



Addressing school violence

Council has been voicing parent concerns about violence in schools for some time. Here is an update on our work in this area and how parents can be involved.

Due to parent concerns about the way in which schools manage and respond to violence, Council established a Parent Support Group on Violence in Schools in May 2017. The Group is a forum for parents and carers to share experiences, discuss issues and advise Council on concerns surrounding violence experienced in schools. Council representatives, in turn, have presented to the Education Directorate the systemic issues and particular concerns highlighted by this group.

Council believes that we need to send a very clear message to everyone involved in our schools that violence is never OK. Violence is, however, a problem we see throughout our society and so we need to acknowledge that all schools will be impacted at some point by violence in some form. This means that it is essential to have good strategies to reduce violence and to respond well when it happens.

“We can’t expect a guarantee that violence will never occur in our schools. But we need to greatly reduce it and to improve the way schools manage and respond to violence,” said Council Policy Officer, Veronica Elliott.

“In the past year or so we have been listening to parents about their family’s experiences with violence and bullying in our schools.”

“While we believe that violence is reasonably well managed at the majority of ACT public schools, some schools need to improve and system-wide approaches and changes are

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From the President



Kirsty McGovern-Hooley

I spoke at our last general meeting about Council's efforts to address violence in schools, and I wanted to discuss our approach in more detail.

Council has been raising violence-related topics and issues on its agenda with Education for many years. Like many ongoing broader societal issues, violence, bullying and harassment has been a constant part of Council's agenda, discussed frequently and submissions made to many reviews and reports. It's an ongoing area of concern and development in Education, as it is in our broader society. We all have the right to safe in our schools. We all have a role in making our communities safe spaces.

It is also a challenging area to discuss publicly. Government and schools are worried about the reputational risk that impacts schools who are 'named and shamed'. Schools who are labelled in the media will find that their communities are affected in profound and powerful ways, affecting school culture and external perception of the school for many years. However, at the heart of media coverage about student violence is a child being hurt and injured, and a family who has reached the end of their tether because they don't feel their child is safe at school. Often the child refuses to attend school and disengages from their education.

It is also important for our communities to recognise that schools are workplaces. Just as our students have a right to be safe in their school, so do our teachers, LSAs, staff and principals. The impact on school staff is being increasingly understood and documented. It is not acceptable to shout, harass or behave aggressively towards other people in our community, yet nearly every Principal and many teachers in our system has had this experience from a parent, and universally from students.

It's not good enough and we need to be better.

We need better systems to support the students, parents, teachers and principals to address and solve these situations.

One of P&C's core roles is to promote parental and family engagement with education. When violent incidents, bullying and harassment at school is not resolved, this is the key point where parents and students disengage. Early last year, violence in schools became a core part of Council's agenda and we have committed resources to address the issues more broadly and with a community-based approach.

The *Building Safe and Strong Communities for Learning Project* has been a valuable opportunity for our education and school communities to listen to each other. The value of having a parent, teacher, principal, school psychologist, student wellbeing representative and a community representative sit around a table and work the problem has been proactive and constructive. The different perspectives have provided all of us with a better understanding of each other's situations. Applying this understanding to the ideas and initiatives in development will drive real changes in how violence is managed. I feel positive that this project will make difference for us all.

I want to thank everyone who has been involved in the *Building Safe and Strong School Communities for Learning* project so far. I feel that is it important to acknowledge how emotionally challenging it has been for all involved to work through issues of violence and trauma and we value the (ongoing) commitment everyone has made to this project.

We have more work to do, and I encourage everyone in our schools and community to participate. Your opinion and voice is critically important and we need more voices to ensure that we capture everyone's perspective.

The real value of this project for us (so far) is the process of open discussion and sharing our experiences and insight. I encourage all our P&Cs and school communities to support 'frank and fearless' discussion about school safety in their P&C and board meetings (while respecting personal privacy of course). By discussing these issues openly, we encourage a culture of reporting. We share expectations and, most importantly, discuss approaches before incidents impact the community. Good luck. ●

To Do: Insurance & Council membership

There are several important upcoming bills and payments which P&Cs should be aware of, as well as a few forms which you should have already completed.

