



ACT Council of
Parents & Citizens
Associations

The parent voice in public education

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS

HOT TOPICS/GENERAL MEETING OF 24 October 2017

Attended by: J Haydon- Lyneham HS, K McGovern Hooley– Farrer PS
C Cox– Gowrie PS, B Sanders– Belconnen HS, C Shlegel– Bonython PS,
P Boulanger– Narrabundah College, J Trustum –Neville Bonner,
K O’Keefe– Neville Bonner, K Wood– Charnwood Dunlop,
G Burke– Black Mountain, D Ellwood– Ainslie PS, R Logue– Wanniasa PS, C Aubrey– Duffy PS,
L Hughes Brown– Maribyrnong PS, V Pearce- LGC, T Sanders- Executive Officer

Presentation “From Sophie’s World to Short and Curly - Inquiring into the really hard problems for children” – Dr Richard Lucas

He proposed that the ACT conduct a trial of a program to teach year 5 and 6 children to think constructively about their problems and explore their thoughts & concerns about the hard and important decisions they will face. He described a number of organisations and programs involving ethics and philosophy designed for children which could be used in the trial. These included the “Short & Curly” local podcast for children which encourages them to talk about the things that concern them and develops critical/ethical thinking. He noted that some similar programs were successfully conducted in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. It was also noted that in NSW the teaching of primary ethics was provided as an alternative to the religious education classes in public schools. Richard would like the Council’s support for a proposal to the Education Directorate for the trial of a program in ACT public schools and will write to the Council with full details of his proposal. It was suggested that, should the trial go ahead, it include a pre-event parent workshop on the program before it is conducted in the trial schools.

Proposal to review the school P&C association business model

Changes in society over the last 50 years have seen greater demands placed on school parents, resulting in the gradual decline in numbers of volunteers being recruited for organisations such as the local school P&C association. The structure of the P&C as a registered association has served us well over that period but the pressure on parents to keep struggling associations operational has led some members and the EDU director general to question if the current business model of the P&C is still relevant and sustainable for the future. This review approved by the Council Executive will be in two parts and include a parent forum plus a survey of P&Cs. In discussion it was noted that:

Many P&Cs appeared not to appreciate their role in the school community properly.

A variety of models for P&Cs may be needed to suit different levels of parent participation.

Fund raising is more important to some, while others see input to broader issues as important.

Many P&Cs operate successfully under the current model & would not welcome disruptive changes.

Some parents want to be involved in a different way than what they see being offered by the P&C.

Maybe what is needed is better promotion of the P&Cs and what they can achieve in many roles.

The greatest challenge is communication with time poor parents, the principals & school community.

The support and co-operation of the school principal is critical no matter what model is used.

More use should be made of citizen members to help manage the P&C.

In discussion of the alternate models in the paper, it was agreed that there were elements of a number of the models that may be incorporated into the existing model to improve it. It was also noted that a number of the alternate models were already operating in some schools and that we may finish with a structure that accommodates a number of different models.

Delegates were asked to discuss the paper within their P&Cs and provide any feedback to the Office on the alternate models or other models that may be considered. We will also be consulting with EDU, the Principals Association and the AEU and bring all this feedback to the parent forum that we will hold early/mid next year.

Results of the P&C Council Future of Education Forum 7 Sep 17

The results of our Forum on 7 Sep are still being collated by the Office and will be circulated later. They will be included in our submission to the Minister and EDU on the Future of Education in the ACT. However, it was advised that our results seemed to closely follow those already identified by the EDU project team. These were shown in the symposium report attached to the agenda. It was also noted that an update briefing on the EDU results was to occur on 27 Oct and their documents showed some additional themes such as school capacity and planning, inclusivity with all students receiving the education that they need, safety of students and teachers. A report on the next briefing will be circulated to all P&Cs, along with our own forum results.

Council's submission to the ACT budget process

Council's budget submission has been sent to the ACT Treasurer. It includes all the key items discussed at Council meetings over the last year such as:

Funding for more teacher librarians and specialist teachers.

Employment of ten (10) additional school psychologists next year (up from five).

Employment of social workers in schools.

Teachers' compulsory professional development on inclusivity eg Leading Learning 4 All program.

Purchase and use of new demountable class rooms in schools that are at capacity.

Funding for new schools in developing suburbs/regions

Fencing for those schools that want it.

Funding for the volunteer recruitment project.

P&C issues -

Narrabundah College – appreciated the Council's advice about the asbestos issue. They had now met with the principal and Rodney Bray from EDU and were satisfied with the plans to manage the problem and keep the college operating using 21 new demountable classrooms. It was noted that a similar problem existed at Campbell Primary School and they were to receive 5 new demountable class rooms.

Ainslie Primary School – has a number of maintenance and building improvement projects that the P&C and school were trying to fund. Advice on who to talk to at EDU was requested and they were advised to contact Rodney Bray.

Consider nominating for P&C Council Executive member

All P&C delegates and Officers are requested to consider nominating for the Council's Executive. We need at least 6 new Ordinary Members. The attached information sheets explains what the commitment is for Ordinary Members. Existing members are happy to talk to anyone interested.

Next Meeting

General Meeting following the AGM on 28 November 17 at Stirling, with guest speaker on Menslink and its programs for young male students from 15 years upwards.