



Spending P&C funds

At Council, we get many questions about how P&Cs can spend their hard-earned funds. Veronica Elliott answers all your questions.

Did you know that P&Cs contribute around \$1.5-2 million in funds to ACT public schools every year? But deciding how to spend your P&C's funds can be challenging. Committees can find that a diversity of beliefs and opinions hinders decision making. Read on for our tips to help.

Start with a plan

The beginning of the year is a great time for P&Cs to plan how funds will be spent. In forming a plan to spend P&C funds it's important to consider how much money is available. To work this out, consult with your treasurer and think about your budget for the year. Carefully consider your opening balance, expected income and routine expenses, such as insurance. (There's more on budgeting in our new Treasurer Handbook.)

What to spend the money on?

A P&C that has strong ties with parents and carers, the principal, the school Board, and teachers will usually have no shortage of suggestions on how to spend funds. Asking your school community for ideas and suggestions promotes the success of your P&C and creates a sense of ownership within the community which leads to increased participation, and ultimately a more successful P&C. The easiest way to ask your school community for suggestions is to do a quick

Continued on page 3



Fadden Primary's P&C recently paid for a new teaching kitchen, which the kids and teachers are loving.

Inside this issue

From the President	p. 2
Helping students stress less	p. 4
Fundraising to get kids moving	p. 5
We're <i>your</i> Council	p. 6
Positive partnerships	p. 7
At our P&C	p.10
Listening to our members	p.12
Dates to remember	p.12

From the President



John Haydon

The ACT Government has just commenced a program called 'The future of education – an ACT community conversation' but the title is a bit misleading because the entire focus of the program, according to Minister Berry at the program launch I attended in April, is on equity, on over-coming disadvantage.

Equity is undoubtedly a major social and political challenge facing Australia at the moment. But if the 'community conversation' about the future of our public education is exclusively about equity and disadvantage, is there a risk that our public schools will be seen as exclusively, or specifically, for disadvantaged students? And wouldn't that further entrench our inequitable two-tier education system, entrench a class divide, entrench inequality?

Making up for disadvantage is extremely important. But isn't the 'future of education' broader than that?

What about quality facilities and the right resources to teach science, technology and engineering or other specialist subjects such as music? What do schools need to do to foster the entrepreneurs and innovators of the future? How can we truly cater for, excite and extend bright, gifted and talented students?

The goal of public schooling is clear – all students should have the opportunity to reach their full potential. But this will not mean equal outcomes.

Are we being a bit middle class and proscriptive of student's choices? Schooling isn't everything in life. Cultural factors come into play. Many Canberra families have values very different from the mainstream and I question whether the mainstream has the right to try to force them to its cultural values.

In Australia and most other countries the largest single determinant of schooling success is socio-economic status (SES). This is not about the brains of people with low SES being different

from those of people with high SES, as they are not, but about family and cultural values, and other factors in early life. ACT public schools are being tasked with turning that on its head. Is this an achievable outcome? Are public schools up to it, or do we need our whole education system and our whole society to work to this end?

It is true that ACT schools do not deal with disadvantage well, having the greatest gap between the achievement of advantaged and disadvantaged students in Australia, apart from the Northern Territory. No one really understands why this is so, but it may be due to the thin geographic spread of disadvantage in the ACT compared to the lumps of disadvantage in other jurisdictions. Perhaps it is easier for a school to address disadvantage when it is suffered by many students rather than a few.

It does not appear that extra resources are going to flow to schools from this program but they are being asked to lift the performance of disadvantaged students within their existing resources. However, needs based funding is being implemented in ACT public schools to cater for the additional resources needed to teach students with disability, from non-English speaking backgrounds, from low socio-economic status backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Ultimately though this is about allocating resources between schools rather than changing the entire bucket of resources.