With Term 2 here already, there are a few important things for your association to take care of. Presidents and treasurers should look after the following payments and requirements.

Insurance

All P&Cs need insurance and not just *any* insurance, but that which suits your circumstances and the activities you run. For this reason, Civic Insurance has sent insurance renewal questionnaires directly to P&Cs. These must be completed comprehensively and accurately and so that the insurer can understand your insurance needs. P&Cs must fully disclose all operations and events likely to be undertaken in the next 12 months. There is a new, additional form for detailing events you will hold. While it can be hard to predict your activities we suggest providing all the information you can about your most likely activities. If things change over time, you simply need to call the broker (Civic) to let them know of new activities/events which you did not specify. The questionnaires are due by June 1 to 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.

Council affiliation fees

Your annual membership fees with Council are due soon. Invoices will be sent to treasurers by the end of May, for payment by the end of June. There is no increase to fees this year. If you are wondering what you get from your Council membership, remember that we provide ACT



Image: Glenn Carstens Peters on Unsplash.

parent associations – our members – with advice, resources, training, publications and events which connect you to other P&Cs. We also provide representation and advocacy with decision makers in ACT education. The benefits are fully expounded on our website.

Term 1 To Do

We know the beginning of the year can be overwhelming, so just to reiterate some essential things your committee should have completed:

- **Report to government on last year's activities and finances, and the outcomes of your AGM.** P&Cs which are a registered charity need to complete an Annual Information Statement for the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission and also let Access Canberra know of any changes to your Public Officer. Other P&Cs must submit an Annual Return (AR form) to Access Canberra (which is now free as long as you do it by June 30).
- **Complete Council's Office Bearers' form.**

Links to all these forms can be found via the 'Essential forms' page of our website.

Help is at hand

If you missed our free workshops, make sure you take a look at the resources, information and templates for on our website. We aim to make the job of P&C volunteers as easy as possible. Please contact us if you have any questions. •

Addressing school violence

needed,” she said.

“Over time some staff, students and families have been subjected to incidents of violence which have left long-term consequences and trauma. In some cases, the school’s response has been inadequate. Some parents have felt that they are not being listened to.”

“Violence is a community problem, not just a school problem. This means a community approach is needed to find better ways to deal with violence,” said Ms Elliott. “We’d like parents and students to be involved; to have their say. We think that together we can find solutions.”

To make this possible, Council partnered with the Education Directorate on a project named *Building Strong and Safe Communities for Learning*. The project began earlier this year with two jointly-designed workshops.

For the first, all-day, workshop, Council worked to ensure good parent representation, inviting parents with a special interest in the topic. We also ensured that a wide variety of specialists and experts were present so that the problem and possible solutions could be explored.

A second event is being held early May, as this issue goes to press. All P&C presidents were invited to attend or to pass on their invitation to another parent or carer to represent the school.

In June, there is a final chance for parents and carers to be involved. In the week of June 12-18, there will be a two or three hour event, repeated throughout the week so any parent who wants to attend can hopefully find a session to suit.

This third series of workshops is the most critical part of the project. In addition to providing attendees with a summary of workshops one and two, we will be asking for feedback on what the ideas and suggestions which arose for the other workshops should look like, how they should operate and whether these are likely to reduce and allow for better responses to violence. There will also be opportunities for parents and carers to put forward new ideas and suggestions.

There have been a number of interesting discoveries so far. We’ve found that the language used around violence depends on the roles involved. Specifically, parents and carers tend to use language very differently to schools. Perhaps this explains why some parents have experienced difficulty communicating effectively with schools, and some of the feelings of not being heard.

This project is also showing a general trend of low levels of parental awareness of, and engagement with, valuable programs in reducing violence and bullying in schools, such as the positive behaviour for learning framework (PBL). At Council we are questioning whether the language used by schools to describe these programs is meaningful to parents, whether the language used stops parents getting involved or whether other factors are in play. These questions are some of the many we are looking to explore with the third series of workshops.

The ideas generated in the workshops are aimed at reducing and better managing violence. Possible measures being explored include ways to support families in navigating the system when something goes wrong; and improving the reporting of bullying and violence, in particular making it possible for parents and students to report incidents.

