



Welcoming new parents

P&Cs are welcoming new families starting school — with a little help from Council and Children’s Week funding.

Late last year, Council received a Children's Week Grant to support P&C projects to welcome families starting school in 2022. We matched the funding and invited P&Cs to apply for \$200 to assist with expenses. The theme was ‘play & network’ and the idea was to support P&Cs and Parent Associations to welcome families, provide P&C information and parent resources, and opportunities for children to play and make friends.

Most P&Cs already have great ideas to welcome new parents but it’s a particularly challenging task during a pandemic.

One primary school P&C used the funding for a combined family picnic and Annual General Meeting in the garden in December. They provided children’s entertainment during the AGM, and created a COVID-safe and wet-weather plan. Over one hundred adults and children attended — a third of the families enrolled to start at the school! The funding covered two thirds of expenses while the event was organised with assistance from a relatively new parent to the school

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A tub of playdough to welcome each new family, wrapped in a note introducing the Harrison P&C.

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From the President



Alison Elliott

Back to *school*

What a very hectic and, for some, confusing start to the year. COVID is still with us, and complicated the return to school. We know some parents absolutely wanted students back to face-to-face teaching from Week 1, and an equal number wanted students to engage in home schooling from Week 1. Not everyone is happy with the decision to return face to face, but many families have struggled with remote learning. Every family has their own set of unique circumstances behind these preferences, and being mindful and respectful of that during these difficult times is really important.

We know the Education Directorate and Education Minister worked hard over the holiday period to ensure the return to school would be as safe as possible. The provision of RATs was a welcome reassurance for everyone. Council continues to advocate on behalf of parents around strong and timely communication to parents, as we know this is really important, and last minute decisions and announcements just add to the stress and anxiety.

We are aware of varying experiences with the rollout of RATs in Week 1, and we hope the changes to that process will remove the frustrations some were experiencing.

Despite the difficulties, we've seen our parent associations come up with wonderful ways to welcome parents to schools in 2022, particularly new parents. See the article on page 1.

Changes at Council

Council Executive undertook a recruitment process during December with Terry Sanders retiring. I would like to welcome Veronica Elliott as our new Executive Officer. Many of you will already know Veronica from her role as Council's Policy Officer. We also welcomed David Pollard as our new Policy Officer.

Council's Executive Committee had their first meeting in early February, where we discussed our priorities and passions for 2022. This will help shape the agenda for general meetings throughout 2022, along with what's important to our members.

The parent *voice*

Council continues to listen to parents through our network of delegates. We saw this network swing into action in January to gather feedback on the return to school and we are incredibly grateful for the feedback you were able to collect in such a short time. We were able to voice your views to the Education Directorate to feed into their planning.

One of the on-going mechanisms for Council to voice parent views is through the representative positions we have secured with a number of important organisations and on Government committees. Find out more about these, and how to get involved on [page 12](#). •

Welcoming new parents

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Mawson P&C's flyer welcomes preschool and kindy families.

wonderful way to get to know the school. The feedback I've received from parents is really touching.'

Parents often tell Council that they appreciate the opportunity to network with other parents and learn about what's happening at the school.

Harrison School P&C purchased playdough pots as a welcome gift for each child starting preschool and printed flyers with information about the P&C. Parents were also invited to join their virtual community on Facebook. This is a space where families can connect and access relevant information. Liz, the EL Parent Rep also shares reference information from Council, such as early childhood resources, information on transitions to preschool/school, and active play.

While the funding Council had to share wasn't large, we found that small gestures can make a big impression on new parents. It's a worthwhile investment towards growing your P&C.

Learn more at our Early Learning meeting

A snapshot of the welcome events will be shared at the next Early Learning Committee meeting on Thursday February 17 (Week 3).

Register for the new time of [10.30am](#) or join us for a summary later at [7.30pm](#). ●

who has a background in event management. We will be sharing her top tips for organising this event at the next Early Learning Committee meeting (see below).

A welcome event is a terrific opportunity for the P&C to say 'hello and welcome!' to new parents and carers, and have a brief conversation about the P&C and what you do. It's an invitation for new families to stay connected, and utilise P&C resources.