If we are serious about addressing inequality shouldn't we look, too, at how we organise our education system as a whole? Representatives of Canberra's independent private schools and Catholic schools were present at the Minister's program launch. We have an inequitable schooling system in this country with independent private schools generally well-funded by the federal government and public schools generally under-funded. The independent private schools teach very few disadvantaged students. Let's not give them even more customers by focusing our public schools on disadvantage alone. ●

Spending P&C funds

continued from front page

survey. What works best will depend on your school community. Free online survey platforms, such as Survey Monkey or Google forms, work well and collate the data for you, which is a good option if most of your school community has computer and internet access. Another option might be to ask for suggestions in the school newsletter. It really doesn't matter how you ask for suggestions, it's more important that everyone feels welcome to contribute and is given the opportunity to do so.

Don't forget the students. They very often have great ideas. While they might ask for a school pool, you can also get ideas you hadn't considered which are simple and easy to achieve — like purchasing bean bags for the school library so there is somewhere comfy to read.

Setting your goals

Once you have the feedback, you can sort them into common groups. At this stage it is worth noting that not all suggestions will meet the Education Directorate regulations and policy. Larger purchases such as playground equipment and garden modifications usually have specific requirements, as well as some smaller items. Council recommends running the suggestions past your school principal to identify any issues or specific requirements the Directorate might have. Consulting with your principal prior to leading a discussion of these suggestions at a General Meeting will save you time. Feedback from your school community and input of the school principal usually provides some consensus and allows shared spending goals to be set at a General Meeting.

If the item your community most wants is beyond your current budget, consider extending the timeframe. A small delay is better than compromising your financial position. It is not uncommon for P&Cs to accumulate funds over several years for larger projects, and meanwhile you have a tangible goal to focus your fundraising activities around.

Once established, your goals should be communicated back to the community and school

newsletters are a great way to do this.

Donate most purchases to the school

Council recommends that P&Cs minimise their assets to simplify bookkeeping and reduce insurance premiums. This means that only assets used by P&C operations, such as a fridge in a canteen, should be held as an asset of the P&C. All other items purchased should be donated to the school. Good examples of these types of items are readers and art supplies. Alternatively, the P&C may donate money directly to the school.

Donate funds directly to the school

Schools are considered non-profit organisations and can accept monetary donations made as gifts without incurring GST. So, when spending P&C funds, consider donating money to the school as a gift which they can use to make a purchase.

In order for P&C donations to be free of GST however, the money must be given freely, that is *without* a particular purpose for the funds being specified. (All donations tied to a specific purpose attract GST.) A shared understanding about spending priorities between the school, board and P&C is needed for this to work well.

Other things to think about

There are a few points to think about before setting your spending goals.

- P&C funds provide extras for children's education. Basic educational needs must be met by the school.
- P&C funds should not be used to make up shortfalls in the school budget.
- Read your constitution to make sure you comply with any rules about spending.
- All expenditure needs to be moved and seconded at a meeting of the P&C.
- Proposals for large expenditure should be flagged prior to P&C meetings so that as many people as possible can participate in the decision.
- Ensure that your P&C can meet its financial obligations prior to committing new funds. •

Teaching students to stress less

Students in years 11 and 12 will be equipped with the tools to better manage stress and anxiety with the launch of a new program.

The program, designed and delivered by Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT), is called *Stress Better*. It is designed to help college students recognise the differences between worry, stress and anxiety, and to know how best to alleviate symptoms to ensure their mental wellbeing.

Statistics from the Mission Australia Youth Survey in 2014 reveal the top two issues of personal concern for young people are coping with stress, and school or study problems. Over a third (38%) were 'extremely concerned' or 'very concerned' about coping with stress. Similarly, school or study problems were 'extremely' or 'very' concerning for 33% of those surveyed.

MIEACT Executive Officer Samantha Davidson-Fuller said the program has been developed over a number of years and aims to help young adults from all backgrounds, including those who are vulnerable and most at risk of developing a mental illness related to stress or anxiety.

"MIEACT has worked with the ACT Health Directorate to ensure this program supports young people who may be experiencing anxiety and stress from life situations that are outside their control," she said.

"The program aims to help young adults aged between 16 and 25 years to better manage stress and anxiety by inspiring them to value their community, friends, family, hopes and aspirations, while also providing practical tools to alleviate stress and anxiety."

