



ACT-wide celebrations

From pancake breakfasts to art shows and community picnics, school communities across the ACT got together last month to celebrate.

The Council-initiated celebration of school communities was taken up by many public schools to highlight the importance of getting parents involved with their children's school.

"Schools held family picnics, community parties, photography competitions, neighbourhood walks and discos during the week," said Council President, Viv Pearce. "These events are a great chance for teachers, students, parents, carers and other community members to interact."

"Research has shown time and time again that family involvement in schools improves student achievement. Kids with involved parents are more likely to get better grades and have a positive attitude to their schooling, good behaviour and attendance."

"Community events make it easier for parents to become involved by helping them to feel like they belong and fostering respect between parents and teachers. When that happens, parents become more engaged with the school and their child's education, and we see the benefits flow," she said.

Campbell Primary's Community Party was a great success, with displays from community groups,

Continued on page 3



Giralang students, parents and staff enjoyed fine food and great art at the gala opening for their art show.

In this issue

From the President	p. 2
Improving school grounds	p. 4
ACT's young leaders	p. 7
Year 12 Certificate changes?	p. 7
Gifted and talented education	p. 9
New body-image program	p. 10
School bus changes	p. 11
You can improve our schools	p. 12
Dates to remember	p. 12

From the President



Viv Pearce

Thank you to all the school P&Cs who helped us celebrate our school communities. We hope it was a great excuse to get parents more involved in your school.

Did you know that family involvement improves student behaviour, attitude, attendance and grades? Because the benefits can be so profound, ACT Education Minister Joy Burch has set up the Parental Engagement Stakeholder Group to find the best ways to get parents involved and to create resources to help schools improve their engagement with parents. This major investment is a direct result of sustained lobbying from Council. We will stay involved and let you know the results!

Another excellent outcome of Council involvement is the series of workshops which the Education Directorate has been running to provide expert advice to parents of children with learning difficulties. The next one is about using iPads to support these students in their early years (July 2, contact Julie on 62072331 to attend). Council representatives pushed for these workshops with the Education Directorate's Learning Difficulties Taskforce and now parents are finding them very useful. This is terrifically satisfying to me.

These are just a few recent examples of how effective Council is as an advocate for parents to government. Find out more about this and how to have your say in our back page feature.

NSW Buy is now ready for P&Cs to register and start saving. The procurement agent offers up to 25% savings on a massive range of items and canteen produce. Contact Council's office if you have misplaced the registration form sent to treasurers a few weeks ago. It is well worth checking their prices before making any purchases. Our other project to help canteens –

the free roll-out of the Flexischools online ordering system – has been taken up by many schools. If you are not yet on board and want to save the set up fee, apply to Council before July.

Many P&C presidents and treasurers attended our workshops in term one and found them very useful. If you missed out and need help with your role on the P&C, contact us. We will repeat them in term three if there is the demand.

Council is currently involved in a couple of issues affecting high schools and colleges: pushing for a slower phase-in of the ACT Government's ban on sugary drink sales in schools so that there is time to adapt without risking canteen viability; and preparing a submission to a review of the Year 12 Certificate. The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies is considering making English and mathematics compulsory for the Certificate and recognising extra-curricular activities and vocational training programs. If you have views on this please convey them to Council for inclusion.

We are very concerned and disappointed that the education funding increases and needs-based targeting recommended by the Gonski review have been abandoned in the federal budget - a loss of \$6billion per year nationally by 2024. The onus has been placed on the states and territories to make up the difference and we do not know if that will happen in the ACT. The need for funding to be targeted to disadvantaged students is absolutely crucial. Recent research in the US shows how effective providing additional funds for the poorest students is in reducing the gap between adults from poor backgrounds and their non-poor counterparts. We will be renewing our lobbying efforts to ensure the best possible outcome for ACT schools.

Finally, remember to follow us on Twitter and Facebook to keep in touch with these issues and more. You can also sign up for our fortnightly email bulletin at www.actparents.org.au. •

ACT-wide celebrations

Continued from front page



Parents and students share a pancake breakfast with staff at Lyneham Primary.

local entertainment, an art competition and a carnival atmosphere.

“Campbell Primary School is very fortunate to be so well supported by the surrounding community,” said the school’s P&C President, Kerryn Vine-Camp. “This is a wonderful opportunity to acknowledge the value and importance of the wider community in supporting our children.”

