



# ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

*The parent voice on public education*

## Minutes

Early Learning Committee Meeting  
Feb 17, 2022, 10.30 am and 7.30pm,  
online via zoom

**Contact:** Early Learning Officer [email](#) P&C Council [website EL](#),

**Announcements:** Council's live [online training](#) for P&Cs.

Training for Committee members (and trainee members) to effectively manage and build their P&C association.

### Committee background

Council's Early Learning Committee (ELC) was established in 2018 to continue the work of Canberra Preschool Society (1943-2018). Representing the parent voice, promoting the importance of preschool education, supporting parent engagement and public education.

### 1) Open/Apologies

*acknowledgement of country*

2) **Approval of previous minutes** - meeting Oct 14, 2021. Approved [via email](#)

### 3) ELC Budget

P&L 13/10/2021 annex

### 4) Early Learning Officer (ELO) 2021 summary

- a) **Navigating/mitigating covid.** In 2021 the ELO continued to monitor the Covid impact on preschool/kinder children and their families. Communicating EL information sources and updates to P&Cs, inviting discussion, and recording/communicating the experiences and concerns of EL families.
- b) **Preschool enrolment** (opened April 30, 2021) Annual promotion of the preschool enrolment timeline and process - this information is widely shared ie Canberra mums. Communicate enrolment resources and support, enrolment requirements, and the value of preschool education.
- c) Council's 3rd **Transition to School** Parent Forum. Held September 16, 2021, the forum had 78 registrations, was held online with 38 attendees, 3 speakers, and the 35 min [video](#) is available online.
- d) Launch the '**Early Learning Parent Rep in primary P&Cs**' program. Council encourages every primary P&C to recruit an [ELPR](#) and provides supporting [resources](#) to primary P&Cs. P-2 parents and carers are ideal representatives for early years parents in public education. Council continues to share expertise and develop resources in collaboration with ELPRs.
- e) **P&C Advocacy** for preschool: issues raised in 2021 included Covid-19, preschool hours, capacity, osh, parent engagement, and inclusion support.
- f) **Welcoming new students and families 2021-22 Children's Week funding**  
Late last year, Council applied for a Children's Week Grant to support P&C projects to welcome families with children starting preschool or kindy in 2022.

The theme 'play & connect' supported P&Cs and parent associations to welcome families through play activities, and/or provide P&C information and resources and opportunities for families to connect. [link](#)

As children adjust to school through preschool and kindy, we know from research that a sense of belonging is an important factor. Schools and P&Cs often collaborate to run information evenings, playdates, or morning tea. These informal events are often the foundations of long-term community connections.

Council will be looking for opportunities to extend the funding support and annual planning of welcome activities to mitigate the impacts of Covid restrictions and confirm the critical role of parents as first educators.

## 5) Early Learning Officer 2022

- a) **Council Staff changes.** Terry Sanders retired at the end of 2021, Veronica Elliot was recruited to Executive Officer, and David Pollard filled the Policy Officer role.
- b) **Engaging new and returning families.** Challenges continue this year for families partnering with schools during the pandemic (omicron). Parents feel locked out of school grounds and miss the interaction with school and other families. They notice the inconsistencies and changes in restrictions across the community.
- c) **Preschool enrolment information.** Planning is underway for internal and external communication to promote and support online preschool enrolment.
- d) **Transition to school parent forum.** Scheduled for September '22. Currently surveying previous attendees regarding 2022 transition experiences. P&C ELPreps are invited to speak at the next forum.
- e) Welcoming the new **Early Learning Parent Representatives.** Contacting and supporting new ELPreps on primary P&Cs and PPAs. Provide calendar, resources, and links for members and EL parents/carers.

## 6) Feedback from members

### a) Parents connecting with school

Parents with young children are missing the close connection with school that comes from spending time with their children on-site. **Comments from a parent** - with a child starting kindy and one in year 3 - how impersonal it's been sending a young child off to school during the pandemic. Restricted school visits, not knowing the teacher (wearing PPE gear), handing over my child at the gate, and not seeing the inside of classrooms. I visited preschool repeatedly with my first child so I know what new parents are missing out on, that close experience with their child's early education. ie No storytime in the library, no P&C activities - traditionally conducted with parents. P&Cs must find an entirely new way to talk to this group. Even the lead-up-to-School activities previously done for younger children remain cancelled. They've missed out on the playgroups, story times, music classes, swimming lessons and others.

### b) **Three ELPRs** talked about what their P&C did with the Children's Week funding they received to welcome new parents and families:

1. Purchased playdough pots as a welcome gift for each child starting preschool, and printed P&C flyers with information about the P&C, and invited parents to join our virtual community on Facebook. Our Facebooks pages are a space where families can connect and access relevant

information. I have shared the reference information from Council on early childhood resources, transitions to preschool/school, active play etc. The gifts were very warmly received.

**2.** Discussed parent networking benefits and networks. Created a welcome parent flyer to accompany small gift bags for preschool and kindy children. Was pleasantly surprised by enthusiastic email response from parents.

**3.** Used the funding for a combined family picnic and annual general meeting in the garden in December. They provided children’s entertainment during the AGM (with a covid-safe and wet-weather plan). Over one hundred adults and children attended, with a third of the families enrolled to start at the school in 2022.

Next meeting: May 5, 2022

Meeting closed 11.35am



**ACTION LIST  
EARLY LEARNING SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING**

**17 February 2022**

<b>Minute</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	
	<b>Distribution</b> Minutes Summary to members (Presidents and EL Parent Reps) EDU, ECA and other stakeholders.	MS	Feb 28
5b	<b>Contact</b> EDU M.Foley re engagement feedback E.Lea re PTPA meeting information	MS	Feb 28
5c	Preschool <b>enrolment</b> for 2023 April 2022 enrolment Promotion plan and timeline for internal and external media strategy.	MS	Mar 7
5d	Transition to school attendee <b>survey</b> – timeline/finalise Qs Starting school experiences for EL families in 2022.	MS	Mar 7
5d	2022 Transition to school <b>parent forum</b> . September ? Initial planning brief. Requests to ELPRs to outline their experience of the role. Interview question prompts	MS	Mar 23
5e	Email new EL Parent Reps – welcome/thank, provide information re Council, EL key dates, invitation to engage.	MS	Mar 7
6	Key advocacy areas for EL members	MS	Mar 7
	Review nomination form prior to next meeting	MS	May 5