



## War on school waste

*Following last year's ABC TV series 'War On Waste' there is renewed community focus on waste reduction. Council Communications Officer, Janelle Kennard, looks at what resources are available to help schools reduce their waste and ways that P&Cs can help.*

Reducing waste is an important – and urgent – part of planning for a sustainable future. Schools have an important role to play, not just in teaching sustainability, but in showing what is possible and creating less garbage. But schools are also complex places – the meeting place of many households and the grounds on which many different activities occur.

The good news is that schools *can* reduce their waste (many ACT schools have already made great progress), that help is available, and that parents and P&Cs can play an important role.

### Help for sustainable schools

We're lucky to have the ACT Government's free Actsmart Schools program which helps schools improve their sustainability. All ACT schools have signed up to this program – a national first!

Actsmart supports schools to increase recycling, save energy, conserve water, protect biodiversity, cut greenhouse gas emissions and integrate sustainability into the curriculum. Schools are evaluated through an accreditation system and rewarded for their efforts with certificates and teaching resources (like books, games and kits).

### Reducing waste

Up to 86% of school waste in the ACT can be

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*Schools — and P&Cs — can lead the way in getting waste under control.*

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# From the President



Kirsty McGovern-Hooley

## Welcome to 2019!

Welcome to all our returning and new P&C members, preschool, playschool and kindy parents.

For our returning members, it's always challenging to get our kids back to school and then prepare for your AGM. Finalising audits, preparing reports and running the business of your association is often challenging. Remember that Council has many [resources](#) to help you, so visit our website for a look.

When you form your new committee, please remember to appoint a Council delegate. The delegate will attend our general meetings to represent your P&C in our discussions. Last year we sought advice from our P&C delegates on a range of matters including bus transport changes, school capacity planning, future of education strategy development, traffic and parking, violence in schools, the development of Council's reconciliation action plan, A-E school reporting, and disability education. Our first general meeting will be on February 26 (see details on back page). Please join us.

I also encourage our P&Cs, playschools and preschool parent committees to appoint a representative for our newly formed Early Learning sub-committee and invite parents from all schools who are interested in early learning matters. This sub-committee has a busy agenda this year, with the ACT Minister for Education announcing the roll-out of three-year-old preschool in 2020 (see more on page 9).

One of the big challenges that committees face at their AGM is engaging new volunteers. If this is the case for you, remember the number one rule – **don't be afraid to ask.**

Communicate via letter, email, social media, posters and school app and ask specifically for what you need – office-bearers, subcommittee members, specific tasks or jobs. Engage your principal to assist and ask parents. Their support

for parents to step into committee roles can be the encouragement needed for them to show up.

Ask the broader community too. Grandparents, neighbourhood watch and local community groups may provide a broader mix of volunteers so you can bring the 'C' – citizens – back into your organisation and expand your horizons.

Most importantly, remind everyone *why* we volunteer. What is your purpose and what do you want to achieve with your efforts? What school services do you run for the community? What infrastructure or resources are you creating? What programs are you supporting? Read more about setting goals on page 6.

Remember to thank your community for their support in whatever way they can contribute. All our time is very valuable and when we are not paid for our effort, we must ensure that this effort delivers value to the school community.

Evidence shows that parents volunteering at school leads to better outcomes for your children, especially social and emotional wellbeing and academic results. When our kids see their families contribute to the school community, it's a powerful recognition and support for them, that the time they spend learning at school is worthwhile and important.

I started volunteering on my P&C because I had been at home with my kids on a career break for a few years and, frankly, needed to get out and talk to adult humans. I was unsure about going back to work and decided volunteering would be something I could manage. The first meeting I attended, I had not met anyone and was quite nervous. Six years later I am back working professionally part time and volunteering as a P&C President and Council President. Through my volunteering with P&Cs I have worked with very interesting people, made long lasting friendships, and built my skills and confidence in negotiation, governance and business. Good luck with forming your 2019 committees and look forward to seeing you at our Council meeting and events this year. ●

# War on school waste

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recycled or reused instead of going to landfill. That's a big figure.