Crowds of parents and students at Lyneham Primary School enjoyed a pancake breakfast, cooked by the school’s Principal and Deputy.

“This is a great way to build good-will between



The Giralang Primary P&C provided free food and drink to give the Giralang community an added incentive to come to their school’s art show opening.

the school and our parents,” said Principal Annamaria Zuffo. “It is also a way of recognising and thanking parents who contribute so much to our school.”

More than 60 students and their families arrived at the breakfast via two specially commissioned ‘walking school buses’, with an added bonus of vouchers at Cold Rock ice-creamery for the walkers. P&C members running the ‘buses’ were impressed with the turn-out, with many parents vowing to make it a more regular occurrence.

The Bonython Primary School community took-over their local McDonalds store for their Community Fun Night.

“Balloons, face painting, glitter tattoos, hair chalking and music added to the atmosphere,” reported Bonython P&C’s Karen Gill. “The McDonalds staff were great, assisting the children to take orders, organise orders and serve at the drive-through. The students loved the opportunity to be behind the counter and also be served by their friends.”

“We encouraged our students to take a look at the new healthy options, which made for good conversations about eating choices,” she said.

Meanwhile, the Giralang school community enjoyed the gala opening of their art show. The school was swarming with families enjoying the kids’ fine art works, bidding on pieces, eating and chatting.

The week coincided with Public Education Week which also saw many schools celebrate the presentation of Recognition of Service Awards to staff by holding afternoon teas or special assemblies. A showcase of public education featuring school bands and student performances wowed shoppers at Westfield Belconnen to round off a wonderful week for our public schools. ●

Improving school grounds

School grounds are probably more important than you think. Jenny Dibley from ACTSmart Schools looks at how to get the most out of your school environment while making it more sustainable, and outlines some ACT government resources that are there to help.

Why are school grounds important?

Students spend up to a quarter of the day in the playground and surrounding grounds. If planned well, they can enhance environmental, educational and social outcomes for the entire school community, including:

- lower energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions
- reduced water use
- a more comfortable playground and improved student behaviour
- better learning outcomes
- protect biodiversity and encourage wildlife.

Use the ideas below to improve your school's grounds.

Planning school grounds - make a great start

Start by finding out what everyone wants. A survey can gather that information while giving

the entire school community a sense of ownership. The ACT Government ACTSmart Schools (formerly the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative (AuSSI) ACT) has a school grounds community survey which asks participants what they like and dislike about the current grounds and what they would like to see in them.

When planning, take into account the various 'zones' within a school such as the public entry, street frontage, assembly area, play and socialising area, boundary, services, special function and out-of-bounds areas. Consider the grounds as a whole and ensure all projects are integrated.

Planting to reduce temperatures

Recent studies have found that vegetation is the most effective way to reduce the surface temperatures of buildings and adjacent areas.

- Trees can intercept up to 90% of direct heat from buildings.
- In terms of evaporative cooling, a single isolated tree is functionally equivalent to five single-room air conditioners running 20 hours a day.

In these ways, landscaping can provide relief from the heat for students, increasing health and comfort. This translates into more physical activity and better thinking and concentration.

For buildings, plantings can significantly reduce building running costs in summer, producing typical air conditioning savings of 25-50%, and up to 80% for some buildings. In winter, trees can reduce heating costs by reducing wind speeds. (Reference: *Landscapes for Learning*, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, 2010)

Planting to reduce water consumption

Landscaping can be effective in reducing water consumption in a number of ways.

- Planting a windbreak on northern and western boundaries can prevent hot summer winds drying out the soil.



Community surveys led to a new landscaped play area at Giralang Primary which focussed on natural elements and native plants under existing shade trees.

- Selecting plants with low water needs saves water.
- Covering soil with soft mulch reduces evaporation and adds nutrients to the soil.

The ‘Household’ section of the ACTSmart website (www.actsmart.act.gov.au) has a Canberra Plant Selector, Water Right Garden Webtool and a number of fact sheets to help.

Count the social benefits

School grounds can impact positively on children’s physical and mental wellbeing and enhance both the opportunity for and the quality of social interactions. According to the Learning Through Landscapes Trust (UK), landscape design can reduce the incidence of bullying, and reducing hidden areas can assist in the management of student behaviour.