The program looks at how common anxiety is and how to recognise it. It also develops an understanding of how to unpack worries and concerns in order to reduce them and offers a tool for dealing with stress. The one-hour session also includes direct positive contact with volunteers within the community who have personal experience with mental illness.



MIEACT Executive Officer Samantha Davidson-Fuller with Snow Foundation CEO Georgina Byron at the launch of the Stress Better program in May.

Lifeline ACT Chief Executive Officer Carrie Leeson said at the program launch: "Learning these skills from a young age strengthens families and communities, this program is fantastic."

The *Stress Better* Program is being delivered throughout ACT schools and colleges (public and private) free of charge thanks to funding from The Snow Foundation. It is also being delivered into regional NSW by partners Richmond Fellowship of the ACT. •

To find out more phone (02) 6257 1195, email clientrelations@mieact.org.au or see www.mieact.org.au/stress-better

Partnerships support kids on autism spectrum

Like all school-aged children, those on the autism spectrum benefit from the school and parents working well together. The *Positive Partnerships* program helps forge these vital links.

Positive Partnerships is a federally funded program developed to support strong and productive relationships between home and school. It produces evidence-based materials and practical resources, and delivers them nationally through workshops for parents and carers, online learning modules and webinars.

Working directly with schools, Positive Partnerships also provides a range of professional learning programs and resources to assist teachers, school leaders and other education professionals to support students on the autism spectrum in the classroom and other school contexts to create an ‘autism friendly’ school culture.

In May, Positive Partnerships held a workshop in Canberra for parents and carers which was booked to capacity. Some of the topics the trained facilitators covered included:

- current evidence-based knowledge of autism spectrum disorder and how it directly impacts on a young person’s learning
- processes and strategies to enable effective partnerships between parents or carers and the school and teacher
- information and strategies for parents to advocate effectively to support a young person’s learning whilst negotiating the educational environment of which they are a part
- ways to maximise their young person’s learning in the home environment.

Positive Partnerships Team Leader Renee Christie said “It was fantastic to see so many parents, carers and grandparents in the room together. We worked through the planning matrix in the morning, sharing ideas and strategies across the room. We then looked at the Positive Behaviour Support template, where parents were able to look at the purpose and function of behaviour and the strategies through which to teach replacement behaviours.”



“The afternoon was spent focusing on the elements of a collaborative partnership by looking at what schools and families both bring to the partnership. Parents were able to walk away with an action plan and knowledge about the local support network in their community to help them be the best advocate for their child.”

Positive Partnerships will be running further workshops in the ACT throughout 2017 and 2018. For more information on upcoming workshops and to access resources to support students on the autism spectrum, visit positivepartnerships.com.au

The templates, matrix worksheet and other materials used at the workshops were greatly appreciated by parents.

For those who are unable to attend a workshop, Positive Partnerships has adapted the materials from the workshops into online learning modules. To access these modules, click the ‘register’ button on their website homepage and follow the prompts until logged on. There is no cost involved in registering or completing any of the online courses. ●

Positive Partnerships is a national project, funded by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training through the Helping Children with Autism initiative and is delivered by Autism Spectrum Australia.

We're your Council

It is that time of the year, when your P&C's membership fees for Council are due.

As a peak body, Council is its members – P&Cs from 86 ACT public schools. We're here to help and represent our members, and we do that using the affiliation (membership) fees we collect .

For the first time in eight years, there has been an increase in fees for P&Cs in primary and high schools. An annual flat fee of \$25 has been added. This small increase will allow us to provide some relief to college P&Cs who are struggling to survive – three have folded in the last four years as parent participation drops in the college years.

Invoices for Council affiliation fees were emailed and posted to P&C treasurers in early May and are due to be paid by the end of June.

What does membership give your P&C?

Why be a member of Council? Well, we provide:

- support for running your P&C, including

information, templates and resources, free training for committee members, and phone or email advice on any P&C matters

- access to Council's group insurance scheme which provides insurance at reduced cost
- free publications such as this one and our *Council Communicator* email bulletin, full of interesting and useful information for parents and P&C office bearers
- representation of P&C concerns to the Minister and the Education Directorate, resolution of problems and input to educational policy and decisions
- advocating and lobbying for improvements in our schools
- a forum to exchange ideas, share expertise and raise concerns with other P&Cs
- regular meetings with guest speakers on topics of concern to parents.

