

# Advocacy for public education

Chris Bonnor

This is just one area of advocacy, but one which is arguably close to home for most existing and retired principals.....in and out of public schools.

Basically Bernie Shepherd and I have dug very deep into *My School* data about schools and found that there are many myths and rusted-on beliefs which are not supported by the data. Maybe that doesn't count for much in this post-fact era – but our findings back up what we and many other principals have observed in our careers.

And it isn't pretty. Most schools are doing as well as they can but the odds keep piling up against them. Our framework of schools has become dysfunctional and stands in the way of schools making the breakthrough we all need. The best single source of our findings is [Uneven playing field – the state of Australia's schools](#), published by the Centre for Policy Development. [My website](#) provides an up-to-date summary of where we are at and more of the same.

We've mainly gone down the self-publishing pathway – online and in print – all the while making our findings available to various journalists and writers. Most have ended up as a media story somewhere, often accompanied by an opinion piece....and the occasional radio or TV foray. One thing media does is force you to be brief and blunt, something which isn't easy for us educators. At the time of writing, our most recent example is in [The Guardian](#). Other writers and commentators also pick up our work.

It has also been valuable to advocate under the auspices of a reputable organization, in our case the [Centre for Policy Development](#). An alternative would have been to attach ourselves to a university – but my brief experience turned me off that very long and often convoluted pathway. However, we have valuable academic friends, people who are essential critics, reviewers and supporters.

Apart from the odd speaking gig, this type of advocacy doesn't pay much (like, nothing) but like so many principals over the years, we do it because it matters.

## Acknowledgements and useful references

See hotlinks in the above

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Chris was Principal of Asquith Boys High (1991-2000) and Davidson High (2002-2005), as well as NSWSPC Futures Principal (2001). He was President of the NSWSPC from 2002-2006. He is now a writer and advocate, in part for the Centre for Policy Development. Chris is a NSWSPC Life Member and was awarded his AM in 2007.