High quality landscaping also increases involvement by parents and the community. First impressions are important and the entrance to a school may influence a parent’s decision to enrol their child. Many schools in the ACT have parent ‘Green Teams’ and volunteers tend to stay when hard work is mixed with pleasure.

See the educational benefits

Hands-on experiences are essential to learning. The development of special areas such as sensory gardens, bush food gardens, environmental orienteering courses, water-wise gardens and vegetable gardens provides hands-on experiences for students. School grounds also provide informal, ‘incidental’ learning opportunities for students, like observing ants during lunch time or recess, or noticing that leaves have changed colour.

School grounds are ideal for conducting cross-curriculum activities. For example, students can assess the environmental benefits of appropriate landscape design by comparing the temperature of an internal wall that receives shade in summer with one that is exposed to the sun. The results

can be represented visually (e.g. graphs), as a written report (e.g. scientific or newspaper report) or an oral presentation (e.g. at assembly).

Reap the environmental benefits

Simple changes can achieve positive environmental outcomes.

- Strategic planting can reduce energy and water consumption.
- Using a solar powered water pump to aerate a pond can save electricity.
- Selecting outdoor games made from recycled materials, such as Frisbees made from PET bottles, reduces the consumption of non-renewable resources.
- Purchasing recycled items, such as local recycled landscaping products, or wood sourced from sustainable forests can save trees, reduce habitat destruction and lower transport miles.

Continued on page 6

Advertisement

A fast and simple fundraising strategy with no up-front cost to you.

Visit us at www.IAJO.com.au to learn more.



Improving school grounds

Continued from page 5

Attracting wildlife

- Thick shrubs provide nesting sites for small birds and help keep cats out.
- Thick-barked trees provide a habitat for small creatures such as insects which in turn attract larger animals.
- Plants such as banksias and grevilleas attract nectar- and seed-eaters while red and yellow flowers attract birds.

School grounds and biodiversity best practice: A guide

Developed by ACTSmart Schools, the guide offers step-by-step actions for creating school grounds based on the principles of sustainability. The

guide includes a Community Survey, tips and hints (landscape design, flora, fauna and soils) and an action plan template. Schools can receive ACTSmart Schools accreditation for their efforts.

Contact an ACTSmart Schools officer for help: jenny.dibley@act.gov.au or 6207 6430.

ACTSmart Schools also has a free horticulture service to assess school grounds and provide advice on design and maintenance, plant selection, keeping chickens, composting, saving water, and increasing biodiversity. To book a visit from the horticulturist contact Lara Lloyd: lara.lloyd@act.gov.au or 62051093. •

Hot project: hothouse from PET bottles

The environment teacher, parents and students at Wanniasa Hills Primary School recently joined forces to create an innovative hothouse made from PET bottles! The original inspiration and design for the hothouse came from an article discovered on the internet.



To complete the hothouse:

- the school community collected 2000 empty PET bottles
- Bunnings Warehouse donated garden canes for the wall construction
- a handy parent built the frame for the hothouse



Above: drink bottles are threaded on to garden canes to make the walls. Left: the finished hothouse.

- students got to work cutting the bottoms off the bottles, removing labels and threading the bottles onto the garden canes. These canes were then slotted into the frame to make the walls of the hothouse.

This experience provided an opportunity for students to learn about recycling, the greenhouse effect and growing plants. Social benefits included team work, cooperation and the involvement of volunteers.

ACT's young leaders

In April, six Year 11 students from Canberra schools spent an exciting and enlightening week at the exclusive UBS Young Women's Leadership Academy in Sydney.

The week-long program offered emerging female leaders the opportunity to build their confidence, leadership skills and business knowledge. It also brought to light important social issues such as mental health and cyber-bullying.

The girls joined 50 students from Victoria and NSW, staying at residences at the University of Sydney, after being selected for the all-expenses paid program. During the week, the students were introduced to inspiring female leaders including Dr Elizabeth Spencer from Headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation.

Sohela Roy, one of the girls selected from the ACT for her aspiring leadership potential, found the week a wonderful experience.

"I had a preconceived idea about a leader being just one person who everyone else followed. After attending the academy I realise that it is a team effort. It is a whole team of people which is leading, all striving for the same thing."

"I learnt something from each of the speakers and made lots of friends. It was a lovely bunch of girls and the food was great!"