Actsmart have education officers who can visit your school and provide advice on recycling systems, and a Waste and Recycling Best Practice Guide that provides step-by-step instructions and recommendations to help schools reduce, reuse and recycle their waste and develop a waste and recycling action plan.

Unfortunately, it is up to each individual school to purchase and label bins (Actsmart can provide the bin stickers) and to negotiate their waste-management contract (bin collections).

## Awarding sustainable schools

Actsmart Schools celebrated its first ever awards in November last year. The awards celebrate excellence in the Actsmart Schools focus areas - waste and recycling; efficient use of energy; addressing water use and quality; improvements to school grounds and biodiversity; and the inclusion of sustainability within the curriculum.

The awards aim to recognise exemplary sustainability innovations and projects as well as significant individual contributions made by students, teachers or school staff.

We're proud to say that public schools were highly recognised at the awards!

### **Innovation Award – Fadden Primary.**

As part of introducing a new recycling system the Green Team created a 'friendship club' where students came together to collect rubbish. They also held a Green Market Day, an event without straws or balloons.

### **School of the Year – Garran Primary.**

This 5 Star School continues to excel in each of the five focus areas; waste, water, energy, biodiversity/school grounds, and curriculum. Students drive initiatives through their Eco-Rangers. The whole community is involved.

## Looking in the bin

An important first step is understanding what is currently being thrown into landfill bins at the school. The Actsmart team can also help schools with a waste audit to examine current school waste and see what most needs to be addressed.

Recent figures from audits in seven ACT schools show that there is a lot of room for improvement.

In primary schools, 16% of waste is recyclable paper and cardboard, 48% compostable organics, 22% other recyclable materials, and only 14% actual garbage. In secondary schools, 27% of waste is paper and cardboard, 29% compostable organics, 29% other recyclables, and only 15% garbage.

## The right bin

Reducing waste often starts with making sure recyclables are collected and sent to recycling, rather than being thrown in a bin destined for landfill. Actsmart have posters, bin stickers and an interactive display to show what goes in which bin and can give presentations to classes to help make sure items get to the right bin.

"In primary schools, once the kids know the waste system, they are pretty good at following it. This means that waste ends up in the right place and reduces contamination. It also means the amount of waste to landfill starts to reduce," Olivia Merrick, the Manager of Actsmart Schools explained.



# War on school waste

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## Dealing with food waste

According to Olivia, one big area for schools to address is their food waste.

“Organics are a huge part of a school’s waste – nearly half at primary schools,” she said. “Composting is one option, but is labour intensive. Chickens are also a fun option. Worm farms are an excellent option. You can purchase them from the hardware store or you can get assistance with setting up and managing your worm farm from waste companies.”

In some schools, addressing their food waste and sorting recyclables properly has meant that they have been able to reduce the size of their land-fill skip bin, meaning a cost saving!

## Nude food

“During a waste audit, when kids look at what is in the bins, they can see that a lot of it comes from home, from their own lunch boxes. It can give a real impetus to waste-avoidance programs like a waste-free lunch, the October nude-food month or a waste-free Wednesday at the school.”

Parents sometimes question the value of waste-free lunches, especially if it just means taking some foods out of their packaging at home and

placing it in lunch boxes ‘nude’, but Olivia says there is still great value in this.

“The kids don’t see the packaging. For them unpackaged food becomes normal and that is an important change.”

Actsmart also have resources to help with packing waste-free lunchboxes. All ACT schools are Actsmart schools and have access to their free resources. If you are not sure how your school is involved, contact Actsmart to see where your school is up to in their accreditation process.

## How P&Cs can help

Experience shows that addressing school sustainability really takes a team approach. The more people on board the better and that means that parents – and the P&C – have an important role to play. It can be as simple as being interested and supportive.

