

A message from ACSSO Chair Sharron Healy



What have we learned?

We recently held our AGM and National Roundtable, where we began to consolidate our education 'wish list' and our strategy for engagement with political parties as we head towards a Federal election. Not surprisingly, equity was at the top of the list.

Compounded disadvantage

The past two years have highlighted even more the differences in educational opportunities for students across the nation. These differences are not simply between the government and non-government school sectors, but between schools within our own sector. This is particularly so for families whose children attend schools in low SES areas.

Critically, equity disadvantage is even higher amongst our indigenous students. It is time for our Federal Parliament to liaise with stakeholders in the education arena, and seriously address the educational requirements of **all** Australian children, starting with the families facing compounded disadvantage.

Fragile mental health

Also high on our list of priorities is ensuring that the mental wellbeing of our students, families, teachers, and staff is looked after as we emerge from recent extended periods of learning from home, particularly on the east coast.

There will be some big adjustments for everyone, but notably so for those children heading into their Foundation year and Year 1, or Years 7 and 8 in 2022. These children and young people have missed out on many of the inductions that would normally ease their transition to primary or secondary school. Their time in a new type of classroom has also been severely reduced, and with COVID still affecting our everyday lives, they may quite rightly be nervous about learning in a school setting.

This is why our planning for the coming year will also focus on getting that transition back into the classroom, and the playground, right.

Interestingly, in our recent survey of the jurisdictions most affected by 2021 lockdowns and Delta outbreaks, very few families (less than 9%) were opposed to compulsory vaccinations or students wearing face masks. A large number of families, however, wanted to know that school staff were vaccinated and that there was adequate ventilation in classrooms.

Read more about our latest survey below.

Planning ahead

Our recent AGM was the perfect time to reflect upon the work of the ACSSO Board, our CEO, and our staff. Like every other organisation, 2021 has thrown numerous challenges at us and I'm proud to say that we have met them all head on.

Increased requests for our input from varied organisations only confirm what I've long known – the quality of work from our Directors, CEO and staff is absolutely first rate, and I thank them all for the amazing input, guidance and governance they provide. ACSSO is only a small team, but such an incredible one - constantly producing extremely professional insights and internationally recognised resources. Thank you to each member of our team.

And finally, I was humbled to be [re-elected as President](#) at the AGM, and I look forward to where the coming year will take us (hopefully to meet in person at some stage!) and how we can continue to be the voice of families across the nation who entrust their children to our great government school system.

Sharron Healy

Chair

Australian Council of State School Organisations

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