

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS

HOT TOPICS/GENERAL MEETING OF 22 MARCH 2016

Attended by 31 delegates



ACT Council of
Parents & Citizens
Associations

The parent voice in public education

Presentation on P&C Fund Raising and volunteers by Mandy Weidmann

Mandy has vast experience of successful fundraising. She says fundraising starts with a shared understanding of the P&C's and fundraising goals – a clearly defined purpose leading to a specific fundraising target. These need to be clearly communicated and “sold” to the school community.

Then there are five steps to building your ‘dream team’ of volunteers:

1. Find volunteers.
 - Plan your volunteer needs. Break down tasks into small, clearly defined roles (eg trivia night: finding prizes, ticketing, decorating, questions, games, advertising). Do this *early* - people are willing to do a small role with a long time to do it.
 - Use mass communication such as newsletter, notes home, and social media. Be specific about each job. Be patient, keep asking and someone will take each job!
 - Welcome events. Be brave and get up at school events to sell the P&C's value and emphasise that all small time contributions are valued.
 - Find a well-connected parent in younger years and draw them in with their mates!
 - Get personal, chat to parents about how P&C is relevant and how they can help.
2. Cultivate an inclusive culture – people want to be part of something valuable.
 - Resist blocking out people who work differently to you; show appreciation of all.
 - At school events, use a “no talking” rule between committee members so they are forced to talk to new people and break the perception of the P&C ‘clique’
 - Use ice breakers at P&C meetings to break down barriers and relax new comers
 - Have a formalised and agreed “code of conduct”
 - Make your committee a safe place for bad ideas. Welcome all ideas at first and only dismiss some after discussion (even those that have not worked in the past!)
3. Effective leadership - Take time to learn leadership skills
 - Aim to bring out the best of everyone, not just dictate.
 - Plan well ahead and break down tasks
 - Encourage a constant process of renewal, while still valuing past experience.
4. Create alignment in the team
 - Survey parents to find out what to raise funds for, what P&C activities are valued.
 - Each member is a piece of a puzzle, but also needs to see the whole picture.
5. Retaining volunteers
 - Respect their time – keep them busy but don't expect more than they agreed to.
 - Let people know what was achieved, linked back to your goals and target
 - Have a “thankyou Sergeant” ensure everyone is thanked

Mandy's website (www.fundraisingdirectory.com.au/) is a great resource, as is her 'Fete in a box' (www.fetesandfestivals.com.au/act-fete-in-a-box) and weekly 'tips' email. Her Facebook page (The Fundraising Whisperer) is well worth 'liking'.

Relieving P&Cs of book keeping and industrial relations/human resources tasks

In our discussions with Edu about engaging a researcher to investigate and make recommendations on options for increasing the pool of volunteers with special skills in book keeping/accounting etc, it was suggested that one option could be for the establishment in the Council office of a book keeper/accountant that could service those P&Cs in need of such support. They might also provide annual auditing services to P&Cs. There was some support from delegates for this idea but also problems were identified in providing such a service. It was agreed that not all P&Cs would need the service and many treasurers were quite capable. However, the removal of the book keeping and annual audit preparation from less confident treasurers may be useful. The suggested service would require funding and while we might receive a small increase in our annual grant from Edu, it would be most likely that P&Cs using the service would need to pay a user fee to help cover the costs. It was acknowledged that we needed to develop this idea much more before being able to prepare a detailed proposal for P&Cs to consider. It was also suggested that we explore the provision of training for treasurers in how to transition from complicated accounting software to a generic Excel spread sheet. It was noted that this topic would be discussed in detail at the Treasurers' workshop on Thursday 7 April.

P&C scholarships grants to students in need

In discussion of this topic it was agreed that each P&C should make its own decisions on such use of their association's funds. Should such use be favoured, then the P&C would need to produce clear guidelines for an application and approval system to ensure transparent operation of the scholarship/sponsorships. There was some concern that this type of support for students should come from the school's equity funds or other assistance schemes. It was noted that the Council did not have a policy on this matter but the office could provide advice to P&Cs on the issues they needed to consider in funding such student support.

School enrolments and turnover of teachers

These issues were raised with the Education Directorate (Edu) on 16 March and their response was included in the report included with the agenda. Edu expects up to 8% changeover in teachers in schools annually and they do monitor such movements in teachers. Any abnormal movement is investigated. However, they believe that a certain amount of teacher renewal in the schools each year is desirable, bringing new personalities and ideas into the schools. P&Cs concerned about high levels of teacher turnover should raise the issue with the school Principal and the Council, which will follow up with Edu if necessary.

Traffic problems at Maribryngong PS

The delegate from Maribryngong PS advised that there had been a very close near miss between a car and a student last week, which highlighted their need for a school crossing. In discussion advice was given that the Principal and P&C should write to David Jones at Edu and also the local member Meegan Fitzharris MLA, urgently seeking installation of a crossing at the school. They should also contact the TAMS officers Robyn Hawkins and Snezana Dimitrovska – Jo Forster agreed to provide email addresses for them (done 23/3).

Ministerial roundtable on implementing the recommendations for high needs students

Our representative at the Ministerial roundtable on 17 March, reported that it had been a good meeting of all stakeholders and that the Minister showed concern for the full implementation of the Shaddock review recommendations, including funding over the next 3 years. Stakeholders were also encouraged to think of other ways to help these students. We emphasised that school counsellors, chaplains and youth workers should not be considered as alternatives to qualified psychologists when considering the 1:500 ratio in school.