You could invite an Actsmart officer or your school’s contact teacher to a P&C meeting to hear more about the school’s waste-reduction efforts. Then, practical ways the P&C can assist might be obvious, like providing a prize for the class with the least lunch waste, buying bins or a worm farm, or rostering volunteers for the composting.

## Canteens

In schools where the P&C runs the canteen, there is a lot of opportunity for the canteen to help reduce waste, for example by:

- Adding food scraps to the school’s compost or worm farm, or starting one for the canteen.
- Rethinking packaging. Could compostable or recyclable containers replace current ones? Is unnecessary packaging used on some items?
- Phasing out plastic straws.
- Replacing throw-away cutlery or containers with re-usable items (eg spoons and mugs) which kids return to the canteen for washing.

For more information, and how to contact the Actsmart Schools team, see the Actsmart website: [www.actsmart.act.gov.au](http://www.actsmart.act.gov.au) •



**Waste-free lunches — unpackaged food can become the norm.**

# Low-waste events

**Running a big school event—a fete or fair? Want to reduce the waste? We’ve compiled some things for your event-organising committee to consider.**

P&Cs often run large events for the school or extended community where waste reduction can be considered and large improvements made. It can even become a selling point for your event. How far you take it is up to you, but it is best if everyone is on board about an agreed approach.

The ACT Government’s Actsmart team can help out with their free Public Event program.

## *Cut down on paper*

Go digital for everything! Forget a paper program to hand out to visitors, there’s an App for that! Share your program/venue map digitally before the event or place large (A3 or bigger) versions around your event for easy reference.

## *Label your bins*

Make sure there are recycling and food waste bins as well as garbage bins, or it will all end up in landfill. Actsmart Public Events team can lend you toppers for bins in the standard colours and signage to help make sure that things end up in the right place. Their free advice can save you money, like using existing school bins. Event organisers have found that having all the bins together in ‘stations’ is best and that contamination is reduced by rostering bin monitors to stand by with a smile and pointer.

## *Encourage re-usable items*

There are many approaches to encouraging re-usable, rather than single use, items. For example, you could totally ban single-use plastic bags or bottled water. Make sure to advertise that no bottled water or plastic bags will be available so people know to bring their own. You could even do the same for coffee cups! If visitors forget, you could sell school-branded cloth bags, water bottles and keep-cups. Selling metal straws is another option, while making the event plastic-straw free. If the carrot approach is more your style, how about a raffle ticket or discount for those who bring reusable cups and bottles?

## *Re-think food and drink containers*

As an organising committee, agree on what you



***Fun and hard work on the wash-up station at The Good Day Out, a sustainability fair in Perth.***

*Photo credit: K.A DeKlerk Photography*

are aiming for and look into options for your food and drink containers. You could aim to use only recyclable food packaging, or only biodegradable items. You could even decide to use only ‘proper’ crockery (which can be hired) and wash it up!

People running large events without using throw-away food containers report that out-door wash up stations are not only a pleasant, chatty, community place to be, but that visitors seeing what you are doing helps get more people on board. (Remember that the final rinse needs to be about 72C - a hot water urn can help - and dishes should be air dried).

Also consider providing things like sugar, sauces and condiments in large containers, rather than offering single-serve, packaged portions.

## *Get stall holders to sign up!*

Outside providers of stalls or food can be encouraged to get on board too. You could even make it a condition of coming to your event. Being clear from the outset, about what containers and so on are acceptable, will help.

We know that volunteers can be hard to find at times and reducing waste sounds like just another thing to plan, but it might just engage some different parents and appeal to a new audience – all while showing students the importance of looking after our environment. ●

# Setting your goals: fun and fundraising

**A little thought and planning now, some shared goals and fresh ideas, and your P&C will be on track for a great year!**

There's nothing like a good plan. Everyone knows what to expect and people can get started early. When you rely on time-strapped volunteers, that is crucial. Even more important is a clear idea of why you are doing what you do!