Mawson Primary P&C had to cancel their face-to-face event due to COVID restrictions. Instead, they produced a flyer to accompany welcome giftbags for preschool and kindergarten children. Ayomi, the Early Learning (EL) Parent Rep at Mawson Primary said that the giftbags helped children to feel special and welcome, and the flyers welcomed the families, inviting them to connect with their P&C.

'The P&C AGM was my first introduction to the P&C and when I nominated to become the Early Learning Parent Representative, it's been a

Get involved!

Relationships & Sexuality Education Alliance

Council is proud to be part of the RSEA - Relationships and Sexuality Education Alliance - which was launched late last year to advocate for comprehensive relationships and sexuality education. All parents are invited to be involved.

The importance of educating our children and young people about consent and relationships, and questions about how sex education is currently presented in our schools, are issues which parents have raised repeatedly over the years. Council responded last year by teaming up to launch a new alliance with other like-minded organisations and key experts.

The Relationships and Sexuality Education Alliance (RSEA) is a group of passionate advocates and partner organisations aiming to harness their collective experience and expertise to influence and advocate for universal access to Comprehensive Relationships and Sexuality Education for all children and young people in the ACT.

Council believes that we needed expert input from the Alliance partners to move towards an age-appropriate and comprehensive program for our schools — to help keep all our kids safe and sensibly informed.

Other Alliance members include:

- Sexual Health & Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT)
- YWCA Canberra
- Institute of Child Protection Studies
- Katrina Marson, a criminal lawyer who has worked in both prosecution and defence — principally in the areas of family violence and sexual offences.
- Dr Kelly Frame, who has worked in education for over a decade, teaching secondary, undergraduate, and postgraduate students and academic staff.



What is **Comprehensive Relationships & Sexuality Education?**

The Alliance is advocating for comprehensive and age-appropriate lessons, activities, curricula, and programs that address relationships, sex, sexuality, sexual health, families, puberty, bodies, and reproduction. It is critical that the education is not limited to only some aspects, and it must address sexual wellbeing protection and sexualised violence prevention. Such a program would be based on:

- the evidence of what works to promote healthy and respectful relationships, decreases sexual violence and protect against negative sexual experiences
- broad community partnerships that are ongoing and include schools, families and community
- a holistic approach focusing on improving knowledge, changing attitudes, and building skills
- being age-appropriate and consistent – building on prior learnings – beginning in early

childhood to support an ongoing conversation

- supporting a positive approach to sexuality, relationships, and wellbeing that builds on the right to health and wellbeing and teaches young people to communicate appropriately and openly about themselves and their relationships
- linking students and families with supports and services that offer information and help in the community
- supporting diversity and inclusion and representing everyone's lived experience including people with disability and from different ethnic and religious communities
- being appropriate for particular groups' learning or communication needs such as visual content, delivering to small groups, or specific pace of learning
- including evaluation and protection mechanisms to ensure effective learning and protection to support the safety of participants.



A comprehensive program would provide information and guidance on:

- bodies and physical development (such as puberty) including diversity in sex characteristics
- the science of human reproduction and the social science of the importance of family
- social/emotional development (friendships/relationships)
- understanding of human sexuality and gender
- expressing and responding to personal boundaries and questions of consent
- supporting informed decision-making and consequential thinking
- health-literacy, health-promoting, and health-seeking behaviours.

Why is it important?

Recently, we have seen many young people stepping forward to ask for better relationships and sexuality education. The Alliance believes a comprehensive evidenced-based relationships and sexuality education will give young people the knowledge and tools they need to successfully navigate their adulthood. Research shows that this type of education decreases sexual violence, protects against negative sexual experiences, and promotes healthy and respectful relationships.

How you can *be involved*

Anyone interested in adding their name to the call for comprehensive education in this area is invited to become a member of the RSEA. You can join up on the [RSEA website](#). Associate members will receive updates from time to time on the work of the Alliance, along with invitations to Alliance meetings and events. Membership is free.

Show your support by becoming a member. •

Recycle & raise funds

There are now more ways to exchange used drink containers for P&C funds.

There is a new way to return your eligible drink containers in Canberra with the opening of the first ACT Container Deposit Scheme (CDS) reverse vending machine (RVM).

