



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 28 JUNE 2016

Attended by 22 delegates

Presentation on ACT school planning, capacity and urban renewal – Robert Gotts, Director of Planning and Performance, EDu

Robert gave a comprehensive presentation on the information, statistics and considerations the Directorate use to predict school enrolments and how school capacity is managed. The major points of his presentation are summarised here.

- EDu planning is directed towards being able to provide schools which are free and open to everyone and available in the child's neighbourhood.
- EDu plan to have 'just right' capacity – not too little (as above) and not too much (this would be expensive).
- Public school enrolments are increasing (up 15% increase in the past 5 years) while private school enrolments are fairly static.
- EDu use a range of information sources to predict enrolment numbers over the next five years, including: birth data, land releases, house sales, transport routes, Development Applications. They work with Land development and planning authorities to determine how schools will be impacted.
- Projected enrolments (5 years) for each ACT public school are available at: www.education.act.gov.au/school_education/enrolling_in_an_act_public_school
- Predicted enrolments are later analysed against actual enrolments so that predictions can be improved.
- The team analyse enrolment data to understand the movement of students into and out of the public system, from one region to another and so on.
- Capacity figures for each school have recently been updated to include all learning spaces and students (including eg special units where fewer students occupy a teaching space – the specific capacity for that unit is now counted).
- The planning team also work with roads and traffic departments to plan parking and crossings or overpasses around new schools (taking into account where students for that school are likely to reside).
- Land is reserved for possible school sites very early in suburb planning process.
- If schools come under enrolment pressure, the following steps are taken:
 - i. implement a School Enrolment Management Plan (SEMP) to guide enrolments, for example, excluding out-of-area enrolments
 - ii. examine the use of school facilities to ensure space is being use most efficiently
 - iii. adjust PEA boundary (this is a long process with consultation)
 - iv. make temporary (eg demountables) or permanent (eg additional buildings) changes to the school (depending on whether the data show that the enrolment pressure is a temporary 'hump' or continuing situation)
 - v. construct a new school.
- The most recent ACT budget included funding for increasing school capacity, eg new classrooms at Garran, Harrison and others.

Changes to Education Directorate policy on school fencing

The delegate from Giralang Primary School outlined the community consultation done at the school to decide that the school wished to have perimeter fencing. They missed out last year's funding round, and have now been advised that the school fencing program has been suspended. The P&C have prepared a submission and list of questions they wish to put to EDu, seeking to understand whether and when the program might be reinstated and whether student welfare is considered in deciding which schools to fence, or only protecting assets from vandalism.

ACTION: Council to present Giralang P&C submission to EDu and seek response

Future of Canberra Preschool Society

The Chair advised that the ACT Government will no longer be funding the CPS and that a plan was being negotiated for CPS to merge with Council in expanded office space. The interests of preschools will be represented by Council in the long term.

P&C treasurers auditing other P&Cs

Many P&Cs find it difficult to find an auditor willing to audit their books at the end of their financial year at reasonable cost. A suggestion from the treasurer at Charnwood-Dunlop School is for P&C treasurers from different P&Cs to audit each other's books. This is permitted, without needing the auditor to be qualified, as long as the P&C has gross receipts less than \$400,000 per annum and fewer than 1000 members. The Office is facilitating this by keeping by listing and sharing interested treasurers. The meeting supported this.

ACT budget

The May budget for the ACT Government included education funding:

- Major capital works including expansions at Harrison, Neville Bonner, Amaroo and Palmerston Preschool; upgrades to learning spaces at Maribyrnong Primary, Calwell and Campbell high schools, Lake Tuggeranong and Dickson colleges and Weetangara and Hawker preschools; roads and traffic upgrades at Wanniasa Hills
- funds for better teaching of Nggunawal culture and history
- \$21.5 Million to implement the Schools for All report
- \$1.1 Million for special needs transport
- new IT systems.

Reports on meetings

John Haydon outlined discussions at the meeting with EDu executive staff on June 14

Viv Pearce reported on the meeting between Council executives and Senator Katy Gallagher on June 15. The purpose was to represent the views of parents in the lead up to the federal election (Senate candidate). Council representatives brought up needs-based funding, chaplaincy program and the over funding of wealthy private schools. They believed they had a fair hearing and Ms Gallagher was well aware of these issues and their importance to parents.

Viv Pearce also presented reports on recent meetings regarding EALD policies, and students with challenging behaviours. She also reported on the successful forum run jointly by Council which discussed ways of improving school engagement with migrant families with around 50 school leaders and teachers – see attached report.

Update English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) Meetings, V. Pearce

Meeting	<i>Me & My School, FORUM on Engaging Migrant & Refugee Families</i> 9 th June, 2016, 2-4pm at CTL, Stirling
Organisers	P&C Council (Viv Pearce, Janelle Kennard), Companion House (Glenn Flanagan, Hongsar Channaibanya),ACT Principals Association
Key Issues	Companion House and Council have been planning the 4 th Forum since the end of 2015. This year we managed to get ACT Principal’s Association (ACTPA) to co-sponsor the event. The aim of the forum was to help schools create a sense of belonging for migrant and refugee parents and students. The forum was a chance for principals, teachers and the Directorate to hear directly from migrant parents and other stakeholders who deal with families, as well as share experience and best practice with other school leaders. With around 60 attendees and with a wide cross section of participants, the forum was a success. Many participants said they were taking away useful ideas and inspiration. Hopefully a conversation will be started in their school or workplaces. It was a very positive experience for me personally and was worth the effort that we all put into organising event.
Follow up actions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote our information sheet and “take outs “from Forum to P&Cs, sheet and report to next Council meeting, article for next parent ACTION. <i>Completed</i> • Sent ideas from Forum and electronic versions of Council and Companion House sheets to Forum participants. <i>Completed</i> • Lobby Minister and EDU for action on some of ideas i.e. Community Liaison person in schools to help parent engagement particularly in high need families, better on ground knowledge of support services outside schools (i.e. Who Can Help? For teachers and principals), greater use of translators, simple ideas ie format of newsletters, food events etc. to get parents into school and forming partnerships with school. <i>Ongoing</i> • Follow up meeting with Companion House, where to next? <i>Completed</i> • Continue dialogue with principals -<i>ongoing</i>