## **Shared goals**

P&Cs work best when there are clear, shared goals – a well understood sense of what you are there for and what you are trying to achieve. It's important your committee talks about this and that the P&C aligns with the aims of the school and the majority of parents. A survey to find out what is most important to parents can be useful.

## **What are we here for?**

If your P&C is floundering, it can help to ask what you want from it. Is it mainly a social, educational, advisory or fundraising body?

If you decide that social interactions are your main focus, you could start up Friday morning coffee sessions or community events such as 'stay and play' picnics after school.

If you think your P&C is more an educational body, you could run forums for parents on topics such as cybersafety, drug and alcohol awareness or just understanding their teens!

Your P&C might consider itself primarily an advisory body, acting as a sounding board for the principal and providing parent feedback on school operations, in which case you could minimise formal committee processes at some meetings and encourage parents to come to discuss important topics.

For other P&Cs providing services to the community – such as the canteen or uniform shop – will be a major focus.

Fundraising may not be your major role.

Sometimes, within a committee, people have different underlying ideas about what the main focus should be and this can lead to conflict, so it is a good idea to discuss it openly, either in a general sense, or event by event. If you can *hear* the differences of opinion then it is easier to accommodate them or agree to a compromise.

It might be that the focus of selling mangoes is to raise funds for a much needed or appreciated purchase for the school, but perhaps the disco is mostly about having a fun night for the kids and families and it doesn't need to do any more than break even. Being clear about the goal will guide what the event looks like and help you direct your resources and time. For example, if your disco focuses on fun rather than funds, you might add a lip-sync competition or a game of musical statues and provide a sought-after prize.

## **Rallying support**

The community is much more likely to support your events and efforts if you can articulate a clear aim. If the focus is on fundraising, be very clear about what you are fundraising for.

Businesses are more likely to donate prizes, and parents are more likely to promote a fundraiser and encourage others to purchase or participate if there is a clear need or benefit.

Try to involve the whole parent community in decisions about what to fund – would the Kindy parents appreciate new readers? Is there a need for more shade on the playground? It's best to work in with the School Board's plans and it's nice to ask the school's Student Representative Council what they think the school needs.

## **Shared calendar**

Once you know what you are doing and why, the next question is when. A well thought-through calendar of P&C events and fundraisers is a must-have item. Make sure you coordinate with the school to avoid times that are busy for staff and

so that school and P&C events and fundraisers don't hit families all at once. Space things out so that your volunteers don't burn out.

### Keeping it fresh

Most schools have their go-to events and fundraisers but it is also important to mix it up, so we have pulled together some of our favourites from the many and varied activities we hear about from our fabulously inventive member P&Cs – read on!

Parents are suckers for their kids' creative works, and some P&Cs have used this to great effect. At one school, a lunch-time knitting club stepped kids through the process of making fabulous beanies. At the end of the term, an auction was held and the creations sold to the highest bidder. There was a lot of interest, the kids felt great about what they had made, and the bids got high!

Parents do get sick of fundraisers asking them to buy discretionary items, but often there is much more interest if the products for sale are ones they would purchase anyway. We have seen schools run fundraisers selling toilet paper, keep cups, trolley tokens and even Christmas trees.

If it is not money you need, but feedback, try an 'ideas raffle' – people drop their thoughts into a box and at the end one is pulled out for a prize (meanwhile you get all the ideas and feedback)!