Find out more on our [website](#) or call the office. ●

FREE SUSTAINABLE EVENT ASSISTANCE FOR ALL PUBLIC EVENTS IN THE ACT

Events that participate in this program have access to free equipment, including delivery, and advice to assist them with strategies to:

- reduce energy and water usage
- reduce waste and increase recycling
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- educate and raise awareness of sustainability issues to event patrons

Events can range from small to large, such as school fetes, festivals, shows or sporting events.

Contact Actsmart today to find out we can help your public event.

- ☎ 13 22 81 (Access Canberra)
- ✉ actsmartbusiness@act.gov.au
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Fundraising to get kids moving

The Physical Activity Foundation has a new, healthy fundraising program for schools, designed to get kids moving.

The Active Schools Challenge is a fun and active way to raise funds for your school while encouraging kids to get moving. The Challenge encourages friends and family to sponsor kids for being active every day during 'Active August'.

The Physical Activity Foundation (PAF) provides all the tools and support schools or P&Cs will need to run the Challenge and make it fun to be involved. It is a healthy way to make valuable funds for projects which promote physical activity. Over 75% of all funds raised go straight back to the school, helping build the capacity to keep kids active all year round.

With alarming childhood overweight and obesity

statistics, encouraging children to be active is a national priority. We all want kids to lead healthier lives and avoid lifestyle diseases and illness such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and even some forms of cancer.

Kids should be active for at least 60 minutes every day and PAF has designed the Active Schools Challenge to make it easy for your school community to support kids to reach this target during Active August.

Registration for the Challenge is now open (there is a registration fee of \$150). Kids receive an Active Schools Challenge wrist band, Active August Activity Tracker and plenty of encouragement to be active during Active August!

Schools get access to an easy to use, online fundraising program which encourages kids to be active for 60 minutes a day. Teachers receive great in-class resources and tips on physical activity and games.

Friends and family can sponsor kids in the event via an easy to use online fundraising platform.

PAF, a Canberra-based charity and health promotion agency, also receives funds to continue its important work in developing and delivering preventative health programs such as the walk and ride to school program. •

Register for the Challenge at www.mycause.com.au/events/activeschoolschallenge or contact activeschoolschallenge@paf.org.au for an information pack.

Treasurers take note

As well as Council affiliation fees (see page 6), your insurance paperwork is now due.

Insurance

Insurance renewal questionnaires were sent directly to P&Cs from Civic Insurance in April. These must be completed accurately and comprehensively. P&Cs must fully disclose all operations and events, including accurate total numbers of people to be covered by the policy. The questionnaire is due by June 1 at Civic Insurance who will then issue invoices for insurance based on your needs. Payment will be due June 30.

Workers compensation

If your P&C has paid employees, you should also have received a wages estimate form, due to be returned to Civic Insurance by June 1. Based on your estimate, you will be sent an invoice for workers compensation cover, with payment due June 30.

Listening to our members

continued from back page

P&C and recruiting help

- information sheets on good communications and running your meetings well – both essential if you want to attract more parents.

It also helps to involve your community as widely as possible in setting P&C goals, to break down P&C tasks and to do so early. (See the cover story of the last issue of ParentACTION for all the details!) Recruiting volunteers is also an important topic in our Effective P&C workshop, so come along to the next one on June 8.

Perhaps this survey respondent has the answer:

“I think the ACT Government should fund some 'heroes of the P&C'-type adverts”

In terms of attracting more volunteers, the survey may also hold some answers...

