



Boost for family-school partnerships

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The Australian government has funded a dedicated, parent-sponsored bureau to maximise the engagement of families with their schools, across both the government and non-government school sectors. The Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau was launched in Canberra today at a gathering of parent groups from across Australia.

The two peak parent bodies – the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and the Australian Parents Council (APC) – have collaborated for several years on research and activities around parental and community engagement with schools. It has earned the Bureau a government funding commitment of \$800,000 over four years.

“We are delighted with Minister Gillard’s strong support for the Bureau,” said Jenny Branch, ACSSO President and co-chair of the Bureau’s governing committee. “It is clear recognition both of the importance of families’ engagement with schools, and the solid work of the parent peak bodies in building the foundations for the Bureau”.

The Bureau will not only consolidate and extend action research on family-school partnerships. It will establish a 24/7 online advice and support service for parents and schools who wish to collaborate more effectively; conduct annual national parent surveys about schooling and related family issue; and assist in rolling out a National Family-Schools Partnership Framework that has been agreed to by all education ministers.

Caz Bosch, President of the non-government schools’ Australian Parents Council and co-chair of the Bureau, said that the Bureau will provide practical support and well-informed advice to schools and parents about building successful and sustainable relationships.

“The research is already affirming the value of parental engagement in promoting their children’s success at school,” Ms Bosch said. “The task is to make sure that partnership best practice is widely disseminated, and that relevant support and easily understood advice is available to schools and parents. The Bureau has the capacity and the determination to make parental engagement a normal, daily and productive feature of school life.”

The Australian Government sees the Bureau as contributing to the broader COAG participation agenda, and has committed the funding in recognition that the national parent bodies can use their unique networks and experience to help drive a major partnership push for the benefit of Australian education and young people in schools.

Media contacts: **Jenny Branch (President, ACSSO) 0417 381 721**
 Caz Bosch (President, APC) 0418 891 531