

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF STATE SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS (ACSSO)  
2016 AGM and ROUNDTABLE 4-5 November 2016, Mantra on Charles, Launceston.**

ACSSO Board:

President Philip Spratt, CEO Dianne Giblin,  
Directors; Tooba Awais, (NT) Peter Kearney (Tas), Sharron Healy (Vic)  
Kevan Goodworth (Qld) Melissa Hankinson (ACT)

Delegates:

NT COGSO -President, Tabby Fudge and Executive Officer, Michelle Parker.  
School Councils QLD - President Gayle Walters  
ACT public school Parents and Citizens Associations - President John Haydon  
Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales, Terry Timms ?  
TASSO Lisa Gillard – Member Delegate.  
(Peter Kearney, Lisa Gillard and Jared Dickason attended the AGM).

Guests: Past ACSSO President Peter Garrigan

Phillip welcomed guests, delegates and board members and gave a brief overview of the last 12 months.

Structure of ACSSO

- The restructure of ACSSO probably took the focus area away from core business for a period.
- The interim board have put in much work meeting with Scott Prasser, representatives from the Minister's office, John Hattie, and Kate Ellis.
- Phillip's role as President is to go out and engage.
- Like any change it may take a couple of years to settle in and share an understanding of the new structure.
- The next Board of Directors will need to focus on the *norming* phase before racing into the *storming* phase.
- The new structure will ensure the focus is driven by good governance not individual agendas.

National Policy

- ACSSO must focus on national policy, think of the bigger picture, consistent messaging away from the danger of playing politics. ACSSO must be the reasonable voice government go to – ACSSO need to be the first point of contact in the public funding discussion.

Federal Funding

- The mantra of 'Fair, Simple and Transparent' funding is getting some traction with discussions aired on ABC program Q&A and a Liberal Government Minister publically questioning the amount/allocation of funding.

- Will need to be mindful of the comparison of how much each state or territory receives does not take over the discussion or taint the message. There is the potential for that to be as damaging as playing off the sectors against each other.
- Phillip compared the issue of federal funding discussion to that of a ‘wicked’ problem. Must consider the off-shoot issues attached to each suggestion.
- ACSSO need to be the voice of public education. ACSSO must be the body the Minister approaches before addressing funding.
- Need to target more than just the Minister, governments and public servants come and go. Government departments must be advising new Ministers ‘you need to speak to ACSSO – ACSSO is the place to go.
- WA were invited to attend this event at ACSSO’s expense, but were unavailable. ACSSO are keeping the dialogue open with WA and SA.
- ACSSO need to focus on structure, voice and the relationship with state and territories.
- Members need to understand ACSSO is not pushing the needs of one state over another.
- You own ACSSO, what are you willing to do support your representative body?

Welcome address via video from the Hon. Simon Birmingham.

Delegates were then invited to introduce themselves and share issues faced by their region over the past 12 months.

### **Australian Capital Territory**

- The Act only has 87 public schools (peak body has 100% membership)
- School autonomy is further along than that road than any other, using the model originally from Victoria. It can be argued that the model may not fit particularly well – there is less logic to the model when applied in the ACT. May be seen as the death of the public school system, absolving the Minister of responsibility – most people say school autonomy has gone too far.

### **Northern Territory**

- School autonomy is used as cost cutting tool. NT are the most disadvantaged jurisdiction. 90% of children have a hearing defect, English as second or third language.
- Federal funds must be tied to schooling – in the NT it was used to pork barrel.
- NT are the only territory funded on attendance. Need federal leadership from government.
- Education Act was rushed through with very little consultation. We do have a close relationship with our Minister, We need Gonski in the NT.

### **Queensland (Gayle)**

- QLD moved from an association model to company limited by guarantee. Worked very strongly to position ourselves as the go-to for public education. We have achieved that. To do so we must be accountable to our members. We advocate for our members.
- QLD has a significant Indigenous population.
- School autonomy – P&Cs QLD play very heavily in that space. We provide governance and training to our members. We support local decision making in collaboration with parents and P&C's.
- Focus on the voice of education – work collegially. We work with Catholic parent bodies and Independents.
- When formulating our strategic plan, three years ago now, we have achieved clear linkage to both sides of government and our Principals association. Our recent AGM yielded large numbers of new board members, we must work to retain corporate knowledge and sustainability. It is increasingly difficult to remain financially viable. We now employ a full-time business and communication manager solely working to seek funding opportunities.