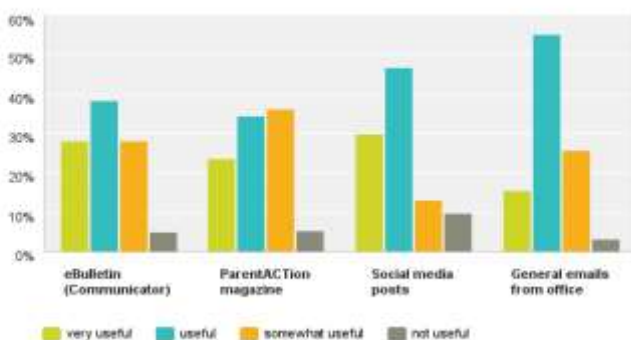
What's the best thing about being on the P&C? (aka how to 'sell' your P&C to new volunteers)

Our survey told us what volunteers value most about being on the P&C:

- being informed about what happens at school
- the satisfaction of doing something worthwhile
- just being involved with their child's school
- personally connecting to community/parents
- personally connecting to staff (especially the principal).

Q19 How useful have found Council communications this year?

Answered: 96 Skipped: 1



We are continually looking to improve our communications with members.

So make sure you let parents know that P&C meetings include a principal's report containing interesting information about what is happening at the school. Allow time on the agenda for discussion about this and questions for the principal. This might mean cutting down on other items on your agenda, but when you know what parents value, make sure it has centre stage. Remember that you can streamline other parts of your meetings by, for example, circulating treasurer, president and other reports with the agenda, rather than getting bogged down with them in the meeting itself.

Also, make sure as many people as possible feel part of the team that achieved all the worthwhile things your P&C does. Thank everyone for their involvement, even if it was small, and feed back to all volunteers and the school community in general. Say *specifically* what their involvement has made possible. For example, the things the P&C does for the school, students or community, or the items it was able to purchase and how the teachers and students are using them.

Workload too great, skills hard to find

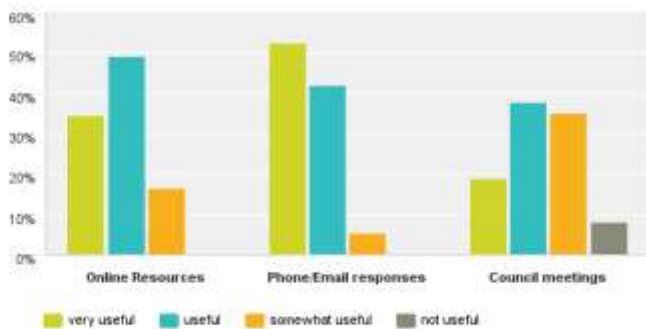
Other common problems expressed in the survey was the incredibly high workload of many volunteers and the difficulty in finding people with the right skills. The areas where the skills shortage is most keenly felt are in financial management and running canteens.

We are hoping some new resources will help. A brand new and comprehensive Canteen Business Manual, put together by ACT Health and Healthy Kids Association with input from many stakeholders, is just about finished and will be a fabulous resource and guide for canteen co-ordinators, managers and P&C presidents alike. We'll let you know when it is available!

We also have a new handbook for treasurers (available on our website) which should make the job accessible to anyone. And we are investigating affordable models of outsourcing the P&C's book keeping.

Q15 How useful have you found Council's services this year?

Answered: 67 Skipped: 8



P&C office-bearers rated our services highly

Council's services & resources are useful

We were glad to find out that P&Cs regard our services highly. While nearly half of respondents had never called or emailed the office, almost all of those who did rated our responses 'very useful' (53%) or 'useful' (42%).

Our online resources were the most used and were rated as 'very useful' (34%) or 'useful' (49%) by most, while 16% rated them as 'somewhat useful'.

So, if you have a query, check out our online resources or contact us by phone or email. Our office is open 9:30am-2:30pm on schools days to help you.

Our social media feed was also highly rated amongst those connected, with 76% finding it useful or very useful. So if you use Twitter or Facebook, please join us!

We've also heard you on where we can improve. Two years ago treasurers found our resources less useful than presidents and secretaries. So we have completely reworked our resources for treasurers – our brand new Treasurer Handbook and updated spreadsheet templates are now available on our website. We also ran additional training on the end-of-year audit for the first time in 2016 and have incorporated more reminders and key dates for treasurers in our other communications.

Is your volunteered time valued?

Most volunteers felt well valued by the executive staff at their school (60% felt 'highly valued' and another 24% felt 'moderately valued'), which is terrific! When it came to the school's teachers, 30% of P&C volunteers felt 'highly valued' while 40% felt 'moderately valued'. Students were seen to value the P&C less.

