

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS
HOT TOPICS/ISSUES MEETING OF 24 September 2013
(Attended by 18 delegates)



ACT Council of
Parents & Citizens
Associations

The parent voice on public education

P&Cs ATTENDANCE AT ACSSO NATIONAL EDUCATION CONFERENCE 17-18 Oct 13

P&Cs were encouraged to send at least 1 member to the conference and make use of the \$100 subsidy from the P&C Council. The role and activities of ACSSO were described – see the attached. We pay approx. \$8,000 pa affiliation fee to ACSSO, so we should maximise the benefits from their activities. Additionally, the Conference themes and papers are all on topics of interest to our P&Cs.

EMERGING COMMUNITIES EDUCATION FORUM & TEACHER, PRINCIPAL, SCHOOL AWARDS 19 Nov 13

P&Cs are encouraged to nominate teachers for these awards which recognize teachers who make a difference in educating and assisting migrant/refugee children. Details and forms are available at:
<https://www.companionhouse.org.au/index.php/8-news/36-recognition-of-excellence-awards-for-teachers>

CONSULTATIVE FORUM ON REVISED ETD POLICY ON GIFTED STUDENTS – Date to be advised

Anyone interested in attending this, contact the Council office for details when they are available.

SCHOOL CANTEENS PROGRESS

Following the recent press about the ACT Minister's announcement of funding for the canteen improvement program, we expect to receive this week the Deed of Grant for the \$200,000 funding. On receipt of the funds we will complete contract negotiations with the preferred supplier and commence the implementation plan. Expressions of interest from P&Cs will be issued on Wednesday 25 Sep for P&Cs to sign up for the online ordering system. Approval for access to the NSWBuy system has been received. A meeting of the Canteen Working Group will be held in the near future for all participating P&Cs and training of canteen staff will be commenced as soon as possible.

ETD GUIDELINES ON BACKGROUND CHECKS FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Council's draft reply to the ETD guidelines was considered and additional points noted:

The guidelines do not satisfactorily define the scope fully or adequately.

The examples used in defining "contact" are questionable and should probably be removed.

It should be stated that the background checks do not include overseas records checks.

How do these guidelines compare with other states experiences and guidelines?

Parents are still unclear on their need to apply for the checks and ETD should consider holding a consultation workshop with parents to ensure the guidelines are clear and unambiguous.

CELEBRATING THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

It was agreed that we should organize a week in the second term of 2014, to "Celebrate the School Community". This would involve all P&Cs and schools holding an event or events within that week and the P&C Council conducting a central keynote event. Council would promote and advertise the week to the community throughout the ACT, with schools/P&Cs promoting it in their areas. We would target the whole community not just school parents eg business, sporting groups, government etc. A plan is to be developed by the Council office and circulated ASAP for P&Cs to consider.

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL BOARD, PRINCIPAL AND P&C

There are three (3) information sheets on this topic in the P&C Council Information Sheets book, of which all P&Cs should have hard copies. It is also available on the P&C Council website. Situations were discussed where there was no feedback to the P&C from the parent representative on the school board. It was agreed that the parent representative should have as part of their school board duty, the

requirement to report to the P&C. Where this does not happen, the Principal should report back to the P&C. Where communication with the Principal breaks down and every attempt to fix the problem has failed, then the P&C may refer the matter to the Council who can consult with ETD to find a solution. Parents may also submit formal complaints to ETD via the ETD website complaints process. This should always be the last resort.

It was agreed that a protocol was needed to handle situations where there was a total breakdown in communication and co-operation between the Principal, the P&C and or the school board.

INTRODUCING NEW TEACHING METHODS IN ACT SCHOOLS

ETD has invited the Council to a meeting at CTL Stirling to discuss this topic and how programs such as QLA are introduced to schools. Interested parents are invited to attend and should register their interest by contacting the Council Office. The date and time will be advised as soon as known but will probably be in the first or second week after the school term break.

IT IN SCHOOLS

There are ongoing claims that IT logon times in schools persist, in spite of the new School Net system being introduced. Given the long time that IT problems have been reported and seem to continue, we plan to take the matter to a higher level in the ETD and if necessary to the Minister. With some schools reporting the ETD directive to discard computers over 4 years old, we will also include IT renewal in schools in our ACT budget submission. We need to gather specific evidence and examples to take to ETD, so P&Cs are asked to obtain such info as screen shots, timings for logon etc and email to the Council office. We may also use the ACT Opposition to raise questions on this matter in the Legislative Assembly.

Some schools are looking at leasing computers to students who will own them at the end of the lease period.

We need to see an IT plan for all schools, which identifies what is needed annually, what is provided by ETD, what is needed from parents etc. – follow up with ETD

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