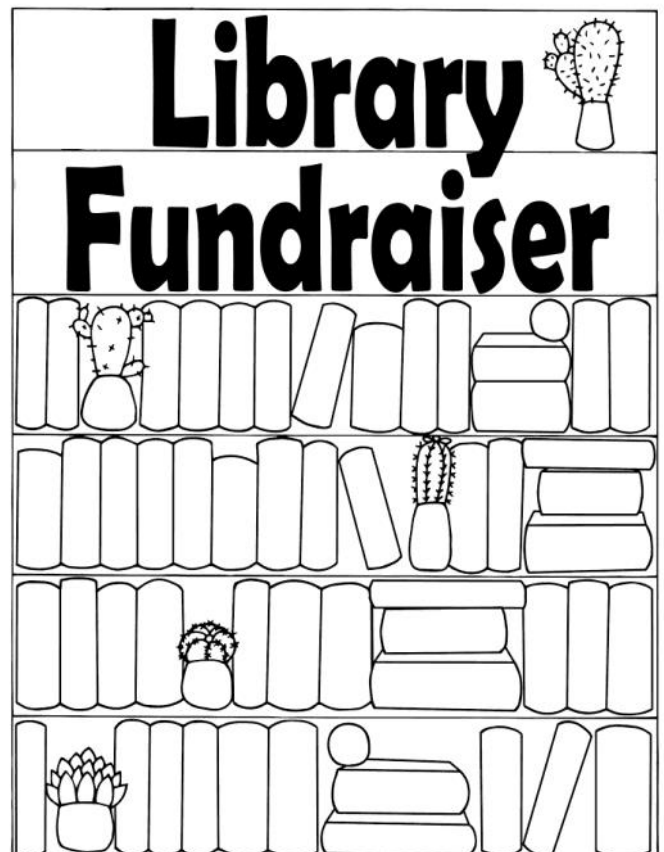
Competitions can be a great addition to a fair or other school event. They add interest and attract people who might not otherwise have come and can become fundraisers with a bit of promotion and an entry fee. You could try a lego building competition (lego sets make obvious prizes) or cupcake decorating contest. A photography or a drawing competition makes a great addition to an art show. One P&C held a cake-box decorating competition at their fair. They provided the cake boxes for the kids to decorate, but entry was contingent upon the box containing something to sell on the cake stall! Clever stuff!

### Feed back on progress

Once you know what your aim is, make sure to

feed back to the community on how it went or how you are progressing. If having fun was the aim of your event – publish happy pictures in the following school newsletter. If you're purchasing items for the school, be sure to share photographs of the kids using them so that people can see that their efforts were worthwhile. If your goal is a bigger one, the 'fundraising thermometer' is a well-loved tool and a helpful way to keep everybody motivated towards the common goal. Instead of saying 'we have another \$5000 to raise before we can refurbish the canteen', a picture not only speaks a thousand words, but helps with motivation!

While the traditional thermometer is great, with a little imagination you can take this concept and make it a lot more fun! If you are raising money for tree planting, draw a bare tree on a poster and add leaves to show your progress. When the tree is full, you have reached your goal! If it is library books you are after, you could draw bookshelves and colour-in or add book as you approach your goal. The options are limitless and you can always get the kids to help! •



# FUN-RAISING GIFTS

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# Universal preschool for 3-year-olds

Did you know the Government is planning to offer free preschool for three-year-olds? Marina Spurgin, Council's Early Childhood Officer, would like to know what you think.

Last year the ACT Government announced it would provide 15 hours a week free preschool for three-year-olds. Backed by significant evidence in the field, the initiative aims to increase equity and affordability, enhance the workforce, improve transitions, and maximise benefits.

Council understands that phase one of the plan will be rolled out in the ACT in 2020 regardless of Commonwealth funding and that the initiative will not include for-profit organisations.

Council has been consulting with parents, preschools and stakeholders and has some questions regarding the program's objectives and approach. We want to ensure the additional year of preschool will really address educational equity in the most cost-effective way. We wonder:

- How many four-year-olds are missing out on preschool in the existing program? Of these how many are from educationally

disadvantaged backgrounds?

