



Money for new schools but not librarians

The ACT Government announced its budget for 2019-20 in early June. How did schools fare?

Each year Council submits a wish list for the ACT budget. We gather together the biggest needs and wants of the system, as voiced by parents and representatives at our meetings, into a formal budget submission. Then we watch with anticipation to see if any of our suggestions are taken up and funded.

It's a process that has been fruitful in the past. So what about this year's budget?

“One of the biggest challenges for our schools at the moment is growth,” said Council President, Kirsty McGovern-Hooley. “Our submission included the need for more schools in Gungahlin, as well as an additional school in central Belconnen and the Inner North. We were very pleased to see funding for an additional primary and high school in the Gungahlin suburbs of Throsby and Kenny.”

Council was also very pleased to see funding for expansions to Gungahlin College, Franklin Primary School, Gold Creek senior campus, Lyneham High and Hawker Primary schools, but we remain concerned that more needs to be done to accommodate the increases in student numbers that are expected in the ACT.

An area of major concern and focus for Council at the moment is violence in schools and we had asked for funds to be committed to programs that could assist. “We have been working closely with

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Every school needs a qualified Teacher-Librarian to build literacy, research skills and engagement.

Photo: Khamkhor on Pixabay.

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From the President



Kirsty McGovern-Hooley

Welcome to second semester!

Council has been busy this year with a range of issues, most recently involving school transport, disability and inclusion, completing our Building Safe and Supportive Communities for Learning project, and contributing to the development of three-year-old preschool strategy. We have provided submissions to government on the Education Act, ACT budget and Melbourne Declaration. Council's Policy Officer, Veronica Elliott, and I also provided evidence at the recent parliamentary inquiry into school violence. We are also pleased that our first reconciliation action plan has been approved in principle by Reconciliation Australia, and look forward to sharing this with you when it is ready.

Council is also pleased that our teachers are set to become the best paid public school teachers in Australia, after being the lowest paid in 2011. Simply, if we want a strong education system and high quality, professional teaching for our children, then we need to pay our teachers properly. The wage agreement also included a small reduction in face to face teaching hours in primary schools, a class size maximum and strengthened health and safety measures. Increasing teachers' preparation time and managing class sizes helps support teachers to deliver more personalised learning – something parents highly value and Council welcomes.

School security is a persistent issue we have been working on with EDU and P&Cs. A number of P&Cs whose schools have been affected by vandalism have told us how confronting and upsetting it was for the school community to see their school damaged or precious resources stolen. Apart from the damage to morale and perceptions of community safety, vandalism and criminal activity have a very real impact on education and school budgets and can interrupt learning.

One school P&C approached us nearly two years ago for help getting approval to purchase a CCTV camera for their school. We started working with EDU and the school on policy and proposals, feeling it was a solid solution worth exploring. We

have faithfully kept this on our meeting agendas, including with the Minister for Education, consistently pushing for CCTV at the school.

We have now had robust discussions about school security with many stakeholders and note:

- Few parents or teachers consider it appropriate for schools to have 'surveillance' on students. CCTV is seen to be a good solution for external security, but privacy issues are a significant hurdle and community concerns must be addressed.
- CCTV can be a very effective tool when used appropriately – police can publish photographs looking for perpetrators and use the footage as evidence at prosecution.
- CCTV is not as intrusive as a fence, but is still seen to be an effective deterrent.
- For CCTV to be used effectively, it needs to be monitored. This is expensive.

The ACT CCTV Code of Practice places a high threshold for use, and substantial compliance burden, on agencies wishing to use CCTV. There is a basic threshold outlined in the code, requiring Government agencies to fully assess the purpose of the surveillance and demonstrate that CCTV will serve this purpose, be cost effective, and that no alternatives or better solutions are available.

Earlier this year, EDU commissioned an expert feasibility study to consider if CCTV or other protective security measures would be most appropriate in protecting schools. The expected outcome of the study is the recommendation that infrastructure changes and other security measures be tried, prior to the use of CCTV at the school in question. The next steps are for the school to have the infrastructure affected redesigned for purpose and re-located to areas that are subject to 'natural surveillance'. It remains to be seen whether this will solve the security problem long term, but we are pleased to see action to resolve the matter. We also acknowledge the investment EDU has made in seeking independent advice.

If you have ongoing issues at your school with security, you can ask your principal to request a security assessment, or talk to Council. ●

Equipping teens to overcome bullying

We know that managing bullying is a serious concern for many students and families. Council's Communications Officer, Janelle Kennard, looks at one program already having an impact in our schools.

