

A message from our Acting Chair Andrew Bidwill



Welcome and thanks

As I begin my journey as chair of a more than 70 year old institution, I'd like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of my home region, the [Ngunnawal](#) people. I acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life and land of my region. I also acknowledge and thank [Kevan Goodworth](#), ACSSO's outgoing Chair. Kevan is a public school advocacy stalwart and it is an honour to continue in his footsteps.

Introductions

I'm a dad, living in our nation's capital, with three kids across primary and high school. I'm not a school teacher, nor a principal, or a politician, I'm a parent and I want our students to have the best education and experiences possible, so they can be ready for life and contribute to our community.

I've been involved in P&Cs for the past eight years; helping, where I can, to achieve better and more equitable educational outcomes. We all have a commitment to demand a continually improving educational environment for Australia's students.

John F. Kennedy said, *Children are the world's most valuable resource and its best hope for the future*. A potentially overused quote, but one that we at ACSSO strongly believe in, as we hold our Federal Government to account.

From strength to strength

ACSSO continues to strengthen and build our national and international partnerships with parent, student, teacher, principal and other institutions – so we look forward to

opportunities for improving public education throughout Australia for our families and communities.

As public school advocates, we are a strong force with common goals to not only better our educational standards, but bring greater equity. I look forward to our conversations and I appreciate our solidarity as we strive for the best our public education can be.

Roundtable and AGM

At our 2019 Roundtable and AGM, representatives of the national education agenda presented a material that was confronting, enlightening and informative. Attendees were given the opportunity to input their advice to policy writers, decision-makers, peak body leaders, and other stakeholders.

I thank all our speakers, attendees, and our fabulous staff, for arranging the event. You can read our CEO's report below, and I encourage our readers to contact your respective [ACSSO State or Territory representative](#) for more details.

And of course, with our AGM complete our [Annual Report 2019](#) is now available.

Bushfires and climate action

Sadly, these past weeks our attention has again been on our bushfires, and (at time of writing) more than 600 schools were closed in anticipation of catastrophic and extreme fire conditions. A clear reminder of how our environment can change so quickly, and that our climate is a harsh one.

While it's important that we let our children be children, hearing that your local school has closed because of fires is a stark reminder that sometimes a day off school isn't the be all and end all.

So, in these trying times it's important to ask what can we do and what can our students do to make our schools and our world a better place?

Supporting our students to take a day off to make their voices heard, to attend climate strikes, participate in the public discourse, and develop their own *student agency* is a valuable and educational way to spend a day participating in our world.

We encourage our students to have an active voice as valuable members of our community.

Finally, as we head into the final exams time of the year, I wish all students and their families the very best over these coming weeks.

Andrew Bidwell

Acting Chair

Australian Council of State School Organisations

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