



MEDIA RELEASE

What we can learn from families in this time of crisis

The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) conducted a National Survey of families to examine the challenges and successes of the "learning from home" schooling over these past weeks. Over 3,300 families responded from a very diverse range and make up living in many areas of the country.

The responses covered families with children in government and non-government schools and some who had children in both.

For ACSSO, this was a study to identify family circumstances, what worked, what challenges they faced and their input on safety and improvements.

The responses were rich in narrative and are still to be unpacked, with the most prominent detail contributed by families of children in different stages at school, those with pre-schoolers and those where parents were also working from home.

"We're still analysing, but comments from the 'learning from home' families suggest that increased school engagement and more consistency with the learning programs would improve their wellbeing emotionally as well as educationally." Said Andrew Bidwell, President ACSSO

The survey responses reflected the many calls our office also received from families. "Families feel alone, confused, and afraid their children will fall behind." Dianne Giblin, Chief Executive Officer, ACSSO added

"It was clear from the respondents that generally schools don't know enough about the number and quality of family computing devices. That's particularly true in primary schools where nearly half of the families have borrowed, bought, or did without the technology for isolation learning." continued Mr Bidwell

"And even in secondary schools, which in many schools have a BYOD policy, more consideration was needed as to whether every child's device would work with the software the school's chose to use. Having a device is not the same as saying it is good enough to cope in isolation for all learning needs."

"One of the more positive things we noted is just like adults are finding unexpected benefits in working from home, some families reported discovering other positive outcomes while 'learning from home'" said Ms Giblin.

“We’re grateful for what schools have done in a short period of time, but there are some big lessons to be addressed if ‘learning from home’ continues and in the post-COVID-19 world for individual children who can’t attend school for lengthy periods due to illness or family situations. We will be seeking to work with educators and decision makers to see how a solid family engagement strategy could help schools respond better and faster in crises like this pandemic.” Mr Bidwell concluded

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