Located in the carpark of Erindale Shopping Centre, this new type of return point gives your P&C association another self-service option to recycle eligible drink containers and raise money for your association.

The RVM is open from 7am to 7pm, seven days a week and is powered by solar energy to further reduce any impact on the environment.



The first reverse vending machine (RVM) in Tuggeranong

Return your containers at an RVM in four easy steps

- The RVM scans and counts your containers and you can donate the refund directly to your P&C Association's Return-It Express account. Sign up for a Return-It Express account [online](#).
- Take your containers to the machine and scan your Express account QR code to get started.
- Return your containers through the appropriate chute to be scanned and counted.
- After you have returned your containers, your refund will appear in your Express account within a few business days.
- Container recycling is something everyone can take part in — whether a P&C member or a student recycles two bottles or 20.
- For more information about the ACT CDS and what containers are eligible for a 10 cent refund, please visit www.actcds.com.au.

Find out more @ Council's Canteen Sub-Committee meeting

Using the ACT CDS and engaging your P&C members in recycling is appealing for many reasons. It is a great way to care for our environment, reduce the waste bill and embed sustainable practices at your school.

The savings from your recycling initiatives and the funds raised with the ACT CDS can go towards supporting your association, other charities or school projects.

Join the ACT CDS and ACTSmart teams to learn more about how to engage your members in recycling and sustainability at Council's Canteen Sub-Committee meeting at 7pm on Wednesday March 16. The meeting will be held on Zoom. [Email Council](#) to receive the link.

Fundraise for your school and help the environment

Did you know that 56% of ACT schools surveyed have participated in the ACT CDS?

Schools use the scheme to fundraise for their end-of-year formal, installation of solar panels, new playground equipment, or to support environmental charities and other good causes. For schools and P&C associations interested in getting involved in container recycling, the ACT CDS has developed a Fundraising Toolkit full of helpful information and useful resources to get started.

Tips to fundraise with the ACT CDS at school:

- Set up collection stations at the school for students to place their empty drink containers. Identify suitable collection points within your school, such as near the canteen or recreational areas, or in each classroom, and place clean labelled bins with signs showing pictures of eligible cans and bottles. Use one of the posters included in the ACT CDS Fundraising Toolkit and when the bins are full take them to one of our return points for your refund.
- Register your association for [Clean Up Australia Day](#) or organise regular drop-offs and encourage your members, students and their families to bring in eligible cans and bottles collected at home.
- Create an [online account](#) and share your number with the wider school community. Simply sign up for an Express Account using your school's phone number and encourage your community to donate their refunds directly to your express account by using your school's phone number.

For more on fundraising with the ACT CDS and to download the Toolkit, visit the [CDS online](#).

Trailer Program

If you are planning a big event but don't know how you'll store and transport the containers, check out the free trailer hire program for schools, communities and P&C associations available through the scheme's network operator, Return-It. You can make a booking directly on their [website](#).

What containers are eligible for a 10 cent refund?

It's the smaller, more portable drink containers, between 150mL to 3L that are eligible — they need to be empty and the '10c' symbol needs to be visible so we can determine the container is eligible for a refund. Lids need to be disposed of before returning and uncrushed cans are preferred.

Containers can be dropped off at one of the many return points across the ACT. Each type of return point offers different refund options.

There's more information online about [what containers are eligible](#) and [directions to Return-It points](#).



Free school lessons

The ACT CDS has partnered with Cool Australia to provide free curriculum-linked teaching resources on sustainability and recycling for Early Learning through to Year 6. The ACT CDS is a great way to engage students in recycling and litter reduction initiatives while raising funds for your school's projects.

Teachers can [download the following free resources](#):

Early Learning: Different Containers

Early Learning: Cleaning the Environment

Foundation: What's it made from? (Science)

Years 3 & 4: Rethinking Waste (Design and Tech)

Years 3 & 4: Exchanging for Good (Maths)

Years 5 & 6: Conscious Consumer Decision Trees (Humanities)

Years 5 & 6: Fundraising through the CDS (Humanities)

[Email](#) the ACT CDS for more information or general enquiries. •

Paid content provided by Exchange for Change.

Why I volunteer

Meet the volunteers that make Council tick!