In August last year, Mental Illness Education ACT (MIEACT) launched a new bullying-prevention program for high school students called No Labels.

The program looks at bullying behaviours and strategies for managing these behaviours in an hour-long workshop for classes of students.

The program is based on recent research and links to the Australian Curriculum, but it was ultimately co-designed with young people in the ACT. In developing the program, MIEACT ran pilots and spoke to students.

Heidi Prowse, MIEACT CEO said that they discovered that young people had become very desensitised to education around bullying.

“They believe they know it all – the prevalence, the impact on mental health, the future implications for both the participants and the person experiencing bullying. They understand motivations for bullying and could cite examples of bullying behaviour,” she said.

“But they couldn't tell us what to do, or even what they currently do, to overcome or manage bullying. When we started a discussion on strategies, the room fell silent.”

“So the program we created focuses on practical strategies that a young person could start to use as soon as they leave the room, whether they are engaged in, witnessing or experiencing that bullying behavior,” said Ms Prowse.

“We are looking for long term behavior change.”

In an address to the NSW Mental Health Association at the end of last year, No Labels Program Director Megan Mills said that it had been pleasing to see the impact of honest conversations around bullying behaviour, and strategies to address this behaviour.

“Most students – 84 percent – said that after the



Photo: Laurenz Kleinheider on Unsplash

The No-Labels program gets teens to reflect on their own behaviour in an effort to reduce bullying.

session they were more confident in implementing strategies to address bullying,” she said.

Ms Prowse said that some previous bullying-prevention programs had taken a prescriptive and judgmental approach – ‘do this and not this’ – but students had not really reflected on their own behaviour, and that this is a major difference in the No Labels program.

In fact, 65% of the students that MIEACT spoke to during the research and design phase said the current education on bullying was not representative and therefore not helpful for their experience.

“The feedback on the No Labels program was that it was much more representative of the student experience today,” said Ms Mills.

No Labels takes a three-pronged approach, looking at behaviours and strategies for those on all three sides of bullying – witnessing, experiencing and participating – so that students have tools, no matter what they are faced with. This helps remove the notion – and label – of ‘a bully’ and focuses on something changeable: behaviour. There is recognition that a person can,

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Your Council membership

There is a small rise in Council membership fees this year so that we can continue to provide comprehensive support for you – our members.

All public school parent associations are members of Council. As your peak body, we're here to help you run your association well, support your volunteers and make things easier so that each of our 92 associations don't have to reinvent the wheel! We also voice your views and the needs of parents to the Education Directorate and ACT Government.

At the beginning of July, we sent out invoices for our membership fees to treasurers, for payment by the end of July. This year, we increased the rate for membership slightly – the first time that there has been a rise in the rate for 10 years. The rise will help us increase staff hours so that we can better meet your needs. The increase is from 90c per student at the school, to 95c – plus GST.

What are the advantages to your P&C of your Council membership?

The parent voice

Problem at your school? Can you see ways in which schooling could be improved? We voice parent concerns and represent the views of parents and carers to the Education Directorate and Minister through formal submissions to enquiries and via representative positions on many committees. We help resolve issues and provide parent input to policies and decisions affecting schools.

“Thank you... for putting together this submission to government. [It] clearly presents the issues that have been raised at Council meetings and discussions.”

Help running your P&C

We have extensive information, advice and tips for P&Cs available on our website, covering everything from running good meetings to licensing your raffle, from collaborating with the school and principal to promoting your canteen.

We also have a range of templates, samples and

“ I love the Council. I value your input and experience. You have seen and heard it all before so know what the right course of action is and if you haven't then you delve in with all your hearts. ”

– P&C volunteer

proformas for you to pick up and customise so that you don't have to invent your own. There's a brochure introducing your P&C, sample hand-over notes, and templates for meeting minutes and agenda, canteen contracts, risk management plans and your association's constitution.

“I found the resources provided by the Council really helpful. We often refer to the information and guidance on your website.”

Your membership also entitles you to free training courses on a range of subjects including amending your constitution and managing your insurance.

“Great presenters and wonderful clear and informative worksheets.”

We also offer advice, assistance and answers to your enquiries over the phone or by email. If you are finding the P&C hard going, or just have a quick question, do contact us. We also offer site visits and can attend your P&C meeting if needed.

“I really appreciate the email contact - whenever I emailed a question... I was answered in a very timely manner.”