Sadly, volunteers felt even less valued by other parents, with 35% feeling 'moderately valued' and 38% 'slightly valued', while 20% felt 'not valued' by other parents. Most respondents felt least valued by the Directorate with 'not valued' (34%) being the most common answer.

We have talked to the Directorate about this and are coming up more formal ways that P&Cs can be recognised by the school and Directorate. •

To access the resources mentioned in this article, see www.actparents.org.au.

SMALLSHOWS presents

GRAN'S BAG

BY GREG LISSAMAN. SONGS BY CHRISSIE SHAW

A magical show for P-3 children, perfect for Book Week, Grandparents' Day, Christmas Parties or any special occasion.

When Gran comes to visit she brings her giant red bag, a treasure trove of surprises and delights. With stories and songs, Gran takes us to the beach, to China and to a lonely witch's house in a dark Russian forest.

Teachers said: "The children were thoroughly engaged and talked about the show for some time afterwards"

Cost: \$5.50 per person, minimum \$450
 Bookings: 0407 079 748
 chrissieshaw@apex.net.au
 Info: chrissieshaw.com
 Available 2017 and 2018
 Addresses many criteria in the Australian Curriculum

At our P&C...

Traffic problems plague many of our schools so the Council team caught up with Forrest Primary School to see first hand their drop-off and pick-up solution that has worked smoothly for years.

Council staff arrived at Forrest Primary School well before the 3pm pick-up rush. Even so parking was hard to find in this central-Canberra location. This didn't bode well. But when 3pm – and parents – arrived, cars formed orderly queues and traffic moved on, slowly but steadily, in a way which utterly amazed us, given our daily struggles with traffic at our own schools.

There are two pick up areas at Forrest, each three cars long – one for juniors and the other for senior students – at opposite ends of the semi-circular roadway that loops past the front of the school. The kids wait and chat to their friends in shaded areas with plenty of seating until their family vehicle arrives and stops in the pick-up zone. Staff and parent volunteers call them over, open the car door and farewell them. The cars move off and the next three cars pull in.

“It can be a bit hectic,” the teacher on duty told us, “but it is a lovely way to finish the day, saying goodbye to the kids.”

If the kids aren't there when the family car pulls up, the car is waved on to complete a circuit of nearby streets and return to the end of the queue



A safe place to wait while Parent volunteer Ali Bos escorts students to their cars.

which stretches some way down the main street away from the school. Clear road markings, however, keep the two queues of cars (juniors and seniors) to one side so that there is still space for through-traffic.

The roadway that loops past the front of the school is divided into two lanes, one for the junior school, and one for cars queueing to pick up at the senior end. Miraculously, the junior and senior lanes cross over mid-way round, so that cars exiting the junior area, after the kids have climbed in from the safety of the kerb, make their way past the seniors' queue on the right so that the seniors can also be picked up from the kerb side. A single give way sign for the seniors' queue to yield to traffic exiting the junior end – which everyone obeyed – makes this possible.

We asked Principal Chris Pilgrim, in between her approaches to cars for a chat, how such a feat of compliance is possible.

“We are very grateful to everyone who does the right thing,” she said. “We have reminders in the school newsletter and it is also on our website and school App. It works well 99% of the time.” She says that new parents do need to be informed and that if she, or other staff, approach a vehicle doing the wrong thing, the emphasis is on the safety of the kids. “You've got to be beautiful and kind, not mean,” she explains.

It wasn't always this orderly, apparently. Some



A clear zone and give way sign means cars can leave smoothly from the junior pick-up area, through the queue for the senior pick-up zone.

About us

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations
is the peak body for
Parents & Citizens (P&C) Associations
in the ACT.

We represent over 60,000 parents and carers
in 86 ACT public schools.

About our magazine

ParentACTion is a free journal published four times a year. It is available online, plus hardcopies are provided to all ACT public school P&Cs and school boards, the ACT Legislative Assembly, senior ACT Education Directorate staff, public education organisations, the media and interstate parent associations.

Contributions, advertising and feedback are always being sought. Contributions can be emailed directly to the Editor, Janelle Kennard, at jkennard@actparents.org.au.