### **New South Wales (Terry)**

- Following a fairly public restructure we are now rebuilding our organisation. Re-establishing links with stakeholders.
- Autonomous schools – there is no documented evidence of improved student outcomes therefore our Minister used funds for parent engagement / governance models.
- Resourcing is a huge issue for NSW.
- Bring Your Own Devices – there are different arrangements between schools as to who funds what, we are seeking a uniform application.
- Divide between rural and urban schools. The Aurora School is a distance education model, trying to create virtual classrooms – gifted and talented students. A quirk of that model is they cannot have P&C as members are required to meet in person. Students attend the Aurora School in addition to their standard school attendance.

### **Tasmania (Lisa)**

- State Government are implementing the extension of high schools to years 11 and 12. There is concern regarding the impact on the existing college system. A group calling themselves Education Ambassadors add an extra layer of complexity muddying the waters. ACT – also have the college system. Many parents take children out of private schools to attend college to promote self-motivation and to prepare for university. Studies show state school students do better in Uni.

### **(Cas)**

- Tasmania like the NT have also undergone a change to education legislation. (NT confirmed they were also required to comment on legislation that referred to yet to be drafted regulations. Parent bodies fought against the proposal to lower the starting age and won). The Bill is yet to

pass both houses of parliament, that legislation also seeks to lower the compulsory school starting age. Tasmania has kinder attendance rate at 98%.

- Launching into Learning is a program available in all schools for children to attend with their parents from birth to four years of age. Longitudinal studies show this is very effective with positive outcomes on academic results however, it appears the current state government may change to structure of that program going forward to be provided only in schools deemed to be of greatest need.
- In terms of Independent public schools – Tasmania has focused on parent engagement and teacher quality. TASSO have been fortunate to partner with the Professional Learning Institute to deliver a training package incorporating workshops and the development of on online learning resources to strengthen parent and community engagement and support school based decision making through the school association .

#### **Victoria (Sharon)**

- Parents Vic. Had a great relationship with the previous Education Minister and now also the new Minister. Parents Vic are absolutely consulted first. The state government is very supportive of state education implementing what amounts to virtually the Gonski model using state funds.
- Our schools have been autonomous for some twenty years, not under Independent Schools – just over time.
- In regards to school fees – schools set their own fees. An Auditor General’s review stated overwhelmingly schools were charging too much. Education costs are on the agenda. NSW school fees are voluntary.
- Phillip – Fees and levies are on the ACSSO national agenda.

#### **PRESENTATIONS:**

**Tony Zanderigo**      Group Manager, Improving Student Outcomes Group,  
Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

#### Federal Education Funding

- There are 3 divisions of funding capital payment arrangements  
Corporate Functions best contact Mary MacDonald  
Teacher Quality School Leadership best contact Renee Hutchinson  
Independent Public Schools State school autonomy, good source of information Brian Cordwell.
- When it comes to discussing funding for parent groups the Federal Government would prefer one point of contact (Currently ACSSO and Australian Parent Council APC).

The Catholic sector are disengaging from APC, the Government will not fund the Catholic sector separately. The only way ACSSO can be funded by Government post the Williams decision is that ACSSO are funding to **do** something. (Project based).

- Australian Education Act (prior to) funding was calculated using SES score. = population count multiplied by fixed amount per capita. (Government Schools) 2 SES indexes including income indicator and Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) score.
- The calculation used for Commonwealth funding is now the same for every Government School  
The amount is then paid to the state, the big question is ‘what happens next?’
- The Minister is clear that once the legislation is applied states/territories cannot siphon off extra funding. Having gone to the trouble of calculating the amount at school level it needs to be applied as such, is it distributed based on need – this will be very difficult to monitor. There are issues, the reality of the Commonwealth calculating funding ie. What the states and territories do with it. The biggest proportion of extra funding has been applied to the public sector.

Peter Kearny – One parent body is an interesting point. ‘Sector blind’ is ok as long as you’re doing alright out of it. (Since 1985) the lobbying power of the non-government schools is huge. If we go to one parent body the danger is to be swamped by competing sectors.

Tony – If you want to lobby Government understand the way funding is calculated. The amount calculated - each school is calculated exactly the same way, the issue is how the states and territories distribute it.

#### NAPLAN

- Full data set is critical to Gonski, without that data it would have been impossible to apply. The Commonwealth has done a lot to move down the road towards equitable funding. It is a forward policy agenda of the Government.
- NAPLAN Online.  
Working to build a system that into the future will allow teachers to log in and look at a student’s general capacity. Seek instructional materials to build on lacking areas of strength. Comparing the difference in results from written test to electronic will be interesting.

#### Quality Education System

- The quality of the education system is good but there are some concerning areas. PISA – 3 major results are trending down. You can see the proportion of student in each band – overtime there are considerably less students in the top band.
- If you look at countries moving up they use much more sophisticated systems aimed at teacher quality.
- The Education Council are looking at upping the quality of teacher training and relationships with schools – Teacher standards.