Siaan Ansori

**Kaleen Primary School P&C Vice President
& Council Executive Member**

I volunteer at my local school P&C and with Council to enrich my children's education and to positively influence the ACT public education system for all students and families across Canberra.

Many parents can't participate in their local P&Cs. I hope my voice goes some way to representing lesser-heard minority views and promotes happy, inspiring, and equal learning experiences for all students, no matter their family background or home environment.

I strongly value the work of Council, particularly our recent advocacy on the impacts of COVID-19 on our students and schools. I hope my role in Council helps all ACT students to emerge from the pandemic in a safe, positive and supported way. •



All about...

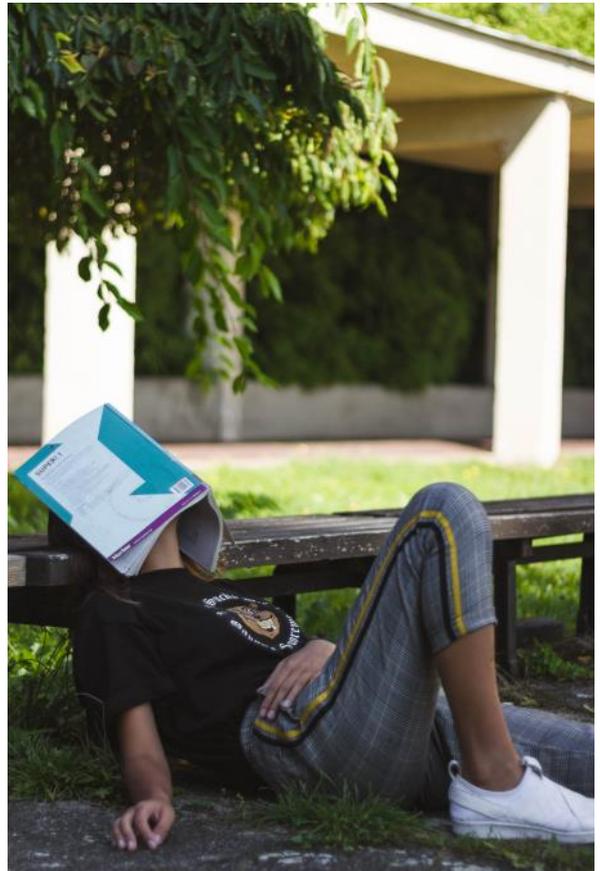
School Psychologists

We've received many questions from member P&Cs about the important role school psychologists play. The Education Directorate's Student Engagement team has supplied this explainer.

There is a School Psychologist position at every ACT public school. School psychologists are part of the Directorate's multidisciplinary approach to supporting student inclusion, academic success, psychological health and social emotional wellbeing. They work within schools and are part of the School's Student Wellbeing Team.

School Psychologists are registered health professionals with the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency. To work with students, they need the informed consent of parents/carers and/or individual students. The School Psychologist can help parents, carers and students understand the range of services that can be offered, how long these may take, and how the service will be delivered. The type of service depends on the reason for the referral and the outcome of support for the student.

The School Psychologist can provide services that may include:



Assessment

School Psychologists work with school staff, parents/carers and/or the student to collect information about the presenting concern. This can include observations, formal testing and reviewing other records. A report may be written from these assessments. Recommendations for support will generally be shared with key school staff. At times these assessments will support a student's access to other services within Education (e.g. Inclusion support) and have deadlines for completion.

Support and Intervention

School Psychologists can work directly with the student or the family. This type of support might be provided individually or in a group setting. Sharing information for how the student can be supported at school is often an important feature of this work.

Consultation

School Psychologists provide advice and information to teachers and parents/carers on ways to support students at school and home. This can include suggesting relevant services and

supports. They might also get involved to help share and explain recommendations by other professionals both internal and external.

School psychologists may also work with members of the student services team (school youth health nurse, school social worker, youth worker); collaborate with community providers to coordinate referrals or services for students; and work with the school executive team on school-wide practices and procedures.

Students presenting with the greatest risk factors (risk to self or others) are prioritised. All school



psychologists have the required training in undertaking risk assessments that help establish safety for the student and others.

