

Australian Council of State School Organisations Limited

One voice for every child in public education



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Vale Susan Ryan AO – a pioneer activist

The Board and Staff of the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) were deeply saddened to hear the news today of the passing of Susan Ryan AO.

“This is such a great loss to our nation; Susan was a pioneer in many fields – with her beginnings as the first full time Executive Officer of ACSSO in 1973” said Andrew Bidwell, ACSSO President

“Ms Ryan was an amazing supporter of parent advocacy, when addressing our 70th Anniversary Dinner in 2017, she spoke of the many stories in the fight for a fair, accessible Public Education system and the parents’ right to advocate and engage in the education of their child”

Susan was indeed a leader, and from her leadership role in ACSSO she went on to pave a career in politics and public life – moving on to be Labor’s first female Senator, Minister for Education and Youth in the Hawke years. As Education Minister, Susan saw school retention rates double and universities and TAFEs grow significantly.

She was the first Minister for the Status of Women, in this role initiated extensive anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation, including the landmark Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and the Affirmative Action Act 1986.

As Australia’s first Age Discrimination Commissioner she was highly effective in drawing attention to the extent of discrimination against older people. She commissioned ground-breaking research into ageism and disability discrimination and conducted the first national enquiry into workplace discrimination against older Australians and Australians with disability.

“From her beginnings in ACSSO, Susan Ryan AO, became a pioneer for those most marginalised – a true champion. Her passing is a huge loss, we send our deepest condolences to those she has left behind and thank her for her amazing contribution to our nation” Mr Bidwell concluded

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