- Do most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and ELAD (English as an additional language or dialect) students currently utilise early entry for preschool (additional six months prior to the preschool year)?
- How can Council work with the Directorate to ensure all educationally disadvantaged four-year-olds access preschool?
- Will preschools be supported with changes to cater for the additional needs of 3-year-olds and are children expected to be toilet trained?

Given the concerns of parents and service providers, we are hoping the Directorate will consider providing a parent seminar to outline how the 2020 roll-out will proceed.

We'd like to know what you think! Let us know via email ([contact@actparents.org.au](mailto:contact@actparents.org.au)) or attend a Council meeting to add to the discussion. •

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## Australia Day honour for P&C volunteer

We'd like to congratulate Vivienne Pearce – long-serving, tireless and passionate volunteer for P&Cs and Council – on receiving a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) on Australia Day.

The Order of Australia recognises outstanding contributions that benefit our community, and ultimately our country.

Several other Canberrans were also celebrated for their contributions to public education: former Principal Narelle Hargreaves for service to children, young people and education; Glenys Patulny for services to the Tuggeranong community; Kaye Price for services to education particularly through Indigenous teaching initiatives; Mandy Curtis from Lyons Early Childhood School was recognised for her charity work; and, Glynis Steward from Evatt Primary was acknowledged for her leadership in teaching.

Vivienne, who has been a Council Executive member since 2008, was recognised for her service to education. Her contributions have been extensive in representing the needs and views of public school parents in many varied committees and working groups, advocating for refugee families and students with disability, and highlighting the importance of sustainable and safe schools.



“Thanks to all the parents and educators who have worked with me to make a difference to our children’s education,” Viv said. “The award is an acknowledgment of our team effort.” •

# At our P&C...

**Liz Moyle from Maribyrnong Primary P&C shares how one fun event got people together, strengthened the school's sustainability focus and raised funds, all while revitalising parents' wardrobes!**

Australians send an average of 23kg of textiles waste per person to landfill each year. For a school of around 500 students – like Maribyrnong Primary – that means students are likely to discard over 11,000kg of clothes – the weight of two elephants – each year. That's a lot of trunks!

“So much of what we get rid of could still be used by someone else,” said P&C volunteer and parent at Maribyrnong, Liz Moyle. “I look after the pre-loved uniform shop at the school and that helps re-use the kids clothes.”

Out of that involvement grew a bigger idea – a ‘Swap Not Shop’ evening - to help parents at the school recycle their fashion clothing too.

“The school has a big theme of sustainability. We

were keen to work with that.”

“We set up multiple collection points several times before or after school and advertised these well,” Liz explained. “Parents donated clothing and accessories in good condition that they no longer wanted or wore. In exchange, they received buttons – one per item of clothing – which they could then use to purchase ‘new’ clothing on our ethical fashion night.”

Liz and the team of volunteers then sorted the donated clothing, hats and bags, made it look great on borrowed display racks and planned an evening for the community to attend and do their shopping.

“The event was lots of fun,” said Liz. “We collected a \$10 donation to the school at the door. Then we had a presentation on styling, suiting different body shapes, and wardrobe planning from a stylist in the school community who donated her time. Some parents even volunteered to be models!”

Then it was time for people to shop, using their ‘buttons’ or paying \$3 per item.

“Afterwards there was tea and coffee and nibbles, while people mingled and talked and looked at some stalls from parents who were selling home-made items like cards or jewelry. In exchange for a stall spot, people running the stalls donated some of their wares which we used as lucky door prizes.”

So, was it a success?

“People who came raved about the evening. It was fun and social,” Liz reports happily. “We raised about \$300 for the school but it was more about building connections with our community and following the school's sustainability theme and values. And it has been fun since then to see people enjoying wearing your pre-loved clothes!”



Photo by Michelle Henderson on Unsplash

# About us

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations  
is the peak body for  
Parent Associations  
in ACT public schools.

We represent over 60,000 parents and carers  
in 89 schools.

