

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS

HOT TOPICS/GENERAL MEETING OF 25 August 2020 via Zoom

Attendance 32: including delegates from 25 schools. Acknowledgement of country made.

- 1. Presentation by Ross Hawkins, EDU Executive Group Manager Service Design & Delivery – Building Strong and Safe Communities for Learning project completed last year resulting in 21 recommendations. Some of these already implemented while more to do on others. Work interrupted by bush fires, smoke and COVID. Out of the project report recommendations 5 priorities have been identified:**
 - Well being – Positive Behaviours for Learning (PBL) is planned to be in all schools in 2021. It has worked well in some schools and not so well in others. Extra resources in place. Student voice being listened to.
 - Family focus - Support to help new Principals engage with parents, P&Cs. More work to do here.
 - **System navigation – ???**
 - Service delivery - Continue implementing the complaints management review recommendations and introduction of the Supporting Parent Engagement grants.
 - Shared language – Making communications between schools/P&Cs/parents and EDU more family oriented, clearer and with less jargon.

There will be tracking and reporting on the implementation of the 21 recommendations. In questions the following were noted:

- PBL will not solve all situations but good results are being seen, some good examples for other schools arising, all classes treated the same, lot of training required for teachers, still need procedures for parents to have input. PBL is recognised as best practice.
 - More teachers are seeking training in trauma based responses from students.
 - There is a lot of overlap between the project recommendations and the ACT Assembly enquiry.
 - It is hoped the project report will be released in next few weeks, following P&C Council meeting with the Director General.
 - Absence of some school psychologists & rapid changes of Principals in schools still causing problems.
 - Problem with parents not knowing if PBL is working correctly in their school – requires more information sessions for parents and better conversations with teachers, school executive.
 - Need to stop hiding behind privacy concerns when there are ways to provide information.
 - The lack of consistency between Principals on PBL is subject of UC project.
 - P&Cs should advise EDU PBL team of problems in their schools.
- 2. School email incident – comments by Ross Hawkins and following questions.** On 14 Aug, a Yr 8 student got inadvertent access to a class mailing list and used it to contact all classmates. Some used this to send inappropriate messages and material to other students/classes. EDU closed the email system down quickly, which unfortunately caused some problems for Yr 12 students. EDU regret the problem but acted quickly as student safety is first priority. Communication to parents was good but some first heard of it in the media. Parents need more awareness/training on E safety but difficult to get them engaged. Possibility of requiring parent training prior to them collecting school devices for students. EDU impressed by the great number of students who responded correctly to this incident.

P&Cs asked to consider what we can do to engage parents more in PBL and advise Council.

- 3. Asbestos and lead paint in schools -** Council raised the issue of lead paint in schools with EDU Senior Executives, following the Yarralumla PS incident. YPS P&C doing a good but difficult job seeking answers to parent's questions. EDU officer present every day last week to talk to parents. P&C meeting very volatile on risk to children, why it happened and need to rectify older schools. Parent doctor advised meeting that testing of children not necessary. Need to consider all pre 1980's schools. Annual thorough cleaning and sample testing, with an expert panel requested by Council to advise on lead standards. Long term plan being sought by Council from EDU, government and election candidates. Idea of a Sustainability Fund in government to finance major refurbishment or replacement of older schools suggested and also address capacity issues. P&Cs/parents should talk to Principals about these issues and review the school's Hazardous Materials plans.

4. **EDU Senior Executive Team on 13 Aug 20** – Matters discussed included Council input to COVID Term 4 plans and remote learning, clear and timely communication to parents, mental health of students & parents, complaints management review implementation, EDU and parent engagement, impact of a renewed COVID outbreak on Yr 12 exams.
5. **Public Education Priorities** – Our priorities are now available on our website. We have sent these to all major party candidates and will also send to others as requested. Interviews with candidates are being arranged and we will video individual interviews with major party's education spokespersons for webinar or replay to parents.
6. **SAS parent portal & second parent contact** – EDU advise these are still being developed and are not yet available.
7. **New P&C Council recruiting resources for P&Cs** – These are now available on our website for download and customisation as P&Cs desire.
8. **Supporting Parent Engagement Grants** – The Grant Workshop covered this and ideas for P&Cs have also been sent to P&Cs. Council office happy to review draft applications for P&Cs.
9. **P&C and Schools working together guidelines** – EDU and Council are developing guidelines for schools/Principals on their relationship and how they should communicate and co-operate. P&Cs with good working relationships with their Principal/school were asked to advise the Council Office, so that we might include such examples in the guidelines.

Some schools/colleges have not advised arrangements for parent/teacher interviews. Others have successfully used online goal setting sessions with parents in 15minute blocks, video or phone calls. This issue will be referred to EDU for follow up

10. **Web platforms for school canteens and uniform shops** – Sustainable School Shop was suggested as a suitable platform, combining stock/inventory control with ordering and payment.
11. **Next Meeting**
Next meeting is the Council Policy Conference followed by a short General Meeting on Tuesday 22 Sep 20 via Zoom.