

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS
HOT TOPICS/ISSUES MEETING OF 24 June 2014
(Attended by 22 delegates)



ACT Council of
Parents & Citizens
Associations

The parent voice on public education

PARENT PARTICIPATION PROJECT BY ARACY

Dr Stacey Fox explained the aim of the project and its expected outcomes which include a guide for schools, a model for measuring the effectiveness of parental engagement and its impact on children, a tool box of resources for parents and schools. She discussed the current research phase which will lead to a survey and then to the deliverables by the end of next year. Defining what parental engagement means is the first step in the research and delegates gave their input to this definition. The ultimate aim of the project is to improve the learning and wellbeing of ACT school students and families.

CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM MOTIONS

It was moved Bichard/Williams that the ACT Council of P&C Associations is greatly concerned at the Federal Government's failure to recognise the secular nature of public schools and their misdirection of funds to the Chaplaincy in schools program, when scarce funds should be directed to meet the need for more school counsellors and student welfare officers.

CARRIED

It was agreed that, following the High Court judgement on the Federal government's funding of the Chaplaincy Program, we refrain from the proposed action plan until it is clear what the Federal and ACT governments will do with the allocated funds. Council has already raised this matter with the Minister at our recent meeting and she seems to mostly agree with our position.

A brief on the situation will be prepared by the Council office and circulated to all P&Cs – **ACTION: MWall**

SCHOOL PARKING AND TRAFFIC ISSUES

Nearly all the schools represented at the meeting continued to have parking and set down/pickup problems. The newer and future planned schools seem to have avoided this problem. To provide Council with detailed evidence to take to the Government, it is planned to conduct an online survey. We also need to know what action the school P&C and /or Principal have taken to raise their problems with ETD or TAMS. Council will take the problems to both Ministers concerned.

ACTION: JKennard, ALL

PROBLEM TEACHERS AND ETD COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

Dealing with problem teachers can be difficult for parents. Solutions are to talk either through the P&C or individually to the Principal, if no resolution achieved refer the matter to the ETD via their complaints system or to P&C Council in writing. There is a link on our website to the ETD website complaints page. You can also ask to speak to the School Net Work Leader. Council can pursue the matter with ETD and the AEU as necessary. Such issues should be raised at the earliest stage and not allowed to drag on. Item for the next Communicator newsletter.

ACTION: JKennard

P&C AUDITORS

Smaller P&Cs with low income do not need registered auditors to do their annual audit. Such a P&C member with the appropriate accounting skills, who is not on the P&C Executive, can perform the P&Cs annual audit. Any issues with auditors should be advised to the Council so that we can amend our list of auditors. Besides Council's list of P&C auditors, lists of auditors are also available on the Chartered Accountants and CPAs websites. Unless a P&C has a high income & expenditure, it should not be paying more than a few hundred dollars up to \$900 (for an account of \$150,000) for registered auditor services for annual audits. Problems with auditors should be referred to the Council for action.

ACTION: TLS, ALL

GRANT AVAILABILITY AND APPLICATIONS

There are many grants available to community groups such as P&Cs from a wide range of organisations, see:
www.grants.act.gov.au/

www.health.act.gov.au/hpgrants

www.communityservices.act.gov.au/women/grants_and_scholarships

www.australia.gov.au/topics/business-and-.../grants-and-financial-assistance

Council is preparing a number of items on grants and how to apply for them eg templates guides etc which will be added to our P&C resources pages on our website. **ACTION: JKennard**

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

ACT schools are often involved with the local Neighbourhood Watch, with school premises being used to hold regular meetings and Principals or other staff attending the meetings. It is basically a matter of the Principal being approached or approaching the local Neighbourhood Watch area co-ordinator. The following web link may provide more information: <http://www.nhwact.com.au/>

P&C INSURANCE AND SCHOOL BUILDING WORK

P&C members are covered by their P&C Council sourced P&C insurance when working on any P&C sponsored task, whether on/or off school grounds. However, where P&Cs members are working on school property and on school buildings or fittings, the school/ETD would be responsible for any such work. Any liability issue would rest with the school/ETD in such a situation even though the P&C members are personally covered by the P&C insurance. It is therefore up to the Principal to approve such work. Further advice on this matter can be obtained from David McAlary at Civic Insurance Brokers on Ph 62626115.

LOCAL AND SCHOOL OVALS MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

ETD has provided detailed information on this topic. Contact any of the people listed at the end of the attached letter for more assistance.

P&C COUNCIL MEDIA RELEASES DISTRIBUTION

At the request of delegates it was agreed to email P&C Council media releases to all P&Cs at the time of issue to the media. Media releases will also continue to be placed on the Council's website. **ACTION: JKennard**

ATTACHMENTS:

1. ETD response on school and local ovals management & maintenance
2. P&C Council President's report for 24 June 14

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

Phone (02) 6241 5759 Fax (02) 6241 8839 Website www.actparents.org.au

ETD RESPONSE TO AGENDA ITEM 4 H – School & Local Ovals Management.