Sharing expertise

We don't have all the answers, and there's an incredible wealth of expertise, skills and experience among our members, so we help

share that collective wisdom around. You can come to our meetings and talk to others in a similar position to yourself, join one of our email groups on special topics (eg canteens, uniform shops) to ask the nitty gritty, or check out articles featuring great works by P&Cs across Canberra.

“Many thanks to the Council for organising the monthly general meetings - great opportunity to meet people from other schools and discuss issues relevant to many.”

Insurance

Our group insurance scheme provides insurance for your parent association at reduced cost, and

assistance in making sure you have the cover you need.

Keeping you informed

To help keep you in the know, this magazine arrives each term for the information of committee members and other parents. In addition, our fortnightly ebulletin, *Council Communicator*, distils must-know, timely, information for your committee. We also have guest speakers at our general meetings who present information on topics of interest to parents and carers. Recently, we've heard about the new system-wide student report templates, ILPs, violence in schools and the Education Directorate's future plans. ●

Equipping teens to overcome bullying

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at different times, be witnessing, or experiencing bullying or be participating in bullying behaviours.

The workshop is a mix of discussions, awareness-building and anonymous reporting and assessment by students of their own behaviours. They use technology so that participants can confidentially self-analyse their behaviour and disclose participation in bullying behaviour without fear of judgement or 'labels' from their peers. The facilitators can see the overall results and tailor the session for the experience in the room.

“Students are brought to reflect upon what their behavior means, what is the impact of their behavior. Then we go through skills for the children to build on to recognise and change their behaviour,” explained Ms Mills.

“We get down into the nitty gritty. If you are teasing and laughing with a friend – is that bullying? If you have a nickname for someone but haven't checked they are ok with that – is that bullying?”

“This creates such a change in awareness. At the beginning of the workshops we ask students to tell us – confidentially – if they have ever participated in bullying. Usually around 50 percent tell us they have. At the end we see this goes up by 20 or 30 percent,” said Ms Mills.

“At the end of the session, students say that they will need to check in with others about some of their behaviours, they recognise how they participate,” she said.

The session looks at four main types of bullying – physical, emotional, isolating others and cyberbullying.

“Student feedback says that looking at cyberbullying is really important. How and when to respond? Who to tell about it?”

The need for these sessions is clear – 86% of ACT students say they are concerned about the occurrence of bullying. Recently, MIEACT piloted a primary school program and the response from schools wanting the program has been high. They are now seeking funding to run these essential programs. ●

Money for new schools but not librarians

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the Directorate on community-based solutions to violence in schools,” said Ms McGovern-Hooley. “We are seeing that more can be done in this space. This is a complex issue that requires a targeted approach for staff, students and parents.”

Our report on the back page of this magazine has more detail on the outcomes of our work and consultation with parents on better managing school violence, and what it should mean for schools. While we were pleased to see funding set aside in the budget to address occupational violence, there was no direct allocation of funds to support students experiencing violence in schools. Council expects therefore that new initiatives will be funded out of existing Directorate budgets.

Another major item missing from the budget was a commitment to properly staff public school libraries.

“We need targeted funding to ensure that every school has a qualified Teacher-Librarian,” said Ms McGovern-Hooley.

“Students and teachers need strong library services today more than ever. Qualified library staff teach kids to negotiate the morass of information on the internet – to sort fact from fiction – and access and assess information they can trust.”

“Teacher Librarians also excite students and instill the love of reading. They collaborate with classroom teachers and help them cater for individual student needs,” she said.

“I’ve seen for myself how valuable it is when a Teacher Librarian puts a really appropriate book in front of a kid at just the right time – a book in tune with their needs and interests or one which is culturally appropriate.”

“In fact, studies show that qualified librarians raise literacy levels in schools.”

“Every child needs that expertise, regardless of the school they attend. But we know that public

schools are much less likely to have Teacher Librarians than other schools,” said Ms McGovern-Hooley.

Council also asked for changes to school funding to accommodate gifted and talented students, and this did not appear in this year’s Territory budget either.

Gifted and talented students often require adjustments to be made to their curriculum and learning plan. At the moment, these adjustments must be resourced from a school’s general revenue. In fact, in some schools gifted and talented students are not formally recognised. Council would like to see specific needs-based funding allocated to gifted and talented students in the same way in which funding is adjusted for students with a disability.

In our submission to the budget process Council also asked for a counsellor or youth worker in every school to address student wellbeing and mental health and to reach out to disengaged students. The Directorate is continuing to recruit school psychologists but more funding is required to address the need.