For Catherine Risbey, the Academy provided a window into the professional world not available through school, as well as practical skills like practicing job interviews.

Congratulations to the six students selected from the ACT: Alannah Alley Freeman and Nicola Strangward from Canberra College; Kayla Buchanan and Catherine Risbey from Gungahlin College; Sohela Roy of Narrabundah College; and, Claire Rummery from Melba Copland Secondary School.

This was the 10th Academy run by UBS, an international financial services firm. ●



ACT students at the UBS Young Women's Leadership Academy: Sohela Roy, Nicola Strangward, Claire Rummery, Catherine Risbey, Kayla Buchanan and Alannah Alley Freeman.

Year 12 Certificate changes?

The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies is conducting a review into the ACT Year 12 Certificate.

The review will look at the possibility of recognising vocational and extra-curricular learning and whether or not English and maths should be compulsory.

If you have views about this, please forward them to Council for inclusion in our submission to the review. Alternatively, you can come along to our next Executive Meeting which we have declared an open meeting in order to discuss this and to determine the position which Council should take on behalf of parents.

The meeting is on Tuesday June 10 at 6:45pm at Sports House, 100 Maitland Street, Hackett. ●

Parents improving our schools

Continued from back page

children with learning difficulties. ETD are now running these workshops which are proving popular with parents.

In this way, Council draws in voices from across ACT schools and acts on them.

The network of delegates, regularly informing Council about parent opinion, is vital to the way Council works and essential for its credibility.

It works both ways

Council meetings include a range of announcements on new information, events and services of interest to school parents and P&Cs. There are also guest speakers from the ETD and elsewhere who provide details on new developments. The second important role of Council delegates is to report this useful information back to their P&C. Ideally, there should be a place on each P&C agenda for the delegate to report on Council happenings and to gather any feedback from those at the P&C meeting. In this way, delegates can inform and consult with their P&C associations on the matters discussed by Council and gather views for the next Council meeting.

If possible, delegates should also help inform the wider school community on what is happening in the educational arena by conveying information from Council, for example through the school's newsletter. When feedback is asked for, or there is a current campaign, delegates have a role in creating interest and action in their schools.

In this way, Council delegates are the conduit, connecting parents with Council's lobbying abilities, experience and information. They link Council to the broad base of parents' opinions on the education of their children.

Interesting, not onerous

Council meetings are held at the Hedley Beare Centre in Stirling on the fourth Tuesday of each month during school terms (two per term). They

start at 7pm and end at 9:30 sharp. A standing agenda item 'Issues from Schools' enables delegates to raise matters on behalf of their school community for discussion and action.

It may be helpful to share the load by appointing an alternate delegate so that if delegates cannot attend a meeting for some reason, the P&C is still represented. P&C presidents and secretaries are also encouraged to attend Council meetings should their delegate not be able to attend.

Most delegates, once they have been to a few meetings and understand more about the school system, find the discussions about educational issues very interesting and informative. They may even feel inspired to stand for a position on the Council executive!

We look forward to seeing more of our delegates during the year. •

Still giving a Gonski

While Council's advocacy work usually happens quietly in meetings and on committees, we occasionally need to raise our voices to try to secure the best for our public schools. A group of parents came to parliament house ahead of the May budget to call for the federal government to support the Gonski school funding reforms. •



Gifted and talented education

Policy Officer, Maclaren Wall, reports on Council's recent involvement in the formation of a new gifted and talented education policy for ACT public schools.

After an extensive consultation process with various stakeholders, the Education and Training Directorate (ETD) have made several key changes to their policy on the education of gifted and talented students.

Ultimately, the aim of the new policy is to ensure that every child has the opportunity to receive developmentally appropriate programs which allow them to achieve their best. The policy is based upon the cutting edge research formulated in Gagné's Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent.

School principals are now required to nominate a staff member as a first point of contact for enquiries from parents and students. All parents should be informed of who this contact person is, via school newsletters for example. These staff members will be able to advise parents and students on the school's approach to the needs of gifted and talented students. This position will serve as a great source of information and advice, directing parents and students to further resources, procedures and programs.

Unfortunately, the decision was made to remove the dedicated gifted and talented education co-ordinator position from ETD. Council has been assured that this will not compromise the roll-out of the new policy and that the situation will be assessed on a constant basis. Council will be watching with interest. If the policy isn't working in your school, please let us know.