We want as many parents and carers to attend these workshops as possible and have their say on how we can work together to reduce and better respond to violence.

Light refreshments will be provided for all sessions. A number of daytime sessions will be offered with child-minding available and evening sessions for working parents. Don’t miss this final chance to comment and help shape some real options for solutions. To book into a session, contact Ms Leanne Ballard on 6205 2912 or Leanne.ballard@act.gov.au .

Council welcomes any feedback or experiences from parents. We are still collecting anonymous case studies, and membership of our Parent Support Group is open to all parents and carers.●

Changes for P&C employers

Council's auditors, Tailored Accounts, outline the new Single Touch Payroll system, required by the tax office, and how it will affect P&Cs which employ staff.

The Single Touch Payroll (STP) is now becoming compulsory for any organisation employing staff. If your P&C employs any staff, it means you will be required to do your financial and superannuation reporting to the ATO (Australian Taxation Office) using an STP compliant software system from the 1st of July this year.

What needs to be prepared to get ready for STP if your current system is not yet compliant? Will there be any impact on your business transactions or cash flow? Here is a step-by-step guide to getting ready for the switch to STP.

Step 1 – Assess your STP readiness

You should check with your software provider now to ensure their software is compliant and that you have the latest version for STP. XERO is fully compliant with STP, so you could consider switching to this software if you need a new program. MYOB is also compliant.

Step 2 – Check your transaction accuracy

Reporting to the ATO via STP requires the following information:

- payment to individuals/contractors
- Gross Pay/Ordinary Time Earnings (OTE)
- PAYG
- Super.

By using STP, the ATO hopes to obtain all the above information on or before the date when the amount is required to be withheld.

Treasurers processing payroll might face a challenge in meeting these requirements. While most non-profit associations currently process payroll on a regular basis, their reporting to the ATO happens quarterly. Typically treasurers conduct reconciliations on a monthly or quarterly basis to ensure the tax withheld and super payable amount are correct before reporting the information to ATO on their Business Activity Statement (BAS).

However, using STP means there will no longer be room to fix any transaction errors before



submitting to ATO each time payroll is processed. But the ATO does allow opportunities to make corrections after lodgement. This could still require a large shift in mindset for P&C Treasurers adapting to this change.

Step 3 – Review your payment timing

Fortunately, the ATO does not yet require associations to pay the withholding and super amount alongside payroll. This means P&C committees can still choose to pay both amounts on BAS/IAS by the due date. However, a small legislation change in the future could easily make it compulsory for P&Cs to pay PAYG and super at the same time that they pay their employees.

Tailored Accounts believe that this might be common practice in future. In fact, it has already been implemented in many other developed countries. Changing to an STP method is a smart decision for your organisation regardless of changes to legislation, as removing end-of-year payment summaries could save you time.

We want to ensure all P&C treasurers are well informed about future changes in this legislation that will affect accounting for your association's business. If you feel uncertain about STP or any other issues regarding your business accounting, contact us for a short, free consultation. ●

This article was Prepared by Tailored Accounts, a XERO Gold partner.

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School reports: system-wide template

The Education Directorate have provided this update on the new system-wide template for student reports, along with a preview of some of the features of the template and how the content is generated.

Under ACT and Commonwealth legislation and regulations all schools are required to provide written reports of student achievement twice a year to parents of students in Preschool to Year 12. In the past there have been school-based formats for students in preschool to Year 10. All Year 1-12 students are required to receive grades. EAL/D students who have been in the country less than one year are exempt.

In 2019 the Education Directorate is introducing a system-generated common report format, for students in Kindergarten to Year 10, through the new Student Administration System (SAS). This change will occur via a staged implementation process, with some schools piloting the new report format in Semester 1, 2019.

What is the same?

All reports to students from Kindergarten to Year 10 have always included and will continue to include the following information:

- academic achievement in relation to the prescribed ACT curriculum and associated achievement standards for each subject
- for students in Kindergarten, a five-point scale used to indicate academic achievement
- for students in Years 1 to 10, a five-point A-E scale used to indicate academic achievement
- for students in Years 1 -6, student effort in each learning area
- for students in Years 7-10, work habits in each learning area
- personal and social capabilities.

