

**NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS
HOT TOPICS/ISSUES MEETING OF 25 June 2013
(Attended by 31 delegates)**



ACT Council of
Parents & Citizens
Associations

The parent voice on public education

WORKING WITH VULNERABLE PEOPLE BACKGROUND CHECKS

Federal Agent Russell Rowell, AFP Co-ordinator Criminal Records, gave a brief on the police check part of the background checks required under the Working with Vulnerable People legislation. He advised that only court outcomes were checked and disclosed to the Office of Regulatory Services which is responsible for managing the checks. Also, this is now a national scheme but some states have added additional requirements such as notifications of recent court outcomes for individuals and consequent review of their clearance.

SCHOOL CANTEENS PROGRESS

Access for our school canteens to the discounted products and services available from the NSW Procurement agency (NSWBuy) has been held up. This is because the Council's constitution does not clearly state that we are a not for profit organisation and that our assets, if wound up, will be transferred to another not for profit organisation. We therefore must amend our constitution and then our NSWBuy registration will be approved. It is essential that we have a quorum on 30 July at CTL when we will hold a Special General Meeting to approve the amendments.

MISSING SCHOOL is a new charity helping seriously ill children with schooling & **SPELD** helps people with specific learning difficulties – see www.missingschool.org.au and www.ausepeld.org.au It was noted that we may need to amend some of our policies to include these new organisations and express support for them.

PARENT PARTICIPATION /ENGAGEMENT ie ways parents can assist their school and children's learning. It was advised that the Minister had asked for our ideas on how to encourage parent participation /engagement to assist our schools. It was noted that there is no clear definition of what parent participation/engagement means. However, the following ideas were suggested:

1. schools should have areas where parents can meet eg when collecting their children,
2. let children play on school equipment after school so parents can chat amongst themselves while the children are playing,
3. it was reported that the National School Reform program recently signed by the ACT requires schools to have a parent engagement policy,
4. encourage parents to attend school assemblies,
5. hold foreign language classes for both children and parents so they interact and learn together,
6. similarly hold art and craft classes for parents,
7. schools need to provide clear information to parents on how to become engaged at the school,
8. parents should develop partnerships with teachers and open up communication,
9. hold a parent class or meeting while children are at an activity eg disco,
10. use the school newsletters,
11. Primary school teachers could hold a meeting of class parents and explain what they are doing during the term and how parents can assist.
12. school/P&C can publish a list of tasks/opportunities for parents with frequency, times etc
13. school could provide a parents room where information etc can be found and parents can meet or have a parents' shelf with references for parents.
14. P&Cs should specifically invite teachers to P&C activities and have them directly involved eg teacher teams at trivia nights etc
15. use parents in "just imagine" programs in classrooms – parents talk about their jobs, skills etc
16. make parents aware that the Public Service and possibly other employers may give time off for parents to volunteer in their schools.

17.ETD needs to develop strategies for engaging full time work parents, eg 4 weeks notice of assistance needed, before school meetings etc.

THE UNDERMINING OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS BY THE CURRENT FEDERAL/STATE/TERRITORY SCHOOL FUNDING MODEL which encourages private schools development before public schools. A letter on this matter has already been sent to the Minister and a review of approval processes sought.

It was agreed to refer this to the Council Executive for further action. Points made included:

1. we need proper and timely planning to meet demand,
2. to ensure parents have a choice of a free secular education, no private schools should open before public schools are open,
3. there should be a right of appeal for the community against new private school applications,
4. we need to discuss this with ACSSO as it could be a national issue,
5. we should use the opposition and Greens in the Legislative Assembly to push our case,
6. the Education Act requires free education, school communities are the hub of local communities.

ACTION: Delegates should refer this issue to their P&Cs and send their thoughts to the Council office. Council's thanks were extended to John Haydon for his great efforts on this matter.

DATA MINING OF STUDENTS

Google is providing free services to NSW schools under a contract which gives them access to students personal information and exposes students to their advertising. Google cannot be adequately regulated and they provide no feedback to the NSW government or users. The children have no rights under this arrangement. Google is not covered by our Privacy laws being USA based. Parents are concerned about this situation.

ACTION: A letter to Mark Huxley at ETD to be sent advising our concerns and asking for ETD's position on data mining, on advertising to minors and opt out choices for parents/children. Council is to develop a policy on this topic and the matter is to be referred to the Social Media & Communications sub-committee.

REGISTERING A P&C AS A CHARITY

Public schools are not able to register as charities but their P&C associations may do so. Details about the benefits of registration and the process involved can be found at:
<http://www.acnc.gov.au/>

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