



Australian Council of State School Organisations Limited

One voice for every child in public education

PO Box 8221
WERRINGTON COUNTY
NSW 2747

☎ 0418 470 604

✉ contact@acssso.org.au

🌐 www.acssso.org.au

ACN: 611 783 218

PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT ADVOCACY GROUP CELEBRATES 70 YEARS

Advocacy, active partnerships and engaging in education are all part of parenting and this weekend the national public-school parent organisation is celebrating 70 years of being that national voice for families.

Established in 1947, the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO), is the peak parent organisation representing the families of over 2.5 million students in our nation public schools. The organisation has been engaged in debate and on the forefront policy development on the national education agenda.

This weekend, at a dinner held in Canberra, ACSSO will reflect on its challenges and achievements over the last seven decades. Long standing champions of public education as well as current delegates will gather in Canberra on Saturday, November 11 to celebrate.

Amongst the attendees is the dinner's guest speaker, The Hon. Susan Ryan AO, former Age and Disability Discrimination Commissioner. Susan who was the first national Executive Director of ACSSO, appointed in 1973, said

"The contribution of committed parents to the wellbeing of our public schools over 70 years has been of the greatest importance.

ACSSO is one of Australia's longest standing non-government organisations and has made a positive difference to public education over all of that time."

Susan Ryan goes on to say that when she was hired by ACSSO the chair of the selection committee was Joan Kirner, who was at the time the ACSSO President.

"One of my first big tasks was to lobby for the establishment of the Australian Schools Commission, a major reform of the Whitlam government which transformed Australian schools"
Ms Ryan continued

"We then lobbied successfully to have Joan Kirner appointed as the Commissioner who would be the voice for state school parents. Joan made a long and valuable contribution as Commissioner. She went on to become premier of Victoria"

So many others who were part of ACSSO have gone on to continue to make valuable contributions including researcher and public education activist Lyndsay Connors AO, who also was a member on the board of the Schools Commission.

Current ACSSO President, Phillip Spratt commented *'Public education is the first choice for our child's future and I thank every parent in every public school community for their tireless advocacy for their school.... it's this foundation, built over 70 years, that gives ACSSO its*

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strength – we are all truly standing on the shoulders of giants, those that have come before and those that are here now and those still to come...'

As we move into ACSSO's eighth decade and with the ongoing discussions regarding funding and 21st Century learning, ACSSO has much to be grateful for from the learnings of the past

'Looking to the future is only possible with the wisdom from those that have already given us the benefit of their time and enthusiasm for the fully inclusive culture that is public education' Mr Spratt concluded

ACSSO's 70th birthday celebrations will be held on Saturday, November 11 at The Rex Braiserrie, Rex Canberra, Northbourne Avenue, Braddon commencing at 7:30pm

For further comment:

The Hon. Susan Ryan AO: 0417 344 926 (Ms Ryan is happy to be interviewed or give an embargoed copy of her speech to the delegates)

Phillip Spratt, President: 0419986547