ATTACHMENT 2

Dear Terry,

Thank you for your email dated 12 June 2014 enquiring about the management and maintenance of neighbourhood and community ovals adjacent to ACT public schools.

As you will be aware, during the earlier ACTEW water restrictions, irrigation to some community and school ovals had been turned off. This was part of the ACT Government's contribution to the community water conservation measures. As a consequence, the condition of many of the community and school ovals deteriorated.

Through Sport and Recreation Services (SRS) in the Economic Development Directorate, the ACT Government is progressively restoring community ovals and, I am informed, has been reinstating around one oval each financial year. This is of course subject to funding availability to SRS each year. I am also informed that currently there are 14 community ovals adjacent to ACT public schools that had deteriorated and are planned to be restored. Re-instatement work for the oval adjacent to Torrens Primary School is programmed for the 2014-15 year.

With regard to ovals and sports fields on school sites, ACT public schools are directly funded for the management and maintenance of those ovals. The exception is Wanniasa School (senior campus) which is directly managed by the Education and Training Directorate (ETD). However, ETD does work with schools that require assistance with re-instating school ovals and informal open space areas.

Recently, ETD has installed or assisted with the installation of artificial grass sports fields and informal play areas at the following schools:

- Neville Bonner Primary School
- Harrison School (senior campus)
- Franklin Early Childhood School
- Weetangera Primary School
- North Ainslie Primary School
- O'Connor Cooperative School
- Torrens Primary School
- Namadgi School
- Calwell Primary School
- Monash Primary School
- Theodore Primary School
- Telopea Park School
- Kingsford Smith School
- Canberra College
- Gold Creek School (junior campus) – jointly with SRS

In addition, ETD has also assisted the following schools to upgrade the school natural grass ovals:

- Calwell Primary School
- Hawker Primary School
- Farrer Primary School
- Torrens Primary School
- Namadgi School
- Taylor Primary School

I trust that this information is helpful. Should you wish to further discuss any plans for community ovals, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Brian Ashcroft, Manager Sport and Recreation Services on tel: 6207 5143 or brian.ashcroft@act.gov.au or any plans for school ovals and play areas, please do not hesitate to contact Mr Rodney Bray, Director Infrastructure and Capital Works on tel: 6205 3173 or rodney.bray@act.gov.au

Regards, **Meg Brighton** | Executive Director

Organisational Integrity | **Education and Training Directorate** | ACT Government

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 24TH JUNE 2014 HOT TOPICS MEETING, VIV PEARCE

The office and various members of the Executive have been actively following up on various issues such as canteen and sugary drinks initiatives, chaplaincy program, changes to the Year 12 certificate, approval of new private schools, lobbying for needs based funding, problems in the disability area and increasing the effectiveness and usefulness of communication to P&Cs and parents. See below:

CONTINUING ISSUES from last General Meeting –

ACT ISSUES

Parent Participation ACTION: in progress

- **Website, Facebook, Twitter etc. initiatives.** Have you and your P&C liked our Facebook page and checked out new pages, Help for P&Cs and parents, on Council website? <http://www.actparents.org.au>
- **Parental Engagement-** ARACY coming to next General meeting, good opportunity to ask questions. We need to get our monies worth out of this group's work on parental engagement.

Canteens NSW Buy is now operational. Signing up of school canteens to online ordering with Flexischools continues. Council continues to network with ETD, Health Dept., Healthy Kids Association and Nutrition Australia to facilitate canteen initiatives. A **PC Council School Canteen Working Group and Stakeholders Meeting** will be held on the 26.6.14. All welcome, we need to know what issues your canteen is having. Meetings on the development of a Water Fountain/Sugary Drinks Policy have been attended. Contracts for P&Cs and outsourced canteens are being finalized. With agreement from ETD, canteens can now use the school's online connections for their computers. We are promoting information to Principals using ETDs Principal's Newsletter.

Students Needing Additional Help - ACTIONS In progress

- **New Gifted and Talented ETD policy** A copy of the new G&T policy and Parent Information sheets, which Council had input, http://www.det.act.gov.au/teaching_and_learning/curriculum_programs/g-and-talented-education please promote to parents.
 - **Council's booklet** "Who Can Help? A Disability Resources Booklet for Young People in the ACT". Copies still available, contact office. Make sure your school has copies.
 - **Students Needing Additional Help - A revised policy will be circulated before August policy conference.**
- Disability Working Group**, a successful meeting was held on 5.6.14. This group is open to all parents. **Action**-follow up issues in letter and in next DERG meeting, next Working group meeting Term 3, possibly invite Chair of DERG.
- **Implementation of Learning Difficulties Taskforce Recommendations.** This is one area where Gonski money has been well targeted. However it appears the newly formed Dyslexia SPELD ACT (DSA) did not get funding for their advocacy, referral and training services (\$50,000). In the 6 months since the group has been active they have made a good contribution to the support of ACT families in the area of learning difficulties. **Action** Executive - Council needs to explore whether we should raise this issue with Minister and ETD.

