prime Minister has announced another system that would empower principals with management authority, but not necessarily local councils with governance powers. Local management, without Local Governance shifts the blame, but not the authority.

With a national curriculum, national standards, a new national assessment and an inevitable performance pay structure – the Federal Government has imposed national decisions in almost all key areas ... except for who is responsible for decision-making.

Why is 'decentralisation' in school decision-making so difficult to implement in Australia? One reason is 'bureaucratic resistance'. It is one thing to change the Act, but implementing a change in attitude is something completely different. Academics note that local governing bodies are 'caught in a power struggle with education departments', adding that; "State Education departments have been very powerful authorities for well over 100 years."<sup>5</sup>

Expecting any bureaucracy to voluntarily & dramatically reduce its authority is unrealistic. To expect 8 separate bureaucracies to do so, at the same time (to bring about uniform Local Governance) is ridiculous. So, somewhat ironically, if Australian communities want to be able to determine their own education priorities, they will first need a coordinated national

intervention mandating their right to do so. Perhaps that should be the 'National Action Agenda for Education'.

<http://www.saasso.asn.au/>

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#### References

1. OECD Education At A Glance 2008.
2. Cranston (2003)
3. The Business Council of Australia, 2008, 'Teaching Talent: The Best Teachers for Australia's Classrooms'.
4. Banks, G, 2010, 'Advancing Australia's Human Capital Agenda'. 13/04/10.
5. Keller, C, 2010, 'Parental Guidance Recommended', The Advertiser, 08/06/10.

NOTE: SAASSO has published a detailed **2010 Federal Election Submission on Public Education** which can be accessed online: - <http://www.saasso.asn.au/media/files/6956.pdf>

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## Parents Victoria Annual Conference 2010

### Celebrating Relationships How we fit together

*Tue 7 - Wed 8 September*

Venue: The Downtowner on Lygon, 66 Lygon Street Carlton

#### Family Friendly Schools

*Dr Joni Samples*, Chief Academic Officer, Family Friendly Schools, Virginia, USA,  
*John Jones*, Project Officer, Supporting Schools to become Community Hubs &  
*John O'Meara*, Principal, Yea HS

#### Small and Snotty to Tall and Spotty

Solutions not Sagas - *Greg Hanson & Leigh Bartlett*, BATForce, Geelong

#### Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Project

*Ange Barry* CEO

#### Ultranet: supporting learning partnerships between parents, teachers and students

*Nina Fromhold* - Communications and Stakeholder Management, Ultranet, DEECD

#### Creating a Resilient Life

*Andrew Fuller*, Clinical Psychologist

Download the flyer and registration: <http://www.parentsvictoria.asn.au/conference-2010.pdf>

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## ACSSO Overview:

### Towards a more inclusive society, developing sustainably

In the approach to this vitally important election, the thoughts of every parent naturally focus on what the issues, outcomes and policy initiatives will mean for the learning and personal development of their children, how these will equip them more effectively for a fulfilling life in terms of the needs and dynamics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it unrolls through the years ahead, and what sort of society and world this next generation will inherit.

Every parent wants the best possible outcomes for their children – and is both keen and anxious about how to help schools provide their children with the knowledge, skills, attitudes,

values and aspirations that will equip them for the journey ahead and enable them to pursue their choices and opportunities through the rapidly changing times and context of the modern world.

Every parent responds positively and intuitively to the nature of commitment given by the Education Minister of the previous government: “We want to make sure that every student – in every community – can achieve their potential”. That must be an essential driving goal and purpose for any incoming administration.

Parents endorse as self-evident truths the essence of the “Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians”. We value the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society; a society that is cohesive, culturally diverse – and sustainable. We appreciate that our schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and well-being of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation’s ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. We understand that this is a shared responsibility with parents, carers, the family environment, the community, business and other service providers.

