

What does it take to get national support for families learning from home?

Hello friends,

As we head towards the end of Term 3 and holidays for some, the impacts of COVID are still being felt across our nation. We are mindful of our Victorian communities, and other respective school community lockdowns that have resulted in even more learning from home.

Our learning continuity has never been tested as it has been this year, and not all of our jurisdictions are able to address it. A national assistance program is limited given the current relationships between the federal and state/territory education systems.

At what point is an issue great enough that a national approach to continue learning from home is desirable? At what point can we be assured that we have other national contingencies beyond, “get back to the classroom”. Sure, education is a state and territory responsibility. Sure, the Commonwealth's hands are tied constitutionally. But surely, too, the commonality between Australians is strong enough to find national options to help.

Violence in schools

Within this past month there have been many other national education reviews into existing standards, emerging strategies, and pathways. As your national peak body, ACSSO participates in each of these as best we can with the time and resources we have available.

These interactions have included participating in a renewed national focus on violence in the school workplace, specifically against school staff. As mentioned in earlier newsletters, the desire for a holistic approach for all aspects of violence in the school community is needed. ACSSO, however, sees that while this focus is on school staff, there are definite crossovers with the other areas and we see value in identifying and supporting our school staff in this endeavour.

A core priority of this discussion regarded community engagement, which we see as the most important area in which to address violence. It is established that an understanding, engaging and respectful community generally results in reduced violence in schools. Many leaders provided input to these workshops and echoed this call.

At present a draft strategy is being reviewed to collate the different viewpoints, and ACSSO represents the government community/family sector.

Hearing and sharing your voices

I am proud of all the submissions our organisation has responded to this past month, with significant reviews taking place within the Federal sphere.

ACSSO has significant experience on our board and more importantly, in our membership, and we are of vital importance to interactions with the federal government in representing the government school sector.

Thanks to all for your input over the course of these submissions. We hear you, and your contribution to the national voice is vital.

Transparency would close the loopholes

Funding into the Australian education system remains a hot topic for ACSSO, and many other organisations concerned with social justice. The recent news that [NSW Catholic schools](#) redirect their government funding from lower SES schools to higher SES schools is nothing new.

When organisations are given the opportunity to shift funds without transparency and accountability, why wouldn't they?

ACSSO continues to call on governments at all levels to implement ways to support funding that is fair, simple and transparent that is based on true need without special deals.

While we understand this inequality experienced by families, this is nothing new for us, and ACSSO continually strives to address the federal funding inequalities at the sector level. Until there is greater public outcry, there will be limited implications for this deeply established business institution, let alone the federal funding concerns continually raised by ACSSO over many decades.

Evidence for fair funding

[Education at a Glance 2020](#) has OECD indicators supporting Australia's ongoing funding into educational investments when compared to other OECD nations. Reports into Australia's performance are compared to OECD nations and used to drive discussions. We call on our governments at all levels to equally consider this report.

These education indicators confirm that public investment into Australia's public education system is below the OECD average, yet we have the third highest level of private expenditure on education, more than 2.6 times the OECD average.

Isn't this imbalance worthy of a rethink?

And finally...

The [Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#) has some new members in the Partnerships and Engagement team, and we say farewell and particularly thank Nina Downes for her time as Director of Partnerships and Engagement. We look forward to continuing our strong, long-term relationship with both our new and continuing DESE colleagues.

Andrew Bidwell

Chair

Australian Council of State School Organisations

September 2020