

A message from ACSSO Chair Sharron Healy



Delta strain ramps up impact on our school communities

Well, we had hoped to be seeing the light at the end of the tunnel by now, in terms of Covid-19 disrupting our lives. Sadly, that is not the case as the Delta outbreak continues to increase in severity in NSW. The spread to extremely vulnerable indigenous communities in more remote parts of NSW is gravely concerning and highlights once again the health inequities in our country.

As I write, Victoria and the ACT are continuing their lockdowns while the NT and South Australia have cautiously emerged from 'short, sharp' periods of restrictions.

Queensland is lifting some restrictions today but remains on high alert for the Delta virus invading again from the south. This follows the Sunshine State's recent containment of a significant Delta outbreak which - worryingly - spread via several Brisbane school populations. Thousands of families were identified for strict stay-at-home quarantine orders based on the schools their children attended, earning them the Queensland nickname of 'Lockdown Legends' for their role in containing the spread. That state's experience is particularly relevant for all of us who are close to schools and school-aged children.

It's not easy, we know

We send our appreciation to all those families supporting our children and young people to learn from home – we know it's not easy! This is especially so if you are also trying to carry out your work duties, or worse, have lost employment due to Covid. Thanks, also, to the staff in our government schools who are having to pivot back and forth between face-to-face and remote teaching and support.

If you or your young people are struggling at all with your mental health and wellbeing right now, which I believe we all are to varying degrees in lockdown, then please contact your school or region to find out what services and supports you and your family can access. Many of our education departments and governments in the states and

territories have poured a lot of funding into setting up these support services and resources, so please reach out and use them.

ACSSO actions

ACSSO's Board met remotely last week, and made the tough decision to postpone our 2021 conference until early-to-mid 2022, when we can hopefully meet in person on the Gold Coast. However, our AGM and Member Roundtable will continue in a virtual format on Sunday 31st October, 2021. More information soon on how to register.

Our CEO, Dianne Giblin, and I recently appeared remotely before the Select Committee on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, to expand on our submission. We appeared this week before the House Standing Committee to discuss our submission to the Adult Literacy inquiry.

Last week we held an in-depth discussion with the Initial Teacher Education Review Panel. We appreciate these opportunities for us to amplify families' views on a range of education matters, and it is pleasing that both our submissions and appearances have been actively sought and valued.

We also met with Simon Puckett, Minister Tudge's Senior Advisor – Schools where we discussed the results of our family surveys, initial teacher education reforms, student disengagement, and trauma informed teaching.

Catch up on the cyber safety webinar

If you missed our Term 3 webinar last week, then you need to watch the [recording](#) on our website. Bec Nguyen from Telethon Kids Institute walked us through the *Beacon: Cyber Safety App*, a free app for parents and carers of children aged 0-18 years. It is primarily an online safety and awareness app, and has many wonderful features, including age-appropriate conversation prompts, tailored content in the family section, family agreements on usage, and how to report inappropriate activity to authorities. I highly recommend taking a good look and downloading it.

Take care

Please continue to take care of yourself, your family and those in your community, and remember, especially right now, to be kind to yourself and others. Wear a mask if you can, and get vaccinated when you can, as these are the best defences we have against this pandemic. We will get there; hopefully sooner rather than later.

Cheers,

Sharron Healy

Chair

Australian Council of State School Organisations

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