Families with mental health or wellbeing concerns should speak to their school, as the pathway for accessing support differs in different schools. In primary settings a student's class teacher is a good person to first discuss any concerns. In high school, this may be a year coordinator or others within the Student Wellbeing Team. Colleges and many High

Telehealth appointments with School Psychologists were first established during COVID lockdown and continue to be available.

Schools will have student services or wellbeing hubs where students can seek and access a range of support services themselves. School Psychologists also continue to be available via telehealth appointments. These sessions were established during the 2021 pandemic lockdown, and will continue through at least Term 1, 2022.

The ACT Government's 2016 election commitment of 20 additional psychology positions over four years has been met with four temporary positions permanently established in 2020. The additional funding for psychologists in schools gave an opportunity to establish the Psychology Assessment and Early Intervention teams as recommended from the 2018 review of the service. The centralised service delivery from these teams helps provide continuity of service to schools when there is a temporary vacancy, develop specialisation across the service and engage in group intervention for secondary schools.

In 2021, 81.6 full time equivalent (FTE) psychologists support students in ACT public schools, including 62.0 FTE working directly in schools.

Every three years, the amount of time allocated to each school and central teams is updated. Calculations using data about the needs of the student population and projected enrolment numbers inform how the resources across the Directorate are distributed. School psychologists are placed in schools and the central teams by matching the school or team allocated time with the school psychologist's availability, preference, experience and suitability to a school setting. •

Healthy canteens

Canteens have changed a lot since we were at school. Evie Green from the Healthy Kids Association explains why policies to ensure healthy options are so important.



We all want what's best for our kids and looking after their health and wellbeing is part of being a parent. But when they go through the school gate, that parental responsibility is handed over for six hours of the day.

Our kids are taught about the benefits of eating lots of fruit, vegetables and wholegrains, but that can be undone if it's not mirrored in the options available from the school canteen. The National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines aim to ensure that healthy eating is promoted both in and out of the classroom.

Forming positive eating behaviours at a young age supports a healthier relationship with food and can set up healthy eating habits for life. The National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines promote a healthy and balanced approach to eating by classifying foods and drinks available at school canteens under a traffic light system. Menu items are classified as **GREEN**, **AMBER** or **RED** based on the food or drink's nutritional value. These guidelines aim to assist canteen managers across Australia to make healthy choices when designing the school canteen menu and help highlight to our kids which foods and drinks best support their active days of learning and playing. It's important for kids to learn that the foods and drinks we consume are in fact our body's fuel to run faster and concentrate harder.

Within the canteen traffic light system, **GREEN** foods are the best choice and are to make up the majority of the menu. They contain a wide range of nutrients and are generally lower in saturated fat, sodium (salt), and/or sugar. **GREEN** menu items are drawn from the five food groups, encompassing foods and drinks like your kid's favourite lean chicken salad sandwiches, reduced-fat cheese and tomato toasties, fruit salads and the like.

AMBER items, on the other hand, contain some nutritional value but less so than **GREEN** items. For this reason, the guidelines dictate that **AMBER** foods and drinks are not to dominate a canteen menu. Examples are full-fat yoghurt cups, chicken nuggets and savoury pastries. **RED** foods and drinks lack adequate nutritional value and are not essential for a healthy diet. These items do not meet the **GREEN** or **AMBER** criteria and should not be included on canteen menus. All deep-fried foods, sugar-sweetened drinks and confectionery items are automatically **RED**.

The ACT Public School's Food and Drink Policy, means that all ACT public schools are required to implement these guidelines. This ensures that the foods and drinks provided to kids during school hours support their healthy development and concentration throughout the school day. And help to appease parents' peace of mind!

If you would like to learn more about the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines, head to the [Healthy Kids Association](https://www.healthykids.org.au) website, or email [their team](mailto:evie@healthykids.org.au). ●

The Parent Voice

Having a parent representative with key organisations and government committees gives Council an opportunity to provide the parent perspective on important topics.

Over the years, Council has been able to secure a seat at the table at many decision-making groups. It's been an important way that parent views have been voiced, heard and taken into account. In some cases, it has led to real change, or a greater appreciation of the challenges families face and the real situation 'on the ground' at our schools. Here are just some of the groups where we are represented, and a little of what was achieved recently.

Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO): input on Federal education issues and funding.

ACT Schools' Animal Ethics Committee

Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS): oversees year 11 and 12 studies, assessment and the awarding of Year 12 certificates and ATARs. The affect of lockdowns and delayed ATARs were hot topics on which parent representatives were able to comment.

Collaborative Working Group on Food at Schools: Our representative provided parent and P&C perspectives on EDU's Food and Drink Policy, the single-use-plastics ban, the procurement of canteen services in schools, and P&C-run canteens that are struggling in various ways, including the impacts of COVID restrictions and lockdowns. We also brought to the table concerns voiced at Council's internal Canteen Sub Committee, such as canteen maintenance.

Disability Education Reference Group: Last year Council representatives advocated strongly for reforms to make education more equitable and inclusive, and for continual work on the issue of violence in schools. The Group also had the opportunity to provide feedback on the remote learning experience for students with disability and sought improvements.

Healthy Kids Association

Relationships & Sex Education Alliance

Schools Sports Council ACT

School Transport Liaison Committee: Representing public school parents on bussing and transport issues

You can read more about the work of these groups in our [2021 Annual Report](#).

Each year we look for parents to take up these representative positions, and at our AGM last year, we welcomed some new volunteers — thanks everyone! Parent input for our representatives to voice is gathered, in part, at our General Meetings, so do come along if there is something you'd like to feed through. ●

To Do: Term 1

Essential tasks for parent associations:

- Get 2021 finances audited/reviewed. [Our website](#) has all the help you need.
- Prepare for your AGM (must be held by end of May). [Use our checklist!](#)
- Prepare handover notes for the new committee (simply adapt [our templates](#)).

After your AGM:

- Report to government – submit the Annual Return (AR form) to Access Canberra. (If your association is a registered charity complete the ACNC's Annual Information Statement online instead). [Find out more](#).
- Complete our [Office Bearer's form](#) so we have up-to-date membership details for you.
- Change signatories on the P&C's bank account to reflect the new committee ([tips on our website](#)).
- Introduce the new committee to the school community (e.g. via the school newsletter).

Dates to remember

- 17 Feb [Early Learning Committee Meeting](#) 10:30am or 7:30pm
- 22 Feb Council General Meeting ([register](#)) 7-9:30pm
- 16 March Canteen Sub-Committee Meeting ([join](#)) 7-9:30pm
- 24 March Council General Meeting 7-9:30pm
- 3 May [Free member workshop](#): Growing your P&C 7-8pm
- 4 May [Free member workshop](#): P&C operations & fundraising
- 3 May [Free member workshop](#): Treasurers & Insurance 7-9pm
- 3 May [Free member workshop](#): P&Cs as employers & canteen operators 7-8:30pm
- 30 May Last possible day for your AGM

All our meetings are held via Zoom.

Our training workshops are held online and are free for members. They are run by people with decades of P&C experience. Find out more and sign up [online](#).

P&C help

Your parent association is a member of the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations. We can help you to run your organisation well.

Contact us with your P&C questions!

(02) 6241 5759
contact@actparents.org.au
www.actparents.org.au

9:30am - 2:30pm Monday - Friday.
Closed public holidays and school holidays.

About us

The parent voice on public education

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is the peak body for public school parent associations. We bring together delegates from Canberra's public schools to represent the views of parents to decision makers and the media.

About our magazine

ParentACTION is our free journal.

Contributions, advertising & feedback are welcome. Contact the Editor, [Janelle Kennard](#).

Views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of Council. Authorised by Veronica Elliott for the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations.

Our people

Executive

President: Alison Elliott
Vice Presidents: Paul Buckley
Kirsty McGovern-Hooley
Secretary: Cecilia Shlegel
Treasurer: Vacant
Committee: Sharon Ding, Taymore Tabbath, Jayne Trustum, Vivienne Pearce OAM, Erin Papps, Norma Yap, Sarah Everingham.

Office staff

Executive Officer: Veronica Elliott
Communications Officer: Janelle Kennard
Policy Officer: David Pollard
Early Learning Officer: Marina Spurgin
Executive Assistant: Melissa Lee

Council acknowledges that we live, learn and work on the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal people. We pay respect to elders past, present, and future.