- Government are proposing for new Principals a qualification standard (currently nothing to measure against).
- In terms of engaging with the Minister he is very receptive to teacher training – a conversation worth feeding into to.

**Pete Goss - Grattan Institute**

*Pete presented a detailed alternative federal education funding model that would see the difference in school funding between schools and across sectors lessen in a shorter time frame than current arrangements. The finer details of the proposal are quite intricate and best reference in the actual report (attached.) ‘Circuit breaker A new compact on school funding’ This was in confidence at the time however the report is now public.*

- Rational approach to funding, one aspiration is stop talking so much about funding!
  - Needs based funding is a myth, indexation is too high, and funding is not just about how much each school has but how they use it. Need highly skilled teachers able to contribute in – a better use of talented teachers. Other countries have gaps but not as severe as ours.
  - Requires a bi-partisan approach – this report is talking about how.
  - SRS – Federal legislation resourcing standard for each school. Base amount, number of students plus 6 additional loading for students and 2 for schools.
  - Each year loadings are increased by 3.6% Pete would argue that is not enough
  - Rather than arguing that some sectors should not be funded, focus on consistent funding.
  - Commonwealth indexation is too high. Inflation is 1-1.5%, inflation is low. Financial markets say it is likely to stay that way for ten years. With projected wage price 2.5%
  - 3.6% is too high for schools at target, not enough for schools below target - they will never get there. The aim is to get 95-100% of school to target by 2023.
  - This would require permanent structural change reducing indexation in line with wages growth and zero indexation for schools above SRS. No schools to be funded more than 100%.
- 1 Strategically reduce the indexation rate to shrink the needs based funding gap.
  - 2 Provide additional catch-up funding to highly underfunded schools
  - 3 Reduce funding to highly over funded schools
  - 4 Update the SRS formula as a priority
  - 5 Establish an independent body to oversee school funding
  - 6 Senior subject specialists working within schools
  - 7 Master subject specialists working across schools

Questions and Answers

Where is this proposal at with the Feds?

- Pete Goss has been talking to Scott Prasser to ensure he understands the proposal to take to the Minister - seeking to create a space for a different conversation, keeping a neutral middle-ground.
- Each stakeholder group will gain something but may also have to give up something.
- Sector-blind approach – may find strong opposition?
  - Will only be from those who are overfunded and Pete is okay with that.
- The Catholic sector have some of the most over AND underfunded schools.
- Purely on target based funding some schools will be worse off – however all schools benefit from the proposal elements such as highly skilled expert teachers working across schools and within schools.

What will be the politics be? Reflecting a parent discussion between sectors can get very heated, will need to find a way to take the heat out of the topic. Perhaps referencing the themes of the greater good philosophy – focus on the positives.

Tony Zanderigo was present for Pete’s presentation, Tony was asked for his opinion on the proposal. He responded:

- It would be positive to get to the SRS quicker, however the lowering of indexation would have to be compared to how it would affect growth.
- Does the data use state and commonwealth funding formulas? Some of the data makes sense if looking at just commonwealth funding, will need to check on assumptions.
- The model would also require the states and territories doing the same over a ten-year period.

Peter Garrigan – Tony, what issues do you see as a worthy focus for this body?

- Teacher professional standards, create concrete structural pathways to achieve advancement. First year teacher feedback commonly includes comments like *‘I’ve been trained as an academic, I don’t know what to do in the classroom’*.
- Teachers have a lot to deal with now in the classroom- behavior management- I.T. etc. A consensus is needed. Contribute to that debate – engage teachers. Australia is in the position where we are concerned about quality.
- General capability – do teachers have the instruments they need to measure and line up with structural requirements, particularly important for students who do not go to University.
- On school autonomy (contact Brain Cordwell) the data is interesting in correlation to what state and territories are doing through Independent Schools.