Council has also been actively involved in developing a series of in-depth factsheets for parents. These factsheets cover a variety of different topics including the definition of giftedness and talent, the identification of gifted and talented students, programs and provisions, and information relating to early entry to school

and grade acceleration.

Council also provided ETD with a number of questions commonly asked by parents and a dedicated factsheet was created to answer these queries. Parents, students and community members alike are encouraged to access the new factsheets online (www.det.act.gov.au), or pick up a copy from your school's designated contact person.

For information about the gifted and talented programs at your child's school, approach the school's designated first point of contact. Alternatively, principals and teachers will be able to point you in the right direction. As always, parents are encouraged to contact Council if they have any questions or concerns. •

Join Council on Social Media!

For education information, issues and events, parenting resources and to keep up to date with Council happenings, check out:

@ParentVoiceACT



ACT-Council-of-Parents-Citizens-Associations

Sign up on our website:
www.actparents.org.au

Any Body's Cool: Body image program for schools

Marina Glover, from Mental Illness Education ACT, describes a recently re-launched program to get girls feeling positive about their bodies.

Any Body's Cool is an evidence-based body image and health promotion program for Year 7 and 8 girls. The program aims to provide young women with the knowledge and skills to build a positive body image and self-esteem, in addition to encouraging them to seek help early.

Like all programs delivered by Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT), personal stories are at the core of the program. The new Any Body's Cool is centered on the real stories of five local young women, each told through their beautifully crafted digital videos. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive from the three schools that participated in the pilot of the program late last year. These stories were seen as a strong and effective method of engaging students in a real but safe way.

The program has been redeveloped with great care and under the guidance of an expert reference group to achieve these outcomes. Our partnership with the University of Canberra has allowed us to utilise the skills and expertise of Clinical Masters students as program facilitators under the supervision of Dr. Vivienne Lewis, Psychologist, Body Image expert and academic advisor to the program.

Why body image programs are important

Poor body image is a known risk factor in the development of eating disorders, which are currently the third most common chronic illness in young women. Health promotion programs which target 10 to 14 year-olds are known to be highly effective in strengthening protective factors associated with eating disorders. Any Body's Cool also covers media literacy, healthy attitudes towards diets and exercise, the impact

of body-based bullying and strategies for managing physical and mental health, including where to go for help.

Working with teachers

Any Body's Cool works with school staff through a teacher education session and the provision of resources. These cover the use of body-image friendly language, creating class environments which support positive body image and guidelines for identifying and supporting students with critical body image concerns including referring them to suitable support services. MIEACT can also recommend complimentary resources to be used with young men in co-ed schools.



Any Body's Cool filmmaker Mary Quinlan, ACT's Youth Ambassador Molly Hodge-Meli and Xanthia and Elenor from the Tuggeranong Arts Centre's Messengers Program cut the ribbon to officially re-launch the program at the National Gallery of Australia.

Bringing Any Body's Cool to your school

Parents interested in finding out how they can bring Any Body's Cool to their child's school can contact Marina Glover on 6257 1195 or by email: marina@mieact.org.au. To find out more about MIEACT's other school and community based programs visit www.mieact.org.au. ●

School bus changes

ACTION will soon be announcing its new bus network. Council Vice-president, John Haydon, is Council's representative on the school transport liaison committee and has information from ACTION on what school travellers can expect.

The new 'Network 14' bus routes and timetables are due to begin at the start of term three. The last extensive change to school bus services was eight years ago, but Network 14 changes will affect every school and most school bus routes.

Using information about bus use by school students collected via the MyWay ticketing system, ACTION have identified under-utilised school bus services. These under-used services will cease. Currently, there are a total of 100 morning and 200 afternoon school services and, while ACTION would not give a number, it was clear that these will be significantly reduced.

ACTION plan to have the details of the changes to school bus routes on their website by week eight of term two. They will also prepare a description of how school bus changes and new routes affect each school. These will be designed to be used in school newsletters and will be provided before the end of term two.

ACTION has reiterated the claim no student will be left without a bus option for travelling to school. For some students, this will mean using normal route services. It may also mean that more students will need to travel via interchanges. We raised this as a concern to parents. There is an appreciation in ACTION that it is desirable that primary students especially should not have to use interchanges, but they argue that the interchanges are monitored.

