



ACT Council of
Parents & Citizens
Associations

The parent voice on public education

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS

HOT TOPICS/GENERAL MEETING OF 26 March 19 at Stirling

Attendance 26: Including delegates from 23 schools Legislative Assembly, V Elliott – Policy Officer and Marina Spurgin.

Minister for Education meeting report

Members welcomed feedback from the Minister's meeting earlier in the evening. Member input from this HOT TOPICS meeting is indicated below in *italics*.

School Chaplains

Council was interested to hear that the Minister is looking at ways to provide similar, but secular supports in ACT schools. At this stage it looks like some chaplains may be offered employment opportunities as community service/welfare workers in schools.

Margaret Hendry school traffic and parking

Council expressed design concerns that the new Margaret Hendry school was already experiencing traffic and parking problems. After brief discussion it was decided that Council will raise these concerns with Transport Canberra.

Year 7 Health Checks

Council raised specific initial concerns with the Minister regarding year 7 health checks. Council is primarily concerned that these concerns relate to a health check which only measures height and weight, potentially sending a concerning body image message to students at a critical time.

*Discussion with members included details surrounding the program. **Members could provide feedback to Council and via the yoursay portal.*** Details discussed included:

- Year 7 health checks will be implemented in 2019 as most parents underestimate their students BMI.
- These checks are opt-in
- Format of year 7 health checks will be only height and weight measurements taken in a private room or screened off area within a larger space. No measurements will be provided to students, instead these will be reported back to parents.
- In 2020 year 7 health checks will happen alongside the vaccinations program and may include an electronic wellbeing (mental health) survey. At this stage parents will not be provided with outcomes of the electronic wellbeing.

Feedback from members:

- *A number of parents questioned whether BMI is an accurate indicator of 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' bodyweight.*
- *A large number of parents felt that measuring the height and weight of Year 7 students was not a holistic measure of student health. Parents felt that students are already too focused on body image driven by media and social media.*
- *A large number of parents felt that 'health check' would include more than taking weight and height measurements.*
- *A large number of parents felt that Year 7 was not a great time to measure student weight and height, due to the number and nature of changes their bodies are undergoing, specifically physiological changes at different rates and stages. Parents also find that Year 7 is a major transition which can be disruptive in many ways.*
- *A large number of parents were concerned that measuring only height and weight places critical importance on numbers, when students are already highly self-conscious about body image.*
- *A large number of parents felt that providing a letter to parents advising them of their students' BMI would not tell them anything they're not aware of.*
- *A large number of parents felt that only being informed their students' BMI would not be well-received and wonder what is this information meant to achieve?*

Of 27 parents in attendance:

- 1-2 may opt in
- 1 other would opt in, despite feeling the health checks (weight and height measurements) sent a message about body image which is unhelpful to students.
- A large proportion of parents would opt out of the weight and height component.

Education Directorate Meeting Items for discussion

Council discussed the issues on the agenda for discussion with the Education Directorate (EDU).

1. Tuggeranong Schools

a. CCTV trial update - EDU, Kirsty and Peter Cheng - 10 minutes

Council would appreciate an update on the security audit and reiterates its strong support for those schools that want CCTV installed now.

b. Theodore PS situation – EDU, Kirsty – 5 minutes

Council would appreciate advice on the current situation at Theodore and if any of the remedial actions taken have been effective.

2. Early Childhood - Kirsty – 5 EDU, Minutes

At what stage are the Early Childhood Learning strategy and the 3 year old preschool initiative up to?

3. Council co-operation with EDU Strategic Finance - Kirsty- 5 minutes

Council has been pleased to work with Strategic Finance to finalise the After Hours Student Care service deed for Macgregor primary school. This co-operation has highlighted a number of communication lessons between school P&Cs and EDU that may avoid future problems in the renewal of other service deeds and licenses.

4. School buses and individual school traffic plans – Kirsty - 5 minutes

Council has continuing concerns about the new school bus program, which has a number of high school students drop off and pick up stops well away from existing school stops and requires students to cross very busy roads. We are continuing to press Transport Canberra to review this situation and revert to existing bus stops. We also understand that Transport Canberra is now working with some schools to develop the long-awaited individual traffic plans.

5. School Chaplains replacements – Kirsty/EDU 5 mins

With removal of the school chaplains at the end of the year, who will replace them in schools and who will fund these replacements? We are aware that in some cases the community (local churches) provide additional funding for the school chaplain (federal government funding being only \$20,000 for a part time role) to become full time positions. Will these fulltime workers be replaced?

6. EDU support for school P&Cs – Kirsty - 5 Minutes

EDU could greatly assist in the promotion of effective school P&C's by improving the reference to P&Cs and the Council on their website, in the EDU Annual report and other EDU publications particularly where the Council has provided significant input. Council staff would be happy to work with EDU on this matter.

7. Council's progress on P&C association business model review – Kirsty – 5 minutes

The review conducted by the Council is complete. We are now preparing changes to our constitution which will make it easier for those P&Cs that are struggling to find a model for parents that best suits them. We are also developing a resource for P&Cs that will assist them with recruiting volunteers and sustain their committees.

8. Active Streets program and schools – EDU, Kirsty 5 minutes

Questions have been raised by some parents about the future of the Active Streets program and we would be interested to know EDUs position on the continuation of the program.

Issues from P&C Associations

- 2 P&C raised specific concerns regarding spending of P&C funds.
- One P&C is seeking to donate significant funds and has asked the school to demonstrate value for money. Despite school staff preparing a business case, the principal has refused to provide it to the P&C. These occurrences have created tension and led to a steep decline in support of the P&C, which the P&C believes is led by the school principal.
- Another P&C has donated money to the school, however the plan for the money has changed without explanation and as far as they know is unspent.
- Another P&C sought suggestions on spending from the school board.

A brief discussion of how and what P&Cs can spend funds on followed.

Council will look into reporting of finances and other issues at school boards, seeking appropriate mechanisms to promote positive school and P&C relationships.

Presentation on Violence in Schools and co-hosted workshops

Council provided an extensive presentation on the work going on behind the scenes on violence in schools. This work is happening across many levels, including a partnership with EDU on the *Building strong and safe communities for learning project*. This project is bringing together all sorts of experts, community services, teachers, LSA's, principals and parents to look at how we can work together to reduce and better respond to violence in schools. There are opportunities for parent participation and feedback. Please contact Council to register your interest or ask for more information: contact@actparents.org.au

Next Meeting

6.45pm General Meeting 28 May 2019, HBCTL Freemantle Drive, Stirling

Important dates

Effective P&C association workshop – 6.45pm Thursday 2 May 19 at Stirling

P&C Treasurers and Insurance workshop – 6.45pm Tuesday 7 May 19 at Stirling

P&C Constitution workshop – 7pm Thursday 23 May 19 at Stirling

P&C Audit workshop – 7pm Thursday 12 Sep 19 at Stirling