

A message from ACSSO President Sharron Healy



Welcome back!

It's been an interesting start to the school year for our students, with all of Australia starting back with face-to-face learning at the beginning of Term One. For most, this was an exciting time after a much-interrupted 2020.

Unfortunately, by the time of writing our Victorian families were once again experiencing a few more days of Learning From Home. This may become our 'new normal' for a while, until we can get the Covid-19 vaccine protecting the Australian community.

For some students and families, the start of the school year brings other all too familiar issues. These barriers to education accessibility include lack of adequate computing devices, which we saw highlighted and exacerbated by the pandemic last year. Fortunately for Victorian students, they were permitted to retain the devices loaned to them last year. They may have been in a better position to begin Learning From Home this week than they were in 2020.

New year's stories

We would like to hear from you about any great experiences, or challenges, your students have had in the return to school this year. Do you have access to all you need for your child's educational journey? Are there physical, material, or other barriers in the way? What are the good news stories we can share via our Caught You Being Great campaign? Contact us by [email](#).

New Minister for Education, Skills & Training

ACSSO welcomes the newly appointed Minister for Education, Skills & Training, Alan Tudge MP. Prime Minister Scott Morrison in appointing Minister Tudge, stated the Minister has a *clear brief of improving education outcomes and, in particular, helping younger Australians navigate challenges in a rapidly changing world.*

We look forward to meeting with the Minister to help him achieve that goal. Our media release can be [read here](#) on our website.

Funding Inequities

ACSSO has long advocated for equity funding from governments for our public-school students. The current funding system is a long way from the sector-blind,

needs-based funding model championed following the release of the original Gonski Report.

This extract from recent [report by Save Our Schools](#) shows just how biased the current model has become, particularly with non-government sectors lobbying for special deals.

The current school funding arrangements are heavily biased against public schools. Private schools will be over-funded by \$6 billion to 2029 while public schools will be under-funded by nearly \$60 billion. The over-funding of private schools will occur because they will be funded at over 100% of their Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) until at least 2029. The sources of the over-funding are:

- \$2.4 billion from funding at over the Commonwealth target of 80% of the SRS;*
- \$2.5 billion from funding at over the States target of 20% of the SRS;*
- \$1.2 billion through the Commonwealth's Choice and Accountability slush fund (from 2020).*

We believe that in order to achieve the above brief given to Minister Tudge by the Prime Minister, funding must flow first and foremost to those schools and students with the most need. Every student is entitled to access to a high quality, fully resourced education.

Currently, too many of our students don't have access to even the basic requirements needed to achieve a robust 21st century education. It is only with world class support that our students will achieve their best, and that support starts with a genuine financial investment in their lives and education by the Government.

We are also calling on our state and territory governments to prioritise our public schools and fully fund the 80% of the SRS. If you are to believe the rhetoric that states are solely responsible for public schools why do they have no issue finding the full 20% SRS top up for the non-government sector?

[National Children's Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#)

ACSSO was recently invited to submit feedback to this strategy which looks at the way services are provided to young children in terms of their mental health and wellbeing. We very much want to help remove the stigma which sometimes still surrounds mental health.

A connected, freely available assessment and referral service is an integral part of early diagnosis and treatment. Information and targeted programs for families would assist with understanding and the ability for them to support their young person. You can find a copy of our submission [here](#)

We'd love to hear of your experiences navigating the mental health landscape – what worked, what didn't, and what would have made a significant difference for your family. Contact us by [email](#).

Australian Education Resource Organisation

The Australian Education Resource Organisation is a newly established national body which ACSSO had suggested in its [submission to the Review to achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools \(November 2017\)](#) and helped through the consultations to determine its direction and remit.

We were a part of over 100 consultations held with education departments, other peak organisations, researchers, think tanks, educators, teachers and leaders from early childhood services and schools across the country. Our conversations shaped the understanding of the work the education community would like AERO to do and the ways in which it should be achieved.

Join us

The ACSSO Board currently has a position open for an [additional director](#).

If you have a passion for public education and love what we do, why not think about joining our board? Contact us for more information on what the position involves.

Thank you

It has been a very busy start to the year for us, with little chance for relaxation and recharging over the summer break. I'd like to thank our CEO and staff for the incredible way they've jumped back into the world of ACSSO to ensure our voice – your voice – is represented in the national education arena.

Sharron Healy
Chair
Australian Council of State School Organisations

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