A college-based format remains in place for students in Years 11 and 12 and is governed by the Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS).

Preschool reports will continue to be provided using a school-based report format.

What is different?

Previously school-based reports have allowed schools to make decisions regarding the detail included against a learning area. For example some schools reported against English using the different strands e.g. writing, reading, viewing, listening and speaking; whilst some other schools reported on English using school-generated outcome statements.

The new system-generated common report format uses information directly from the subject area Achievement Standards outlined in the Australian Curriculum. Achievement Standards set the goal for what all students should learn as they progress through their school life – wherever they live in Australia and whichever school they attend. From the first year of school to Year 10, students develop knowledge and skills in eight learning areas: English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education (HPE), Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS), The Arts, Technologies, Languages.

Each learning area contains content descriptions accompanied by **Achievement Standards** that describe what students will know and will be able to do as a result of teaching and learning in the classroom. For example ‘count to and from 20 and order small collections’. Schools will select when they report against different sentences in the **Achievement Standard**.

The new SAS generated report format will help ACT public schools to provide greater consistency when reporting student achievement to families.

The Australian Curriculum is accessible to all students and there is parent-friendly information available at www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/parent-information/

In the ACT, a ‘C’ grade indicates the student is on track and demonstrating achievement at the standard. A ‘C’ grade is to be celebrated.

Parents will be provided an opportunity to provide feedback on the new system-generated common report format early in Term 3. •

This is the template for the explanation page that appears at the beginning of all school reports. The contents and overall layout are part of the Directorate template which schools must use. Most of the wording is set in the template, except the areas indicated.

Schools write this section.

These sections are provided by the Directorate and detail how to read and understand different parts of the report.

This section provides information about the child's attendance and is filled based on school attendance records.

About this report

Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book. It has survived not only five centuries, but also the leap into electronic typesetting, remaining essentially unchanged. It was popularised in the 1960s with the release of Letraset sheets containing Lorem Ipsum passages, and more recently with desktop publishing software like Aldus PageMaker including versions of Lorem Ipsum.

Scale Overview

Your child's achievement for each subject is reported against the Australian Achievement Standards using the following five point scale:

A - Outstanding:	Demonstrating outstanding achievement of the standard
B - High:	Demonstrating a high achievement of the standard
C - At Standard:	Demonstrating achievement at the standard
D - Partial:	Demonstrating partial achievement of the standard
E - Limited:	Demonstrating limited achievement of the standard
S - Status:	Indicates that circumstances have prevented the student from being assessed against the individual achievement standard sentence, or there is insufficient evidence to award an overall grade

Comparison of student achievement in subject/key learning areas

The school's front office can provide you with a separate report containing A-E comparative data. This report will show the number of students in each of the achievement levels from A-E. This report will only be provided for cohort groups of greater than 10 students.

Plan (P) reference

A 'P' indicates that the student has been assessed against an adjusted curriculum based on their learning needs. Their learning sits outside the learning described in their equivalent year level achievement standards.

Personal and Social Capabilities and Habits

Your child's capabilities for social awareness and social management, self awareness and self management as well as work habits are reported using the following 4 point scale:

C - Consistently:	Consistently demonstrates the habit/capability
U - Usually:	Usually demonstrates the habit/capability
S - Sometimes:	Sometimes demonstrates the habit/capability
R - Rarely:	Rarely demonstrates the habit/capability

Attendance for 04/02/2019 - 05/07/2019

Whole Days Absent	0	Partial Days Absent	0
Explained Whole Days Absent	0	Explained Partial Days Absent	0
Unexplained Whole Days Absent	0	Unexplained Partial Days Absent	0

Mathematics **Grade: B**

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	Status	Limited	Partial	At Standard	High	Outstanding
Amelia...						
Solves problems involving the comparison, addition and subtraction of integers				✓		
Makes the connections between whole numbers and index notation and the relationship between perfect squares and square roots						✓
Solves problems involving percentages and all four operations with fractions and decimals						✓
Compares the cost of items to make financial decisions						✓

Work Habits	R	S	U	C
Effort in Learning Area				✓
Is punctual to class				✓
Works cooperatively		✓		
Completes and submits work on time			✓	
Respects others' right to learn				✓
Is appropriately prepared for lessons			✓	
Works independently			✓	

R = Rarely, S = Sometimes, U = Usually, C = Consistently

Teacher Comment

Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book. It has survived not only five centuries, but also the leap into electronic typesetting, remaining essentially unchanged. It was popularised in the 1960s with the release of Letraset sheets containing Lorem Ipsum passages and more recently with desktop publishing software like Aldus PageMaker including versions of Lorem Ipsum.

