

## NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS HOT TOPICS/ISSUES MEETING OF 24 March 2015

(Attended by 19 delegates)



ACT Council of  
Parents & Citizens  
Associations

*The parent voice in public education*

### ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS BUILDING & MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS

ETD Director of Infrastructure and Building, Rodney Bray provided the following information:

- His budget is in 4 parts, major projects (which must be bid for each year as a separate ACT budget allocation, capital works upgrades (\$14 million), repairs & maintenance (\$14 million) and sustainability/environment works.
- Of the \$14 million, schools are allocated shares of \$6.5 million for minor repairs/maintenance works which they manage (for jobs less than \$5000 each). Support funding may also be available on a case by case basis.
- The remaining maintenance funds are spent approx. one third on compliance & preventative maintenance, One third on urgent repair work and one third on planned maintenance.
- Schools send in requests which are prioritised based on safety as top measure.
- The older schools upgrade program no longer exists. Approx \$500K is spent each year on disabled access.
- Security fences have been installed at about 67 schools with 8 more to be done. About 10 schools have opted not to have security fences and they will have to fund any ongoing vandalism etc from their school budgets.
- Fences are credited with reducing vandalism from \$700K per year to \$240K per year.
- Car park expansions, roof replacements, toilet upgrades & staff facilities improvements covered gradually.
- \$1 million is being spent on environmental work eg solar panels, water conservation, installing more energy efficient lights, smart meters and appliances in schools. These reduce school operating costs and schools can retain the savings generated by these innovations and school behaviors. Learning programs for students have been built around these developments.
- ETD employs an interior designer to work on each school (at no cost to the school budget) to co-ordinate school presentation though co-ordinated furniture, fittings, painting etc.
- School internal electronic security systems and services are capturing a high number of intruders.
- Hearing loops are being installed in school halls.
- Frontage upgrades to a number of schools has raised their public appearance and image.
- ETD will respond to individual school needs but all requested works must directly or indirectly result in improved student outcomes.
- Questions from Hughes PS, Farrer PS, Garran PS, Telopea School, Gungahlin College, FECS and Hawker PS followed on the above. In response to a question it was explained that the ACT Planning Directorate followed a formula of 8 car parks per 100 students for each school. It was recognized that this was insufficient for school attendance by parents. Also it was acknowledged that it was physically not possible to expand car parking at some older schools where there was just no space available.

### SCHOOL SPORTS ISSUES

Problems with a lack of communication within the Belconnen school sports network were reported, with soft ball trials mentioned as a specific case. It was advised that the lack of a school sport co-ordinator for the Belconnen area was the main cause of this problem. The matter is to be referred to the Council's representative on the ACT School Sports Council for action.

## **SCHOOL CANTEENS**

In response to a question, it was advised that the Council could provide a sample canteen manager's contract and that the Healthy Kids Assoc NSW Jo Garner could provide an impartial business operations review of school canteens. These reviews were possible because of the membership of HKANSW that the Council funded in the last two years. Those P&C canteens that had already had HKA reviews done for them were very satisfied with the results.

P&Cs were advised not to sign the canteen service deed that they may have been presented with by their school, as the Council was negotiating changes that would make the deed fairer for P&Cs.

P&Cs with school canteens were encouraged to nominate a member to the P&C Council School Canteens Subcommittee, which was addressing all the above issues.

## **"PUTTING THE 'C' INTO P&C"**

Few if any P&Cs seem to have "citizen" members who are not related to school children eg grandparents or carers. It was recognised that local school community members with an interest in the school or education could apply to join the P&C by simply writing or emailing the P&C with a request to join. The P&C Committee needed to approve such requests and keep a list of such members in addition to the school parents list held by their school.

## **WHAT RELATIONSHIP DOES YOUR P&C HAVE WITH THE SCHOOL BOARD?**

Most P&Cs seem to have a good relationship with their school board, although contact with them may be very minimal. Parent representatives on the school board are required to report to the P&C and parents on the activities of the school board. The school principal may in some cases do such reporting to the P&C but it is formally the parent representative's responsibility. Often P&C meetings are held after the school board meetings, thus making it easier for members of both.

## **INVOLVING PARENTS**

The P&C Council's information sheets book provides advice and ideas on how P&Cs may raise interest and participation by parents in P&C activities. One successful method used by Gungahlin College is to hold a parent forum on a topic of great interest to parents (and students) and use this opportunity to promote other P&C activities and committee needs.

## **WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES A "POSITIVE" SCHOOL HAVE ON THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

All agreed that a positive school had a good influence on the local community and vice versa. P&Cs should strive for this and developing a positive attitude within the community. This could bring benefits to the school and the P&C by greater interaction with the community, support from local businesses, improved school security and student opportunities.

## **ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations**

Phone (02) 6241 5759 Fax (02) 6241 8839 Website [www.actparents.org.au](http://www.actparents.org.au)