We expect:

- A central leading emphasis on the transformative change of education and our schools system seamlessly through from the critical foundation years of early childhood through primary and secondary through a range of avenues of tertiary learning and into the trades and professions of the modern world, equipping all young people to maximise their potential and maintain the learning skills, attitudes and values to lead fulfilling lives in a changing society and an increasingly globalised world – with the appropriate range of learning and development opportunities to be provided for every child in every school community in all parts of the country.
- An inclusive approach to supporting the learning and development of children with a disability or special needs, including adverse socio-economic circumstances or other factors affecting full and successful participation – together with meeting the opportunity needs of those who are gifted and talented.
- A supportive focus on mental health, resilience and well-being to enable all young people to participate as effective learners with a positive outlook and engagement with their community, together with complementary support for their physical health and development.
- A highly skilled, highly qualified and highly regarded professional workforce in our schools as teachers and leaders, inspired and sustained collegiately by their own passion for learning and teaching and in turn inspiring young people with a love of learning and the skills and attributes and motivations of self-directing life-long learners and the values and qualities to operate effectively as members of a cohesive and inclusive society.

Elements of work in progress that must continue and further develop include:

- Development and implementation of a rich, creative and coherent National Curriculum of recognised world standing reflecting and promoting best professional practice
- National review of schools funding and the development of an effective equitable national funding and resourcing model which promotes and supports the achievement by all schools of the objectives of the Melbourne Declaration
- Further development and implementation of greater and more effective school & principal autonomy within the context of enhanced school governance and shared leadership models
- Further support for the building of the teaching profession – to “gain, train, develop and retain – the skilled professionals and teams in the classrooms and in school leadership positions across the country: which necessarily includes more structured and resourced workforce planning in terms of providing the required high levels of

subject-specific expertise in every key element of the national curriculum – including the more effective harnessing of the potential of modern technology to build national learning networks and the online “borderless” classroom

- Building the language and associated international literacy skills with a particular (but not exclusive) focus on our own region, building on the minimal “seed funding” and inadequate short term kick-start of the three –year NALSSP, with a longer term horizon, a more extensive and inclusive vision and plan, and the necessary sustainable resources to achieve the outcomes desired and required by the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, building on the potential of our multi-linguistic and multicultural society.
- Undertaking a systematic rebuilding of music education in schools progressively from the very earliest years and onwards throughout schooling, to address the needs identified in the 2005 and 2006 reports and to remedy the disgraceful situation these reveal, that some 75% of children in public primary schools have no access to an adequate or appropriate music program in their school (nor do some 20% in non-government primary schools).
- Working towards a sustainable future and a balance of human needs with the biodiversity and capacity of our dry and ancient continent, the pressures on our region, and the maintainable state of the planet, given the mounting challenges – and opportunities – of carbon pollution, climate change and global warming.

The parents of Australia await the related announcements and proposals of the incoming Australian Government with keen expectation.

<http://www.acsso.org.au>

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**NATIONAL  
CONFERENCE**  
**Friday 22 October 2010**  
**163 Greenhill Road Parkside South Australia**

ACSso invites parents, principals, teachers, educators and anyone with an interest in education and young people to join us at this exciting conference.

**Program**

- 9.00** Peter Garrigan - **Welcome**
- 9.15** Hon Jay Weatherill - **Conference opening**
- 9.45** Marie Brennan - **Public education for public purposes**
- 10.30** *morning tea*
- 11.00** Martin Westwell - **Creating capacity: meeting the needs of an uncertain future**
- 12.00** Kym Nadebaum - **Documentary film – literacy and student voice**
- 12.45** *lunch*
- 1.30** Gavin Wanganeen - **Opportunities for young people**

- 2.15 Elizabeth Handsley - **Children, media and the law**
- 3.00 *afternoon tea*
- 3.15 Angelo Gavrielatos - **Public education**
- 4.00 close

It will be a unique opportunity to hear from prominent Australians who through their thought provoking presentations will inform and challenge you.

Read more: <http://www.acsso.org.au/natconf10/>

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## ACSSO EMAIL NEWSLETTERS

- Australian Education Digest : <http://www.acsso.org.au/australian-education-digest/> (weekly)
- International News Roundup : <http://www.acsso.org.au/roundup/> (monthly)
- Values Education : <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Languages Education : <http://www.languageseducation.com/news.htm> (monthly)
- Ensemble - Music Education : <http://www.ensemble.org.au/news.htm> (monthly)
- Family School Partners : <http://www.familyschool.org.au/news/> (monthly)
- Public Education Voice : <http://www.acsso.org.au/public-education-voice> (quarterly)

Do you know of an event or resource that schools should know about? Email us at [letters@acsso.org.au](mailto:letters@acsso.org.au). Details of products, services, events, resources or points of view are provided for information only; publication does not imply endorsement or recommendation. No warranty is provided nor liability accepted by ACSSO, its members or employees.

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