



ACT Council of
Parents & Citizens
Associations

The parent voice on public education

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS HOT TOPICS/ISSUES MEETING OF 25 March 2014 (Attended by 23 delegates)

CYBERBULLYING ONLINE SURVEY

Delegates were encouraged to ask their P&C parents to complete the cyberbullying on line survey if their children had any experience of such bullying. The survey is at: <http://www.acsso.org.au/youth-exposure-to-and-management-of-cyberbullying-incidents/>

GIFTED & TALENTED STUDENTS FACT SHEETS AND FAQs

Delegates were asked to review the plain language fact sheet and the Frequently Asked Questions sheet and advise any comments to Viv Pearce by close of the meeting, or to our Policy Officer by 1200 Wednesday 26 Mar, as our response to them was due to ETD on Friday 28 Mar. **ACTION: Delegates**

SCHOOL TRANSPORT – CHANGES TO SCHOOL BUSES

P&Cs should read the report from John Haydon on the recent School Transport Liaison Committee meeting, which advised that changes to school buses for a number of schools would be occurring shortly. Any concerns should be directed to the Council office for follow up by John.

SUN SMART POLICY IN SCHOOLS

There appears to be no ETD school wide policy on this matter. Primary school delegates confirmed that a “no hat no play” policy was enforced in their schools ie no hat no playing in the sun. However, following Cancer Council advice, this policy did not apply in the winter months. The application of sun screen to children could not be done by teachers, so parents needed to apply their own sun screen to their children prior to them entering the school. Parents should be aware of the choking danger of hat cords and should ensure they have collapsible cords or bucket hats. The provision of sun shaded /sheltered areas for students in schools was important and should be encouraged by P&Cs. The greatest problem existed in high schools and colleges where students were not inclined to follow the same policy that applied in primary school. The use of school uniform in new high school and colleges, may help but the best solution for these schools seems to be the provision of shade and sheltered areas. Cancer education of students could also be useful.

PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

The Minister has announced funding for a research project to develop tools etc to improve parental engagement in schools. Communication with parents is considered one of the biggest problems in getting their involvement. Suggested strategies include:

- Parent (& student workshop) on how to use their Ipads to engage in the school and student activities.
- P&Cs use P&C Council newsletters to reprint useful advice etc for parents.
- All forms of communication should be used, no reliance on just one method.
- Teacher/parent interviews could be used to facilitate better parent engagement.
- Council should conduct a social media use workshop. This could be sponsored and prizes offered to attendees.

CELEBRATING THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

P&Cs should send details of their proposed activities to the Council Office, for promotion in our media campaign. Details should include a contact person for media interviews.

CHAPLAINS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSES

The issue of secular councilors in schools has been raised again following the recent dismissal of two such people from schools. However, delegates agreed there was general satisfaction with the chaplaincy program, provided they were not acting outside their guidelines ie proflicising religion. The

difference between the ACT legislation and other states and territories on religious education in public schools, could cause concerns for parents who do not want their children involved in religious education. Concerns about the timing of such religious education in schools, possible impact on curriculum time, the process for its introduction to schools and the impact on students who are not involved in it need consideration. Delegates were asked to advise their parents to report to Council any concerns about religious education in their school. Council would also enquire of the Minister or ETD if any schools had asked for extra funding for religious education or been approached by parents or religious bodies to teach in their schools.

ACTION: Delegates, P&Cs Council

INEQUITIES BETWEEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

It was agreed that inequities between public schools would always exist and that it was one of the purposes of NAPLAN to identify those schools that need extra funding assistance. The inequities were largely dependent on the attitude, vigor and skills of the school Principals, plus the level of activity of the P&C and parents. The socio economic situation of schools also contributed but there are plenty of example of schools in such circumstances prospering, due to the work of their Principals, teachers and P&Cs. Council should ask ETD to ensure that schools are maintained at a similar level and no school allowed to fall behind others in presentation and maintenance. School boards and their parent representatives should be lobbied hard if parents are unhappy about the standard of their school.

Mr Terry L Sanders

Executive Officer

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

Phone (02) 6241 5759 Fax (02) 6241 8839 Website www.actparents.org.au