Teacher: William Sheppard

This is the template for a learning area page. The overall layout is set in a Directorate template and includes a grade, description of the course or work covered, performance, an indication of student effort, and comment.

Schools may select to write this section to outline the work covered.

These descriptions of learning (Achievement Standards) come from the Australian Curriculum and must be reported against.

The Work Habits are set in the template. For high schools this is provided for each subject; in primary schools this is represented as effort in learning area per subject.

Teachers write this section.

On the final page of the report is the Personal and Social Capability table which is drawn from the General Capabilities in the Australian Curriculum.

The Education Directorate's Martin Hine will attend our General Meeting on May 28 to show and discuss the template. Everyone is welcome (see back page for details).

Personal and Social Capability:

Social Awareness and Social Management	R	S	U	C
Demonstrates respect for others				✓
Appreciates different points of view			✓	
Develops respectful relationships		✓		
Collaborates with peers	✓			

Self-Awareness and Self-Management	R	S	U	C
Recognises and expresses emotions appropriately			✓	
Seeks assistance when required			✓	
Works towards learning goals			✓	
Manages time effectively			✓	
Works independently and shows initiative			✓	

R = Rarely, S = Sometimes, U = Usually, C = Consistently

More volunteers!

One way to swell our volunteer ranks might be to better understand why people leave, writes Council Communications Officer, Janelle Kennard.

Whether it is finding a new treasurer or enough hands to run a fair, fostering a strong volunteer workforce is a perennial effort for parent associations.

The ground work is really important. Do parents know about the P&C? Do they realise that they are already members, and is it clear what the organisation does?

Council has some resources to help, such as a brochure template you can adapt for your P&C, but it is being consistent with the little things that really helps make your association approachable and relevant enough that people will give it a try.

Communicate consistently

Choose the communication methods that best suit you and your school and stick to it so parents know where to expect P&C information. Don't say more than you have to, and be accurate, so that parents come to value your information.

Happy tone

Keeping the tone consistent, friendly and welcoming is really important. Sound like a group of humans, not a bureaucracy or set of processes. This includes your meetings. Even when you have to cancel an event due to lack of volunteers (and you should do that, rather than burn out the volunteers you do have), it's possible to explain calmly why and cancel with a smile. We do know it is not easy!

Clear, shared, goals

Tell people in plain language what the P&C is trying to achieve and make sure this lines up with what parents want.

A 'face' for your P&C

People react better to people, rather than organisations, so it is great if some of your committee will stand up at events and be identified with the P&C and chat to parents without shying away from the P&C badge. Getting friends and acquaintances involved is definitely a tactic worth trying.



Volunteers of all ages at Charnwood-Dunlop School

Understanding volunteers

Over the years we have surveyed hundreds of parents across the ACT who volunteer on P&Cs. They tell us the *best* thing about being involved on the P&C is:

- the relationships they formed with other parents
- being informed about what happens at school
- a sense of pride at what they had accomplished
- satisfaction of helping their child's school.

If we know what people like and why they help out, it helps us focus on those aspects, in both talking to new people about volunteering and making sure we keep the positives alive.

Why volunteers leave

Likewise, it might be worth looking at research on why volunteers leave. Susan Ellis, an international consultant specialising in volunteering lists the top ten reasons as follows.

Reason #10 – The reality of their experience is not what they expected when they signed on.

Reason #9 – They don't like the work they are being asked to do nor how it is being done.

Reason #8 – Veteran or leadership volunteers won't let them into the "insider" group.

Why I volunteer

We talked to some of Council's own volunteers to see why they give up so much of their time.

Jane Koitka

Council Executive Member and volunteer at Farrer Primary.



