

NOTES FROM THE ACT COUNCIL OF P&C ASSOCIATIONS
HOT TOPICS/ISSUES MEETING OF 23 September 2014
(Attended by 12 delegates)



ACT Council of
Parents & Citizens
Associations

The parent voice on public education

ETD POLICY ONSCHOOL OPEN SPACES & COOMBS PS DESIGN WORKING GROUP

The Council office has received advice from ETD on how school open space area is determined and the formula they use for new schools. We also have the latest meeting minutes of the Coombs Primary School Design Working Group which will meet again on 8 October. Anyone interested in attending that meeting should contact the Council office.

MEETINGS WITH ETD AND THE MINISTER

Reports on the recent meetings with ETD on 26 Aug and the Minister on 10 Sep are attached. Agenda items for the next ETD meeting on 17 Nov are called for now.

SCHOOL TRAFFIC AND PARKING SURVEY RESULTS

Janelle Kennard explained the results of the recent survey where over 1,100 responses had been received. Note it is not for release to the media at this time.

It was agreed that the Council write to the Minister and ETD to recommend a Ministerial task force be established to address the traffic and parking set-down issues around schools. This should include TAMS, ACTION buses, ETD, Urban Services, the Health Directorate and the P&C Council.

ACTION: TLS

It was also noted that the Council was to include in its ACT budget submission, \$500,000 for detailed research into school traffic, parking and set-down issues and solutions. Also we should seek funding for the renewal of the Walking Bus program in the ACT.

ACTION: MW

DEREGULATION AND FEE INCREASES AT UNIVERSITIES

It was noted that the P&C Council does represent universities in its membership and therefore any consideration of university issues should be in relation to the impact they might have on students in colleges and high schools. Increased university fees could result in more students seeking to go into Vocational Education & Training (VET) and thus placing greater strains on that sector. It was agreed that the Council not make public statements on the university fees issue but use our normal lobbying avenues to highlight the problems that may arise in the VET sector and VET training in colleges and high schools.

ACTION: Executive

POSSIBLE REDUCTION IN PRESCHOOL HOURS FOLLOWING THE END OF FEDERAL FUNDING

It was noted that the federal funding for preschools would continue until the end of 2015, thus allowing the continuation of 15 hrs per week per child. If that funding stops, the ACT government would have to provide the additional funding or the number of hours would drop to 12. In discussion, there was some feeling that the extra ACT funding may be better spent on other educational priorities. Therefore, it was agreed that we:

- Seek information from preschool parents and the Canberra Preschool Society on whether the reduction to 12 hours would create problems for them. **ACTION: JK/TLS**
- Include gap funding for preschools for beyond 2015 in our ACT budget submission. **ACTION: MW**
- Take a measured approach to this issue until we have more information.

STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS THE SHORTAGE OF TEACHER LIBRARIANS IN ACT SCHOOLS

Cecilia Shlegel advised that Council had raised this issue with the Minister and ETD. The Executive had developed a strategy which included:

Encourage the Minister and ETD to adopt a policy that all ACT schools must have a qualified (or under training) teacher librarian. Include in our ACT budget submission extra targeted funding for the training and employment of teacher librarians to meet the ETD policy.

Continue to gather statistics to support our lobbying.

ACTION: Executive, TLS, MW, JK

P&C COUNCIL ACT BUDGET SUBMISSION

There are a number of items already identified for our ACT budget submission and they include those noted at this meeting plus:

- \$2 million for converting college and high school canteens to cafe standard facilities.
- \$250,000 for a high profile education campaign in colleges and high schools to convince students of the benefits of non-sugary drinks.

It was suggested that we include funding for schools to provide Mathletics and Reading Eggs for students. P&Cs should email other items for our ACT budget submission to Maclaren Wall in the Council office ASAP.

BENEFITS OF HOMEWORK FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

The recent Victorian report on homework in Victorian schools has sparked the debate on the pros and cons of homework for primary school children. There was general agreement that if homework is given, there needs to be follow-up by teachers via assessment or class room activity and feed back to parents. The negative aspects of homework at the younger ages need to be addressed if homework is to be successful in its aims. It was agreed that Council refrain from any lobbying on this topic until after the Council AGM on 25 Nov at which we hoped to have an ETD presenter to speak on the topic and ETD's homework policy.

LIKELY IMPACT OF VET TRAINING FOLLOWING INCREASES IN UNIVERSITY FEES

On 3 Sep, Hugh Boulter appeared before the ACT Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education & Youth Affairs to explain our (and his) concerns about this issue. He had noted the lack of business responses to the Standing Committee on this topic and the difficulties that a significant increase in students seeking vocational training would have on ACT registered training organisations (RTOs). In particular, he expressed concerns about the colleges and high schools that had VET programs and the disastrous consequences for students in such programs if the schools lose their RTO status. He advised that ETD had no applied for RTO status as an umbrella body for such schools.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Report on the meeting with ETD on 26 Aug 14
2. Report on the Minister's meeting on 10 Sep 14

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

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