## About our magazine

*ParentACTion* is a free journal published four times a year. It is available online, plus hardcopies are provided to all ACT public school P&Cs and school boards, the ACT Legislative Assembly, senior ACT Education Directorate staff, public education organisations, the media and interstate parent associations.

*Contributions, advertising and feedback are always being sought. Contributions can be emailed directly to the Editor, Janelle Kennard, at [jkennard@actparents.org.au](mailto:jkennard@actparents.org.au).*

*Views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations.*

## Our Executive

President:	Kirsty McGovern-Hooley
Vice President:	Andrew Bidwell
Secretary:	Cecilia Shlegel
Treasurer:	Crystal Cox
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### Office hours

9.30am - 2.30pm Monday to Friday.  
Closed public holidays and school holidays.



“We got a great response because it was new and we managed to create a bit of a buzz about it. A talented parent created eye-catching ads and invitations for it.”

“Having the collection points very visible was also important. They became social spots and created interest. The kids also asked why we were collecting, what we were doing, so it meant that we could have great conversations about sustainability with them too.”

“I would encourage all P&Cs to consider whether their community could benefit from a Swap Not Shop event. It was really worthwhile for us and lots of fun!” Liz said.

It looks like it could give rise to more events in the future.

“This year we focused on women’s fashion. We are wondering about looking at kids’ in the future, maybe focusing on items like coats that are expensive and not usually worn out.”

Sounds like it is worth trying on! ●

# Dates to remember

**26 Feb Council General Meeting**  
7.00pm - 9.30pm  
Centre for Teaching and Learning  
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

**26 March Council General Meeting**  
7.00pm - 9.30pm  
Centre for Teaching and Learning  
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

**April 13-28 Office closed for term break**

**2 May Effective P&C Workshop**  
6.30pm - 9.00pm  
Centre for Teaching and Learning  
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

**May 7 Treasurers & Insurance Workshop**  
7.00pm - 9.30pm  
Centre for Teaching and Learning  
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

**May 21 Effective P&C Workshop (repeat)**  
6.30pm - 9.00pm  
Centre for Teaching and Learning  
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

**May 23 P&C Constitution Workshop**  
7.00pm - 9.30pm  
Centre for Teaching and Learning  
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

**May 28 Council General Meeting**  
7.00pm - 9.30pm  
Centre for Teaching and Learning  
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

## Training for P&Cs

**Our workshops will help you master your P&C role and get your parent association running well.**

Each year we run training for P&C office bearers which is greatly appreciated by those who come along. We've outlined this year's offerings below. Refreshments are provided. To book your place go to [www.surveymonkey.com/r/PCTraining](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PCTraining).

### Effective P&C workshop

*Thursday 2 May or Tuesday 21 May (see above)*

Covering everything from running good meetings, recruiting volunteers and employing staff, this workshop will help you improve how your P&C runs. It is perfect for new P&C members and continuing officers alike. There are four modules, each focusing on a different aspect. You can attend for individual modules if you wish. For details, see the [Training](#) section of our website.

### Treasurers' and Insurance workshop

*Tuesday 7 May (see above for details)*

Experienced treasurers and Council's bookkeeper will provide information and answer your questions about P&C finances, handling money, record keeping, annual reporting, audits, tax status, reporting by sub-committees, and staff employment including the new one-touch payroll system.

“ Great Session!  
So much to take away  
and implement. ”

– 2018 workshop participant

We will also cover the insurance available through Council and how to complete the paperwork. All treasurers should attend.

### P&C Constitution workshop

*Thursday 23 May (see above for details)*

Is your P&C's constitution out of date? This hands-on workshop will help you review, rewrite or amend your constitution.

We will look at the Model Rules, the Associations Incorporations Act, Council's sample P&C constitution and how to pass an amended constitution at your P&C. We will examine the specific content and wording required and also consider By Laws. Participants can bring their own association's constitution to work on. Presidents and secretaries should attend but all members are welcome. ●