



ACT Council of
Parents & Citizens
Associations

The parent voice on public education

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS

HOT TOPICS/GENERAL MEETING OF 27 June 2017

Attended by 20 delegates from 20 schools

Presentation on Mindfulness in Schools – Jennifer Sexton

ABC journalist and broadcaster Jennifer Sexton is a Certificate 4 Trainer specialising in Meditation, a Partner of Lifeline ACT and previously a paediatric critical care nurse. She discussed the mental health crisis effecting many young Australians including our youngest school students and the research she conducted into finding solutions to help them e.g. Mindfulness. She has developed a simple program consisting of a daily short run, 5 to 10 minutes of meditation followed by a reporting and journaling exercise. The program makes use of a free video on meditation from “Smiling Mind” see <https://smilingmind.com.au/> which was developed by psychologists and educators to help bring mindfulness into peoples’ lives. The video makes it unnecessary for teachers to have specific training in the meditation process. Jennifer’s program was trialled at Giralang Primary School with a difficult Year 3 class and according to the class teacher it had an immediate positive result for all the children. An ABC news item on this trial was viewed which showed students participating in the activities and meditation. The teacher and principal were interviewed and praised the program, which saw a 95% improvement in the class conduct and performance over the 6 month trial. Students interviewed said that after the 20 minute activity they felt calmer, safer and more confident. It was so successful that it has now been extended to all primary school and preschool classes at Giralang. The program is now being used in three ACT primary schools and one high school. Students have reported that they are even continuing with the meditation while at home. However, the introduction of the program to schools is dependent on the principal, and P&Cs were encouraged to discuss its use in their schools with their principals. Jennifer is happy to talk to any P&C/school about the program, just contact the P&C Council for details.

P&C Council meeting with the EDU senior executive team on 1 June 17

It was noted that the most senior members of the Education Directorate attend these meetings, demonstrating the importance of the opportunity the meetings offer us. EDU encouraged us to include our concerns about principal/P&C relations into the Future of Education consultation. It was suggested that we ask EDU to include a question about school P&Cs in the annual school parent surveys. EDU also saw the benefit of having an independent arbitrator of appeals against complaint results and will continue to work with us on these issues.

The Big Issues in Public Education for the Council

The five big issues as presented in the meeting papers were agreed. It was also agreed to add “and the school board” to the last point on P&C/principal relations. It was also noted that we may be able to use the principals’ network meetings to brief them on our P&C relations issues and if possible separate school traffic as an item on its own. It was advised that these big issues would form the basis of our input to the Future of Education consultation. The consultation process and timetable were discussed and P&Cs advised to speak with their school principals and provide specific input to their school’s contribution to the consultations. However, the Council would hold a Future of Education Forum at 7pm on Thursday 7 Sep at Stirling, for all P&Cs to attend and provide input to the Council’s submission.

School Board Manual review

The current school board manual is being replaced with a more user friendly and shorter series of information sheets for board members. Council has provided input to these. It was recognised that parents appointed to the school board had specific responsibility to act in the interest of the board. However, where possible there should be communication with the P&C association through the parent board members or the principal. It was also acknowledged that the legislation takes precedence over any conflict with the manual.

P&C issues -

Lyneham HS – a very active P&C. The principal gives a presentation before each P&C meeting.

Narrabundah College – retention of cleaners under the new cleaning contract. The Council has been advised that the tender calls for tenders to show how they will retain the current cleaning employees.

Chapman PS – traffic and parking issues remain. Transport Canberra visiting the school on 30 Jun.

Neville Bonner – canteen opening more days so they need to employ staff and would appreciate talking to P&C's who employ staff. *Council office to advise contacts.*

Charnwood Dunlop – loss of school psychologist is a concern. *Council to advise.*

Torrens PS – staff changes midterm causing concern, with some classes not having the same teacher for a whole year. Failure to communicate teacher and principal changes to parents, students and other teachers upsetting everyone. *Council to refer concerns to EDU again.*

Kingsford Smith School – traffic issues continue.

Garran PS – traffic and parking issues paramount.

IPECS – shortage of volunteers, school master plan being discussed with P&C for their support, trying to recruit preschool parents and using the Entertainment book as a fundraiser.

Harrison – traffic and parking issues still, P&C becoming more focussed.

LGC – P&C struggling and reliant on night learning classes for fundraising.

Reports on meetings

Disability Education Reference Group 25 May meeting report considered.

Suspension, Exclusion & Transfer of Students in ACT Public Schools Policy Review 5 Jun Report considered.

Next Meeting

General Meeting 25 July at Stirling, with guest speaker on Pathways Planning & transition to work, including a program for years 5 to 12.