While no one likes to see changes and particularly reductions to bus routes, it is clear from our meetings that ACTION is using real travel data and taking an individual traveller approach to try to provide the best service that they can within a complex set of constraints and needs. ●

About us

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is the representative body for Parent & Citizen Associations in the ACT.

We represent over 60,000 parents and carers in 85 ACT public schools.

About our magazine

ParentACTion is a free journal published four times a year.

Distribution: 600 copies - the ACT Legislative Assembly, ACT Government School Boards and P&Cs, public education organisations and interstate parent associations.

Contributions, advertising and feedback are always being sought. Contributions can be emailed directly to the Editor, Janelle Kennard, at jkennard@actparents.org.au. Views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations.

Our Executive

President:	Viv Pearce
Vice President:	John Haydon
Secretary:	Cecilia Shlegel
Assist. Secretary:	Amanda Richard
Treasurer:	Hugh Boulter
Committee:	Graeme Evans, Donna Reed, Joan Kellett, Matt Williams, Jo Lewis, Karen McLaughlin, Kim Fritsche, Harriet Adams.

Life members

Ian Morgan, Pam Cahir, Graeme Evans, Joan Kellett, Richard Scherer, Trevor Cobbold, Grant Battersby.

Contact us

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations Inc.

a Sports House
100 Maitland Street
Hackett ACT 2602

t (02) 6241 5759
f (02) 6241 8839
e contact@actparents.org.au
w www.actparents.org.au

Office staff

Executive Officer: Terry Sanders
Policy Officer: Maclaren Wall
Communications Officer: Janelle Kennard
Executive Assistant: Sulenna Nicholson

Office hours: 9.30am - 2.30pm, Monday to Friday.
Closed public holidays and school holidays.

Dates to remember

10 June	Open Executive Meeting Discuss Year 12 Certificate. All welcome.	30 June	Policy Conference submissions due
24 June	Council Hot Topics/General Meeting 7.00pm - 9.30pm, Hedley Beare Centre 51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling.	7-19 July	Council Office closed for term break
26 June	Canteen stakeholder meeting Discuss canteen matters. All welcome. 7:00pm Hedley Beare Centre 51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling	26 Aug	Policy Conference/General Meeting 7.00pm - 9.30pm, Hedley Beare Centre 51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling.
		23 Sept	Council Hot Topics/General Meeting 7.00pm - 9.30pm, Hedley Beare Centre 51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling.

You can improve our schools

Would you like to see changes in the way our schools work? Would you like your voice to be heard? The network of Council delegates for P&C associations is an effective way for the views of parents to be heard by decision makers. Make sure your school is linked in!

The network works

Council has regular input into emerging education policies and practices as well as a range of associated issues which affect schools. Council executives meet regularly with the Education Minister and senior officials from the Education and Training Directorate (ETD) to raise issues experienced across ACT public schools and voice the concerns of parents.

Our members are also involved in many decision-making groups and government committees where they represent parents. Examples include the ACT Curriculum Taskforce (commenting on curriculum changes), a Disability Education Reference Group (providing parent's input on disability issues) and groups working on the design of several new schools in Canberra. In addition, Council writes formal submissions representing the views and concerns of parents to official inquiries and government bodies, and makes a submission each year prior to the ACT Government's budget, presenting programs and areas in need of funding.

How do we gather parents' views and concerns in order to represent them? Through Council meetings and via Council delegates!

Gathering voices

At the beginning of the year, each P&C elects a Council delegate. Delegates can gather issues and concerns from the P&C and then voice these when they attend Council meetings. Because of the wealth of experience present at meetings, these concerns can often be answered. However, if delegates from other schools share the concern, together the meeting will decide how Council can best take up the issue.

Ideas into actions

There are many recent examples of Council responding to delegate concerns and representing parents to bringing about change:

- influencing ETD's new policy on gifted and talent students (see the article on page 9 for more)
- successfully lobbying the ACT Education Minister to look more carefully at applications for new private schools which affect public school enrolments
- initiating a major project to help school canteens in response to ongoing concerns from delegates about their financial viability (as detailed in our last issue)
- responding to frustrations about the dispersed nature of information on disability services by collating a comprehensive booklet of ACT services.

Council lobbying was a major factor behind the ACT Government's new project in parental engagement. Also, parent representatives pushed for information sessions to assist parents of

Continued on page 8