End day 1

**Dr. Stanley Rabinowitz - ACARA General Manager**

- Over the last 3 weeks online NAPLAN tests occurred. (Narrative and persuasive writing) 10,000 year 6 students in 500 schools participated. Mostly successful. Used portable servers NAP sample was delivered by USB.
- 80,000 kids during 2 week window will use the intuitive platform.
- 90% of kids surveyed reported they liked taking the test.
- Acknowledge not every child is ready to do the test. Believe we have provided for a properly prepared student in year 3.
- Students write less online than on paper, able to edit and review online, use slightly fewer words which has no effect on the outcome. The more words you write the better however, more than 160 words the results go down – students are marked down.
- People are starting to push back against learning to write electronically, some feel learning to write with a pencil is cognitively better. ACARA's position is that both is best. Handwriting – lousy handwriting leads to lower scores.
- Adjustments – will be exactly or the same as it is now on paper.
- 2017 will use double marking (auto marking and human).
- The study also used tricks people commonly use to try to fool a computer. It turns out the computer is no more likely to be fooled than the human marker. The algorithms used today are not the same as many years ago, this uses artificial intelligence. If the computer 'sees' something it does not recognize or something that flags self-harm or similar, the test is flagged and sent to humans for checking and follow up.
- ACARA hired students to see if they could crack the system, the system has been load tested at ten times the expected load using multiple servers across different states. In our system, every time the child enters anything it is saved. If the system did crash work completed would be saved. Looking to prevent crashes, for example firewalls on top of firewalls.
- NAPLAN online will be easy to access on school devices using Chrome and Explorer – good for Bring Your Own Device.
- ACARA have learnt from the Census fail. The platform will handle the lockdown of browsers.
- There are practice sessions and practice tests available now. No video (video eats up bandwidth). Saving some of the innovation until 2020 – including video and adaptive testing.
- With the paper test all kids get the same test. The online test – after around 14 questions you are branched into streams based on your answers. The test adapts to students, branches overlap in content. NAPLAN online is better, faster and more precise.

- May was picked as one of the only 2 week periods all students across Australia are in school.

#### Vision of 2020:

- Children will take the test when the teacher thinks the child is ready. Any time of year, not constrained to the same time across the nation.

#### Results –

- Over the last 3 years have moved away from high achievement to high gain. Look for high gain schools to celebrate publicly
- In the future results will be available as soon as the test is complete.
- It is likely year 3 students will not take the writing test online – currently a jurisdiction decision.
- There are no plans to expand NAPLAN outside of its current focus.
- Equity – what about schools who do not have devices? The movement online should drive equity. Using 3 separate servers we have demonstrated 95% kids have access to some type of device at school or home. This does require a solution.
- Tasmania will move online in 2019.

#### **Alex Shain** – Reconciliation Australia.

- Reconciliation Australia - established 2001.  
Independent not-for-profit organisation which promotes and facilitates reconciliation by building relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Vision of reconciliation is based on five inter-related dimensions: race relations, equality and equity, unity, institutional integrity and historical acceptance. These five dimensions do not exist in isolation; they are inter-related and Australia can only achieve full reconciliation if we progress in all five dimensions, weaving them together to become a whole - only as strong as the weakest of these five points.
- 5% of young people are Aboriginal/Torres Strait islander and 3% of parents.
- National program – need to think locally

Reconciliation implies there was conciliation, from a history point there has not been conciliation. There needs to be historical acceptance – every state and territory will some element of a dark past they have still not accepted/recognized.

Can you make amends? How do you do that?

- Stolen wages for example, there would be avenues for recompense.

Mile Creek massacre site – non indigenous people have lived there for many years. That community worked with the Aboriginal community over many years. Ended up building a memorial and have a

community that accepts and acknowledges what happened. Respect has been built through acknowledgment of what had happened and working together through a difficult ongoing conversation over many many years.

You can't move on if you don't know exactly what happened.

Nurragunnawali – is a word from the language of the Ngunnawal people meaning alive, wellbeing, coming together and peace. The Ngunnawal people are Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waterways on which Reconciliation Australia's Canberra office is located.

'Nurragunnawali - Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning' is designed to support early learning services, primary and secondary schools in Australia to develop environments that foster a higher level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions.

Participating schools and early learning services will be assisted to find meaningful ways to increase respect; reduce prejudice; and strengthen relationships between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The program includes:

- Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) successful, positive action plans
- Professional learning resources (adult learning)
- Curriculum resources
- An evaluation platform
- National Awards (for over and above, launched 2017)

This program is focused on early learning, primary and secondary schools. Potential for parent involvement, need to reach out and include parent organisations/groups going forward.

Direct engagement is with teachers and educators. There is no success without buy-in.

Using National Quality Standards Area 6 (6.3.4) the program is built to help teachers meet the standard. The how to. Links to the Australian Curriculum exists cross curriculum.

Schools engage initially, it then takes a couple of years to complete the action plan. A Catholic inner Sydney school developed a plan completely driven by parents.

All resources are available to all (parents, students, community, and teachers)

Relationships, respect opportunities – modified for schools, teaching and learning curriculum.

In the classroom, around the school, the ethos within the school with the community and links beyond the school gate.

Where do you start?

- Complete the survey on the website, the answers inform suggestions for the RAP.

- A RAP is designed to be a living document.

More information <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/schools/> Email: [schools@reconciliation.org.au](mailto:schools@reconciliation.org.au)

The new platform will be ready early 2017.

Cassandra Wells, **Executive Officer.**