Planning Process for New Private Schools Applications-

Council was offered an update on the work ETD is doing emanating from the review, John and I attended, see report. Progress is being made in this area; we will end up with an improved process for approvals. It will not be as rigorous as we would have liked, so vigilance by Council will still be needed.

FEDERAL ISSUES

Minister Pyne has been pursuing various issues which need close scrutiny:

- **Gonski Needs Based Funding.** In the ACT, by asking questions we are attempting to understand how first 4 years of money is being used. It's hard!!
The majority of Gonski federal money was to happen in Years 5 and 6; this funding model has been discontinued. It appears that private schools will be the big winners. Council is networking with other

educational stakeholders to refine our future lobbying in this area.

Action: All - Persistent lobbying needs to continue, Council needs to keep parents well informed in this important area.

- **Chaplains** in public schools; there have been some problems in local schools. The Federal money for secular workers has been withdrawn, while money for religious chaplains was to continue (\$240 million) - until the High Court decision last week. If money is given directly to ACT, which seems likely, we need to negotiate with ACT Minister about how we want money delivered. We put out media release. We have been asking questions at ETD and Minister's meetings to clarify the area of religious education in the ACT in Government schools. The Minister has agreed to look into this area.
Action Executive has prepared some motions on these issues, to be voted on at hot topics meeting. We also need to recheck our policy in this area.
- **School Autonomy** (called Independent Schools), ongoing.
- **National Curriculum Review**, ongoing - Implementation in ACT has been good.
- **Teacher Education/Quality**
The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) are bodies' set up by the previous government around these issues. This area is also a major focus for Minister Pyne.
- **ACSSO (Australian Council of State School Organisations)** National Executive met in Canberra weekend of 24th May to discuss federal issues and governance of ACSSO.(report Donna). Letter sent from Council re office and timetable of meetings of President and CEO to facilitate networking with ACT.
- **My School/NAPLAN**- The aim is to repeat our campaign to inform parents regarding the misleading data published by the Canberra Times. Office is monitoring media in this area.

Office – Planning continues for policy conference in August. Review into Year 12 Certificate has been submitted. Work on Canteen initiatives, Parent ACTION, updates to Facebook, and general inquiries have kept staff busy. A subcommittee for Before and After school Care has also been set up as requested by General Meeting. Council also raised this issue with Minister. Several letters re Year 12 Review, ACSSO, and Disability etc. have also been sent.

MEETINGS ATTENDED: SINCE LAST MEETING

- **Pre-consultation Advisory Group for Food and Drink Policy**, several meetings, Council rep Matt Williams, Viv .P. Council's view is while we support the phasing out of sugary drinks in schools, the policy must reflect the difficulties in High schools and Colleges in implementing policy with such a short timeline. This issue was also raised with Minister.
- **BSSS, 22.5.14 Review Year 12 Certificate Meeting** - Hugh B. Attended.
- **ACT Budget 3.6.14**, we did not put out a press release on the ACT Budget, as there were no great surprises or cuts. However we did note the large amount of money allocated to IT and infrastructure in the private schools. We raised this at the meeting with Minister. Amanda, Hugh and Maclaren attended Budget consultations. A response has been sent in, Council decided not to attend the Budget hearings.
- **Forum on Year 12 Review, Executive Meeting 10.6.14**. Head of BSSS spoke; a very informative meeting which helped crystallized our ideas for Council submission to the review.
- **BSSS board 12.6.14 Hugh B**
- **DERG (Disability Education Reference Group) meeting 27.5.14** Karen Mc. Attended. See report
- **Disability Working Group Meeting, 5.6.14**. A small group but worthwhile discussion of various issues
- **Planning Process for New Private Schools Applications Update -13.6.14**, John and Viv
- **Parental Engagement Stakeholder Group 17.6.14** -
- **Meeting Minister 18.6.14, 11.30am,Legislative Assembly**, very positive meeting, Minister has agreed to look into issues we raised.
General Meeting /Hot Topics 24.6.14, speaker from ARACY on ACT Parent Engagement Project

MEETINGS STILL TO COME

- **2020 Vision Project**. Future? Meeting ETD, SeeChange , Viv.P , 26.6.14
- **PC Council School Canteen Working Group and Stakeholders Meeting 26.6.14,7pm**,
- **Gonski Action Day 28.7.14**

- **Policy Conference/General Meeting 26.8.14**
- **Forum for EALD parents and educators November 13th**

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MEDIA

- 11.6.14 Pole dancing Canberra parents beg for kids' pole-dancing classes
<http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/-zs3w4.html>
I was asked for comment, I also received an email from a pole dancer confirming my view as expressed in article.
- 12.6.14 Letter to editor C.T re article saying public schools had no values, see on our website
- 24.6.14 High Court decision against federal chaplaincy program
Viv Pearce said schools "need more counselors, not chaplains".
Read more: <http://www.canberratimes.com.au/act-news/support-for-high-court-ruling-against-school-chaplains-program-20140619-zsf9o.html#ixzz35WuRKLuB>

Also our media release, both John Haydon and myself gave radio interviews