Views expressed in this journal are not necessarily those of the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations.

Our Executive

President:	John Haydon
Vice President:	Kirsty McGovern-Hooley
Secretary:	Cecilia Shlegel
Treasurer:	Adam Miller
Committee:	Andrew Bidwell, Sharon Ding, Joanne Forster, Xiaoyan Lu, Adam Miller, Vivienne Pearce.

Life members

Grant Battersby, Pam Cahir, Trevor Cobbold, Graeme Evans, Joan Kellett, Ian Morgan, Richard Scherer.

years ago cars parked right round the circle, and on the median strip and traffic island, jostling to leave as other kids walked to their cars. “It came to a head when two kids were clipped by a reversing car” explained long-time parent Alison Kobal. “A round-table was set up with the police, ACT roads and the National Capital Authority” (as the school is in the parliamentary triangle). A “very driven mother” designed the basics of the system which were then refined at the roundtable. It then took about a term to start to run smoothly. According to Alison, clear signage and road marking were essential, as was having the pick-up zones staffed.

A teacher is placed on duty at both the junior and senior pick-up zones, as well as at least one parent volunteer at each. Parent Ali Bos, this year’s co-ordinator of volunteers, says that they only have about half of the volunteers that they really need. “We all wear the hi-vis vests, but the teachers are the ones that mostly ‘move on’ cars and I think that is important,” she said.

How to teachers find it? we asked Chris Pilgrim. “It is another duty for teachers but they are glad to have the kids safe. On rainy days, they are here with big umbrellas – it’s a real service.” ●

Editor’s note: Following pressure from Council the ACT Government has promised to create traffic management plans for each ACT school. We are hopeful that this process, involving relevant roads and policing authorities, will be a chance for schools to create systems as effective as Forrest’s.



Two orderly queues form out of the school entry loop and down the main road.

Contact us

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Office hours

9.30am - 2.30pm Monday to Friday.
Closed public holidays and school holidays.

Dates to remember

June 8 Effective P&C Workshop
6.30pm - 9.00pm
Centre for Teaching and Learning
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

June 27 Council Hot Topics/General Meeting
7.00pm - 9.30pm
Centre for Teaching and Learning
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

June 30 Affiliation fees & insurance premiums due (see page 6)

July 1-16 Council office closed for term break

July 25 Council General Meeting
7.00pm - 9.30pm
Centre for Teaching and Learning
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

Listening to our members

What's the best thing about being on the P&C? What are the greatest difficulties? These are some of the questions asked in our annual survey. While the answers weren't surprising, they were illuminating and demand action. Here's what you told us and how we responded.

For the last two years, we have asked P&C office-bearers how they found their year on the P&C. Around three-quarters of ACT P&Cs responded. The results are helping Council to better support P&Cs and the great work they do in our public schools. If you are looking to better understand what motivates volunteers, you may be interested in the results as well.

The greatest challenge? Too few helpers

It's no surprise to anyone, but here it is – a third of P&Cs cited too few volunteers as their greatest difficulty, the most common difficulty by a long way. An even greater number answered 'what would make the job easier?' with 'more volunteers'. Yes, more volunteers are needed, but what can be done to help?

Council is also looking into the possibility of linking with a number of other organisations which might be able to help, and we are considering a possible research project in this area. We have raised the issue with both senior executive staff at the Education Directorate and the ACT Minister for Education.

We have explored several other avenues for finding volunteers – for example advertising in a seniors' newsletter – and making it easier for volunteers, by seeking Centrelink recognition of volunteer work canteens for example. A couple of



Members rated Council's phone and email advice our most useful service.

P&Cs have trialled these avenues and we will let everyone know as soon as we have some clear evidence about what is helpful.

We also have a number of resources to help P&Cs attract volunteers, available on our website:

- a letter, approved by the Education Directorate, to include in school enrolment packs which introduces your P&C to new parents (and asks for their email addresses)
- brochure template (ready for you to customise for your school) advertising the wonders of your P&C and the advantages of being involved
- information sheets with tips on growing your

Continued on page 8