Council would also like to see the employment of Community Liaison Officers. Some schools have allocated part of their budget to similar positions to provide a vibrant and personal link between schools and families. We asked the ACT Government to fund these positions at two schools for a two year trial, to develop school outreach and communication strategies and build community confidence and understanding. We will continue to ask!

With 2020 an election year here in the ACT, Council will continue to talk to decision makers about the needs of ACT schools and families. Our experience is that persistence pays off. Where we have made repeated calls, and continually said why something is needed, we have managed to get significant new ideas funded – like the school crossing supervisors who are now keeping kids safe on our busiest school crossings. ●

Violence in schools: building understanding

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and identify what works well, what could be improved, all whilst building empathy for others,” said Ms Elliott. “From my perspective, the best part of the project has been bringing a diverse group of people together, united by the goal of reducing and better responding to violence in our schools and asking them to consider the issue of school violence from all perspectives.”

“We’ve seen some light bulb moments, but mostly we’ve seen an increase in understanding, respect and appreciation for others, that may not have been there before.”

“Initially, I think people were really concerned that this would be another talk fest and not result in on-the-ground change,” she explained, “After coming along to a workshop, I feel that most people could see the project’s commitment to exploring school violence from all users

perspectives, where no one’s experience is more or less valid than another.”

The feedback from participants reflects this observation. One principal said they felt “privileged to have participated in the project.”

“Together with the Education Directorate we’ve heard how important it is to have real, positive change happening in our schools,” said Ms Elliott. “That’s why Council would like to see some of these ideas happening before the end of the year – although we appreciate that the Directorate will need to follow their processes.

Going forward, Council believes the suggestions for improvement from the workshops which were refined at the Ideas Xchange will be empathetic to all user experiences and therefore more likely to achieve the goal of reducing and better responding to violence. •

Please share our upcoming event with preschool parents



**Transition to Kindergarten
parent forum**

Resources and information for a smooth transition

Good transitions promote positive expectations of school and help children to become confident learners. Find out how parents can assist children to prepare for their first school year at this free parent forum.

To register please email: earlylearning@actparents.org.au
Can't attend? request a podcast via email

**Tue 17 September
7.00-8.30 pm**

**Centre for Teaching
and Learning**
51 Fremantle Drive
Stirling

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

What bank?

P&Cs have told us of difficulties operating their bank accounts, so we spoke to the major banks to clarify the best accounts and processes for parent associations.

Setting up your new committee as signatories at the bank should be a straightforward process, but it is often hampered by conflicting advice from staff within the same branch or different practices between branches. This leads to frustrated volunteers and can hold up running your P&C. Committees have also told us about practical difficulties with using electronic banking with 'two to sign' at some banks.

We spoke to the major banks to get a clearer picture for our members. We asked them which accounts are recommended for associations, how to update authorised account signatories, and how practical their 'two to sign' authorisation processes are for electronic transfers.

Accounts for incorporated associations

Most banks have specific accounts for Incorporated Associations. Mostly these come under the umbrella of 'Business Accounts' and will often have the words 'community', 'non-profit' or 'society' in their names. Examples include Bendigo Bank's 'Not for profit everyday account', Westpac's 'Community Solutions One' and Commonwealth and St. George Banks' 'Society Cheque Account'. Features of these types of accounts typically include no account keeping or transaction fees, a cheque book facility, and access to internet banking.

Opening a new account for an incorporated association usually requires:

- copy of your association's constitution
- meeting minutes including the name of the association and naming the office bearers approved to open and operate the account
- Certificate of Incorporation (eg. St. George).

The president will need to be present and sometimes one other office bearer. All signatories should attend a branch to be identified and for a profile to be created on the bank's systems if they are not an existing customer.



P&C volunteers need convenient and reliable processes for setting up new account signatories and authorising electronic transactions. Not all banks offer the same.

Updating Signatories

The banks we spoke to vary in their processes for updating signatories. So before organising your committee for a trip to the bank its best to check the requirements ahead of time. The bank's business banking specialist will often be the best person to speak with to make sure you have the necessary documentation.

Banks such as Beyond Bank, ANZ and Commonwealth Bank, will provide a 'signatory authority form'. Once filled in by all signatories each person can then visit the bank separately to have their identification verified and have a profile added. Other banks, like NAB, require all new and existing signatories to appear in person at the same time to be added and removed from the account. Beyond Bank also requires the signatures of signatories being removed although this can be done on a form with no need for the person to appear at the bank.

