

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS

HOT TOPICS/GENERAL MEETING OF 27 Mar 18 at Stirling

Attended 31: K McGovern Hooley– Farrer PS, V Pearce – LGC, M Peters – Richardson PS, K McKenzie – IPECS, J Laloz – Torrens PS, A T Niyonsenga – Telopea School, J Forster – Chapman & Mt Stromlo, S Hollis-Bennetts – Macquarie PS, C Redmond – LGC, A Azeuebo – Monash PS, S Luckhurst – Canberra College, T Corder – Farrer PS, K Austin – Yarralumla PS, P Cheng – Chisholm PS, J Floro – Harrison, P Stafford – Majura PS, G Binks – LECS, K Boyel – Maribyrnong PS, A M Mare – Hughes PS, C Shlegel – Bonython PS, N Yap – Harrison, M Conley – Hughes, B Roppola – SCECS, L Beeching – Giralang PS, M Battenally – MCSC, C Cox– Gowrie PS, T Sanders- Executive Officer, V Elliott – Policy Officer plus 2 others.

Apologies: J Haydon- Lyneham HS, B Sanders– Belconnen HS, J Trustum –Neville Bonner, S Ding – Weetangera PS, R Logue – Wanniasa PS

Presentation “The School Principal, Parents & the P&C association.” Co-president of the ACT Principals Association, Mike Battenally is also the principal of Melba Copland Secondary school & college. He made the following points:

Schools need skilled staff to do everything expected of them and having the support of an effective P&C and engaged school community assists them greatly.

The community owns the school and should be active in its governance eg via the school board and the P&C. Principals are attending governance training conducted by the Institute of Company Directors.

The “voice of the community” was being referred to in the Future of Education consultation and provided an opportunity for P&Cs to be heard.

P&Cs should be supporting their school’s leadership.

School boards often presented principals with issues and codes of conduct applied to the boards.

P&Cs should not restrict themselves to putting money back into their schools.

Learning is the centre of the schools stage and parents need to engage with children in that learning.

Homework is best if it engages parents and child, was not task oriented but balanced with other activities.

When engaging with a new principal you should discuss the school’s 5 year strategic plan and the action plans that are derived from it. The Director of School Improvement for your region coaches new principals.

Communication between school board and P&C is important & principals can help with their reports to P&Cs, particularly where the board parent representatives do not report.

It is important for P&Cs to build good relations with both principals and their deputy principals, invite deputies to P&C meetings (with the principal’s consent).

School boards can meet “in committee” with their P&C committee, this helps built trust between everyone.

P&Cs that are struggling to attract parents should restructure their meetings to be more interesting/enjoyable.

We need robust P&Cs at all schools and they need to address strategic issues with the principal and board, recruit people with skills to enhance the P&C and utilise retired and childless people willing to participate.

Parent Workshop on Violence in Schools. Council will conduct a workshop rather than a forum, to investigate constructive ways to address student violence in schools. A paper on Student Violence is being prepared to inform this workshop. We will look at the definitions of violence and measures to engage parents, principals, the Education Directorate and students to achieve outcomes that we want. We need to continue to collect case studies from parents and information from students and their leaders. Implementation of policy and procedures will also be considered.

The workshop is still in the planning stage and is likely to be held in third term this year.

Meeting with Education Directorate on 20 March. A major discussion at this meeting was about school capacity and enrolments, specifically the loss of dedicated rooms as schools struggle to find more classroom space. We made the point that the loss of such rooms was a concern for parents who had often donated substantial funds to set those rooms up and equip them – refer to the meeting report sent with the agenda.

Council's submission to the Future of Education consultation. Council has submitted its final paper on the Future of Education consultation to EDU. It is very comprehensive and covers all the issues presented to the Council over the last few years. It will be publicly released after its consideration by the Minister/EDU.

P&C association business model review. The survey of P&C association officers will be repeated to include all new officers recently elected by their associations. Results will be added to the responses from EDU, principals and teachers to form a paper for consideration at a Council forum in third term.

P&C issues. The meeting formed into regional school groups for this discussion.

Belconnen, Gungahlin & Inner North -

Majura noted that their crossing supervisors had been used on the wrong crossing. Council will follow-up. They also reported on success using the Facebook Live streaming service for their P&C/community meetings. P&C constitutions may need to be amended to allow. This is covered in the Effective P&C workshop.

Lake Ginninderra College - The new Admin System (Sentral) was still failing and students being wrongly marked as absent.

The Sentral attendance marking system is being rolled out to schools then to parents for notifications. What should we expect from this system? Council to follow-up.

Inner South & West –

Hughes reported they had two crossing supervisors but expected only one – Council to follow-up.

Torrens traffic problems still, preschool parent group to remain separate from the P&C, canteen not P&C run.

Lyons ECS childcare now outsourced, half the preschool is government and half is private.

Yarralumla – too much admin for teachers, separate P&C for PS and preschool in same location (Council advice is to form a P&C preschools Subcommittee and merge the preschool into the P&C).

Telopea – Canteen not run by P&C so how do they enforce healthy food (canteen deed should require healthy food and ACT Health audit should enforce this).

Canberra College and Narrabundah College – also have problems with the new Sentral system wrongly recording student attendance and texting parents' incorrect messages.

Mt Stromlo reported that a recent student death had been handled very well by the school.

South -

Chisholm reported recent school photos were terrible and had to be redone by a different photographer. Other delegates repeated this complaint. Schools were aware of the problem.

Isabella PECS – advised that they were looking at a total upgrade of the school's IT.

Other comments- rebuilding a P&C is an uphill battle (Council's Effective P&C workshop has advice on this).

Next Meeting

General Meeting 22 May 18 at Stirling, guest speaker on Inclusion for All & Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).