I volunteer with Council because I love kids, and learning has always been one of the highest things in my life. A good education is just so important for kids today, living in a quickly changing world. So it's a really good purpose for me. Everyone needs a purpose.

When I signed up, I didn't know what to expect but I am really really happy that I did! I have worked on some interesting projects – drafting Council's Reconciliation Action Plan, looking at ways to boost volunteer numbers, and our anti-bullying work. The progress this has made through the Education Directorate has been a great achievement. When changes are being made, you get a great sense of satisfaction and involvement, knowing people will benefit.

Cecilia Shlegel

Council Secretary and previously Bonython Primary's P&C President



I started volunteering at the P&C because I believe it sets a good example to my child. What makes me stay on as a volunteer is the real sense of satisfaction I get from giving my time to something beneficial to the community. Also the people you meet, linking up with like-minded people, that makes me come back for more.

I volunteer here at Council because in that way we have influence at a higher level. A particular issue might pop up at different schools and each could come up with a solution, but there is more influence to solve the problem well across this higher level. Working with Council I've seen slow and steady progress, grinding away at making things better in our schools. We've seen good policy changes in relation to canteens and more transparency from the Education Directorate, for example, on how they allocate funds and resources or how they plan for new schools. ●

More volunteers!

continued

Reason #7 – They spend more time meeting than doing.

Reason #6 – No one listens to their suggestions.

Reason #5 – They feel unrecognized, and see that thanks are unfairly given to everyone, no matter who did the most work or none at all.

Reason #4 – They are no longer asked to participate.

Reason #3 – They do not actually understand how to get more involved.

Reason #2 – They can no longer see how their involvement makes a difference.

And the #1 Reason volunteers leave is...

it stopped being fun.

It's well worth stopping and thinking about how your P&C is ticking the right boxes, and not setting off the signals to leave. Council's Information Sheets have further tips and suggestions on managing volunteers. We suggest P&Cs consider adding a 'Volunteer Coordinator' as a new position on their committee – someone to think about the needs of volunteers and match these to the tasks available. Training in volunteer management is available through *Volunteering and Contact ACT* and paying for one of your volunteers to attend could be an excellent way to show your appreciation and give them something back. ●

At our P&C...

Parent associations contribute to their communities in all sorts of ways. At Mount Rogers Primary school, that includes getting people together to keep fit!

For over 20 years parents and members of the community have been turning up at Mount Rogers School for evening classes. They're not brushing up on their maths, nor learning more about helping kids with readers. Instead, they're sweating it out in P&C managed exercise classes.

Steph Hinds, who was until recently a parent at the school, co-ordinates the program.

"The P&C pays the instructors. People attend on a casual drop-in basis and pay just \$8 for the one-hour class," she explains. "At the moment we offer group PT-sessions twice a week as well as Zumba and boxing classes."

As she explained more about the program, it was obvious that their community-based approach offers advantages that you don't get from a gym – and not just the affordability.

"The classes are popular with parents but the majority of our exercisers are actually older members of our broader community. There is a really special culture in the classes – very safe and non-judgmental."

The classes are also very adaptable and tailored to community feedback.

"There is a culture of people saying what they need, what they like, and our instructors respond to that and change. The local community, in a way, are creating their own class," said Steph.

"One participant calls it a 'hidden gem'!"

"At the end of each year we host a Christmas party for the combined classes. We put on food and drink and chat and celebrate," explained Steph.

"Each instructor also runs a short 15 minute session so everyone can find out what the other classes are about."

The sessions are advertised on the P&C Facebook page and a couple of times a year flyers are



Participants in Mount Rogers' newest fitness class—boxing!

dropped into local letterboxes, but people also find out through word of mouth. The program is popular, with up to 20 people per class, and still growing.

"The classes run all year, rain hail or shine, and over the school holidays," said Steph. "Participants love that it is consistent. We've been doing it for years – longer than some gyms last in business! One of the ladies has been coming since it began in 1994!"

"The last couple of years the numbers have really picked up. We have just added another class," Steph told us. "We asked our community on Facebook what is their favourite way to get sweaty. Lots of people were interested in boxing, so we've just added that."