When updating your account signatories all banks require a copy of the minutes which detail the office bearers who are to be signatories to the account (for example a copy of the AGM minutes

Top Tips for hassle-free banking

- ⇒ You can bank at any branch of the bank, not only the branch where the account is held.
- ⇒ Speak to a business banking specialist (all banks have these and often there is a seven day a week helpline). These are the staff who have detailed knowledge and can help answer any questions.
- ⇒ Check the requirements of your bank for updating signatories ahead of time.
- ⇒ Ask how authorisations work for electronic transfers (EFT) on your bank's online banking platform – importantly check if there are transaction fees.
- ⇒ Develop a relationship with the Branch Manager, especially if you are having difficulties.
- ⇒ When specifying signatories in your meeting minutes, be sure to spell names correctly and as they appear on people's identifying documents (eg full names as per their driving licences).

or any meeting where the signatories are agreed). It is best if the minutes specify which signatories will have access to internet banking and any other requirements specific to your account.

It is worth noting that if you need to make subsequent changes to the signatories, for example add a new signatory to the account, a new authorisation form may need to be filled in by all existing signatories and you will need to provide a copy of the minutes where the signatory updates have been agreed.

Two to sign options

Having online access to your account means you can check the balance at any time, print off statements and pay bills electronically (without the need to write cheques and wait for them to clear!). All the banks we spoke to allow internet banking by signatories and can give view-only or authorising access to committee members.

Most banks' standard internet facility allows for two authorisers to complete transactions. The person initiating the payment will usually have to notify the co-signer that a transaction is ready to be authorised. The second person can then log in and authorise at a convenient time.

St. George and Westpac's online banking allows for one or two signatories to act as administrators

who can then set up access rights for the other signatories.

Commonwealth Bank electronic transfers require both signatories to be together at the one location, at the same time, to complete the transaction, which can be inconvenient for volunteers. ANZ's 'Internet Banking for Businesses' offers a portable security device for two signatories. When a transaction is initiated, a security code is sent to each device and both codes are needed to complete the transaction. This means that both signatories don't necessarily need to be together but do need to be able to communicate to relay the second code.

Other online business products are available such as 'CommBiz' and 'NAB Connect' which give extra functionality for your accounts and for authorising payments, as well as helping to manage payroll and interfacing with accounting software. However, these often come with transaction fees or other administrative costs, so you should consider whether these options suit the needs of your parent association. •

The advice in this article is general in nature. P&Cs should seek professional advice and exercise judgement on banking products and services which are right for their individual circumstances.

At our P&C...

If communicating better with parents and building community is at the top of your P&C's wish list, the Class Carer Program at Chapman Primary may be something worth emulating.

At Chapman Primary School there's an additional, and very important, role on the P&C committee – the Class Carer Coordinator. Their role is to oversee the school's Class Carer Program which is set up to provide communication and support to all families in the school community.

Each class has a designated Class Carer and anyone can nominate for these roles at the start of each year. Each year, parents provide their Class Carer with their email address and hey presto – instant communication network.

“The network has been running for years,” P&C President, Alison Callaway, told us. “For both the school and the P&C, it is an essential way of getting messages to parents.”

Apart from the most official of school communications – like the newsletter and student reports – almost all school messages use the Class Carer Network. That includes whole-school notices about upcoming events and announcements, reminders and information from classroom teachers, and P&C news and happenings.

“The message to be sent out from the school or P&C goes to the Class Carer Coordinator. They send it on to the relevant Class Carers, and they pass it onto their class list. The Class Carers are also in direct contact with their class teacher for class-specific information,” Alison explained.

“For me and other P&C volunteers, it's a great way to very quickly get the message out without having to fiddle around with problems with email addresses. I can send a quick one-line email to the Coordinator and she makes that a nice message that gets propagated down the network.”

An important component for making it work is having clear guidelines and processes.

“An initial get together with all the Class Carers, the Coordinator and the school Principal at the



The Class Carer Program is another way to link your community together.

beginning of the year has been very effective in making sure everyone understands the protocols and what the role is about.”

The Program is not just a handy tool for busy presidents and teachers. It is an important linkage for the school community.

“When you are new to a school, you can get overwhelmed by the whole school community or by the whole P&C. The formality of an email from the Principal can be daunting,” said Alison. “The beauty of the Class Carer Program is that it promotes a small community within the larger community. It is on a more relatable scale.”

“We don't use it for social messages – like kids' birthday parties – but there is that social element. The messages are kept informal. It's useful information to parents but the delivery is personal and more relaxed than it might be if it came direct from the school.”

