

A message from
ACSSO President
Sharron Healy



Keep engaging families, no matter what.

'New normal' excludes families

It's hard to believe that we are at the end of Term 1 already. This year has continued with a degree of disruption with lockdowns and border closures happening sporadically as coronavirus continues to circulate within our communities. School communities continue to follow advice of the jurisdictional health advice and we urge families to stay safe.

What is concerning to us is that this 'new normal' frequently excludes parents from participating in many aspects of school life. It is imperative that schools don't accept the absence of parents in school life, but rather find alternate ways to engage their families.

What is **even more concerning** is that while many restrictions are being lifted or easing, it has been reported to ACSSO that some schools have found it “easier” to continue restricting access to schools by families.

While some schools may believe it's more efficient to remove all but students and staff from school life, all the research says that in the long term this will have a detrimental effect on student outcomes.

In the end, family engagement helps the whole school. If you're looking for other ways to keep families involved in your school during movement restrictions, get in touch on contact@acsso.org.au

Wellbeing and resilience

The key findings of [our survey](#) last year identified the importance of family engagement and the connection for students and families with the school environment was imperative not only for student academic progression but mental health and wellbeing.

With wellbeing of students, families and school staff on the front of our minds we invite you to join us on our first webinar on May 17. Clinical psychologist, Andrew Fuller will join us for an evening with his tips on Creating Resilient Families – scroll down to find further information and [register your attendance](#).

Consent education

Since our February newsletter, awareness of sexual assault, harassment and coercion has been heightened across the education sector.

As adults it is always especially shocking to us to view the darkest sides of adolescent life and many of us are wondering: as parents and educators where are we failing and what can we do?

So-called 'consent education' is most certainly a start. While the concept of consent forms an element of many personal development programs around Australia, we support the recent government announcements to explicitly teach consent in the classroom.

Given the sheer number of harrowing stories shared by young people recently, our current level of consent education must not be enough. Everyone needs to understand and teach the concept - and that means families at home as well as teachers in schools.

Meeting with the new Australian Education Minister

Along with the ACSSO CEO and project officer, I met with the new Education Minister, Alan Tudge MP, on 11 March. Our discussions highlighted the importance of schools engaging with families in support of both the academic and wellbeing outcomes for young people.

We will continue our dialogue with the Minister and his staff as we navigate our way into the different ways of operating coming out of what we hope is the worst of the pandemic.

Planning ahead for our team

Recently, we held a planning weekend in Sydney with some directors joining us online (picture below) as we also begin to “work differently”. The weekend was extremely productive and keep an eye on our social media and further newsletters to see how you can assist in projecting the parent voice in support of public education.

While we will introduce her properly next month, I would like to quickly welcome Natasha Coster to our Board. Natasha has a wealth of experience to support our work, both as a director and as a parentschools in NSW.

And finally, may I take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support of our schools so far this year and hope you have a safe, healthy break. I look forward to working with you in support of our young people in our nation’s public schools.

Sharron Healy

Chair

Australian Council of State School Organisations

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