The program is also a fabulous fundraiser, making around \$2000 a year for the P&C. According to Steph, it also gives the community

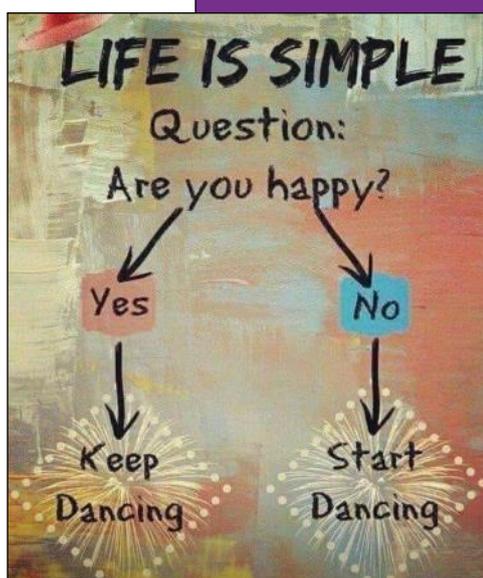
an extra interest in the school.

“We tell them all what the money goes to. They can see that it benefits this immediate space – the soccer goals on the senior playground that they helped pay for.”

It sounds like a program that is kicking many goals at the same time. ●



**THERE ARE
SHORTCUTS TO
HAPPINESS...
ZUMBA DANCE
IS ONE OF THEM**



The Mount Rogers P&C does a great job creating a buzz and a sense of fun about the classes via their Facebook page.

About us

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is the peak body for Parent Associations in ACT public schools.

We represent over 60,000 parents and carers in 89 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.

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Office staff

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

Office hours

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

Dates to remember

May 28 Council General Meeting
7.00pm - 9.30pm
*Centre for Teaching and Learning
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling*

**June 12-19
Building Strong & Safe Communities -
workshop sessions**
See front page story

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

July 6-21 Council office closed for term break

Aug 27 Council General Meeting
7.00pm - 9.30pm
*Centre for Teaching and Learning
51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling*

Bus update

Transport Canberra's new bus network began this term while safety concerns persist.

The much anticipated start to Canberra's light rail service and completely re-worked bus network dominated the headlines as school returned for Term 2. Council's primary concern remains student safety and the area where we believe the greatest number of students are at risk is where students are catching buses from stops at a range of distances from the school, rather than from bus bays at the front of the school.

Our concern is not the distances to the stops (up to half a kilometre) but that groups of students are crossing busy roads, some outside the school's 40 km/h zone, and that teens may not take the detours needed to safely cross at pedestrian lights or underpasses. Schools affected include Lyneham, Belconnen, and Mt Stromlo High Schools, and Amaroo and Gold Creek Schools.

As a small organisation, Council is constrained by time and resources in responding to the new network and representing parents. To manage this, we focused on ensuring safe and convenient travel to high schools from each school's priority enrolment area, as this affects the greatest number of students likely to commute by bus. We worked together with Transport Canberra on a list of inadequacies in their first draft of the new network last year and were able to gain many improvements. We continue to have frank discussions about our remaining concerns and are hopeful that small changes can be made to routes or infrastructure to improve safety.

We also know many parents prefer dedicated school buses over route buses and we will continue to advocate for dedicated routes wherever they are possible and needed.

We'd like to hear from public school families (email contact@actparents.org.au) **about your difficulties or concerns. We will represent these to Transport Canberra and the Transport Minister.** Alternatively, use the [online feedback form](#) on the Transport Canberra website.

On the first days of the new network, we received reports of students left at bus stops due to over-full buses. We believe that Transport Canberra have been able to respond to this in some cases by putting larger buses on some routes. We also know that there are timing issues for some students who now arrive at school too early or wait too long at the end of the day for the bus. We would welcome any specific cases.

Council also received several reports of families unprepared for the new network. We were very disappointed with the notices in public school newsletters which looked like advertisements for the bus network. In most cases there was no specific information about which of the school's routes would and would not be operating in Term 2. This was despite earlier advice from Council on the type of information parents needed to understand the scale of the changes and so click through to the Transport Canberra website to explore the detailed school-based information provided there. ●