Although the network is for important school messages, not social ones, the network does become a social contact.

“Each year the network puts families in contact who may not have crossed paths before. It assists with quickly linking immediate class families.”

“At the very least, people get to know their class carer. When you chat, you can say ‘I’m the one that sends those emails’. It’s an important point of contact.”

The network also makes it easier for parents to send queries 'back up the chain'. Parents can ask questions, in a more face to face manner, of their class carer, who is in contact with their teacher.

Some Class Carers even organise an end of year dinner for the parents and carers of that class, which, Alison says, is particularly popular with the more junior classes.

The network is also a great way to spread the volunteer load and being a Class Carer is a way in which parents can contribute to the P&C without having to make it to meetings.

“We are building on the idea of each Class Carer co-ordinating a stall at our annual fete,” said Alison. “The kindies might do a plant stall and the year fives the BBQ. From that sub-community of parents, can you organise and run that stall? It’s a different level on which to get people involved.”

When asked for tips for others who might like to run a similar system, Alison says once you have clear guidelines and roles, the essential elements are timing, trust and tone.

“You’ve got to start as soon as possible at the beginning of the year. Get out the note early to invite people to be their Class Carer and parents to opt in to the network and supply their email addresses. We leave last year’s network in place until the new one is up and running and that helps.”

“You have to encourage people to sign up. They have to know that you won’t be sending lots of emails or things that aren’t relevant – it is important to maintain that all year. And keep the emails friendly and informal.”

“Once it is really part of the school, it is a really worthwhile program.” ●

Contact Council if you would like to know more.

Got questions?

All ACT public school parent associations are members of the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations. We are here to help your organisation run well.

Contact us with your P&C-related questions.

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

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Office hours

9.30am - 2.30pm Monday to 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 government and the media.

About our magazine

ParentACTION is a free journal published quarterly. It is available online and 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 welcome. Contact 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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Dates to remember

27 Aug	Council General Meeting 7.00 - 9.30pm Centre for Teaching and Learning 51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling	17 Sept	Transition to Kindy Forum (see p. 7) 7.00 - 8.30pm Centre for Teaching and Learning 51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling
12 Sept	Audit Workshop Details on the training section of our website 7.00 - 9.30pm Centre for Teaching and Learning 51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling	24 Sept	Policy Conference /General Meeting 7.00 - 9.30pm Centre for Teaching and Learning 51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling
17 Sept	Canteen Connect 4.00 - 6pm Pick Up Stix, Lyneham Hockey Centre 196 Mouat Street, Lyneham	28 Sept - Oct 13	Council office closed (term break)
		29 Oct	Council General Meeting 7.00pm - 9.30pm Centre for Teaching and Learning 51 Fremantle Drive, Stirling

Violence in schools: building understanding

Community input, respect and understanding have been the vital first steps in addressing violence in our schools.

Last term, in a joint project between Council and the Education Directorate, a series of workshops considered ways to reduce and better respond to violence in our schools.

“We gathered together specialists and experts, parents and principals so that we could better understand the complexities of violence and what might help reduce its impact in our schools,” explained Council’s Policy Officer, Veronica Elliott.

“Our thinking was that, as violence is a community problem that we see reflected in our schools, it will take a community approach to find solutions,” said Ms Elliott. “We are so grateful to the parents who gave up their time to be involved and have their say.”

The first two workshops of the project came up with 27 great ideas to reduce or better manage violence. In June, parents were invited to attend a two hour Ideas Xchange to hear what these were and provide their experience and thoughts on whether these ideas might be effective, or what would be needed to make them work in their school.

“Overall we’ve had 119 people have their say in

the project, with 56 participating in the Ideas Xchange sessions and we thank them all for their insights,” said Ms Elliott. “At the Ideas Xchange people appreciated seeing the work that had already been done. They were able to tell us which of the ideas are practical, achievable and likely to have high impact.”

Although Council and the Directorate are still sifting through ideas and collating all the input from the Ideas Xchange, it is clear that reducing and better responding to violence in our schools cannot be solved with a single quick-fix solution. From Council’s perspective, we see the need for a range of measures.

For a while now Council has heard that some people are having vastly different experiences when it comes to the management of and responses to violence in our schools. We also know that a number of people within school communities can be affected by violence. The project built on this by using scenarios based on real-life experiences in the workshops.

“The scenarios allowed participants to sensitively explore violent incidences from all perspectives

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