



P&Cs: in pictures

How do you describe all the things that parent groups add to our schools? Well, perhaps the collection of images that we received as entries in our P&C Photo Competition comes close!



What do P&Cs add to schools? Colour, fun, community, and smiles on little faces. The winning entry (above) from Council's P&C Photo Competition shows all this at the Gowrie Primary School colour run, and won their P&C \$500 cash!

From car boots full of bread and sausages to libraries full of Dads reading with kids, we were

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Reporting in ACT public schools

End of year school reports will soon be on their way home, but many parents tell us they find them hard to interpret. The Education Directorate has provided more information for parents.

Reports are one way ACT public schools inform parents about their children's learning and progress. Reports are provided to parents at the end of semesters one and two of each school year. Parents are encouraged to meet with their children's teacher/s to discuss the report and strategies for supporting further learning.

Schools provide other opportunities for parents to engage in learning about their children's progress through parent-teacher interviews, three-way interviews, learning journeys, exhibitions, performances and portfolios.

Preschool

Parents receive reports about how their children in preschool are progressing towards the five Learning Outcomes in the *Early Years Learning Framework*.

Kindergarten to Year 10

Australian Curriculum

Teachers of students in Kindergarten to Year 10 report on how a student is progressing against the achievement standards for each learning area or subject in the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards describe the quality of learning expected by students in each subject for their year level. For example, one of the Achievement Standard sentences in Year 3 English is 'They listen to others' views and respond appropriately using interaction skills'. This part of the Achievement Standard describes how well students are expected to 'listen' and 'respond' by the end of Year 3.

Teachers also write comments on the reports to provide more information about a student's strengths and indicate areas for development and strategies for improvement.

Kindergarten

A descriptive scale is used to report on a

Kindergarten student's achievement against the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards for each subject.

Years 1 to 10

The end-of-semester reports for students in Years 1 to 10 provide parents with an assessment of their children's achievement against the achievement standards in the Australian Curriculum for each subject studied. Grades from A to E are used to report on student progress against the standards.

When a student in ACT schools is given a 'C' grade it means they have demonstrated the understanding and skills expected at the Achievement Standard for their year level. If a student receives a 'C' in both semester one and two reports, it indicates that the student has made progress, and learned new knowledge and skills based on the new and more challenging material studied.

Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES)

A number of ACT public schools are also using the Abilities Based Learning and Education Support (ABLES) to report progress and achievements of students in schools who are not yet accessing Kindergarten level learning.

Years 11 and 12

Reports for students in Years 11 and 12 provide parents an A to E grade and information about their children's progress on the courses they have studied each semester. All courses for Years 11 and 12 are approved by the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies.

New system wide reports

A new report format for students in Kindergarten to Year 10 is under development. This new report will be used by all ACT public schools as part of a new system for reporting on student

achievement. A further update on the new reports and how to understand them will be provided in 2019. •

ACT Education Directorate's Curriculum team.

Editor's note:

Council has presented parent concerns to the Directorate about the difficulty garnering meaningful information from their child's reports, particularly seeing clearly whether their child is struggling and what progress is being made.

We'd like to hear more about what you think. Do you find written reports from your school useful? How could they be improved? What additional information do you need?

Council is looking to work with the Directorate to make the new report format as useful to parents as possible.

New faces in our office

Next time you contact the Council office you may be met by one of our new staff, so we thought we'd introduce them to you.



Following the merger of the Canberra Preschool Society and Council, we welcome Marina Spurgin in the newly created role of Early Learning Officer. Marina will be focusing on advocacy for our members and promoting preschool and early years learning.

Marina has recently moved to Canberra. She has been coaching gymnastics including kindergym part time for six years and has a background in communication in the education sector.

She currently coordinates the Forrest Primary School Uniform Shop and has also helped with the canteen and reading support.

“My son and I are enjoying living in the ACT, we love the cycling paths, markets and easy access to the bush.”

“I'm looking forward to working with preschools and parent organisations on early learning matters.”

Melissa Lee also joins us , She is our new Executive Assistant, looking after our member database and keeping the office organised.



“Through volunteering at my son's schools in a range of activities from fetes to classroom reading I've seen the positive impact parents and other volunteers can make to the school community. I have also worked in two P&C-run canteens, one in a P-10 school and one in college.”

“As a long time member and office bearer of the local branch of the Country Women's Association, I also understand the rewards and challenges of membership-based volunteer organisations.”

“I look forward to contributing to the aims of Council through providing assistance and support to P&C members.” •

Wanted: grandparents!

Council Executive member Jane Koitka has some great tips for grandparents wanting to be more involved in schools, and for parent associations looking for volunteers.

Many grandparents take a very active role in the lives of their grandchildren and have a good understanding of their educational and social development. Grandparents can take a greater role in shaping the educational environment for their grandchildren and all children.

Parent associations across Canberra need to swell their ranks, to fill committees or other volunteer roles, and grandparents and other local citizens could be in their sights. Associations could benefit from the input of people who bring different points of view and help provide a school focus in the local community. In fact, grandparents are in a unique position to help evolve P&C connections with the broader community and to help secure a prosperous future for our children.

Kirsty McGovern-Hooley, Council President says “the success of P&C associations in the past has mainly been measured on their fundraising efforts. With so much change in social and community structures, parent associations are evolving and their success may also depend on their ability to build community connections.”

Grandparents have a wealth of life experience to share. Their long-term view and understanding can make a difference in helping to shape emerging educational policies and practices. It's time to encourage grandparents and other citizens you know to join a P&C Association.

10 reasons why grandparents and other citizens should join your P&C

- meet interesting people
- work with a team of people towards common goals
- grandchildren will be proud
- learn about new education developments
- voice can be heard — incorporate ideas and understanding of community responsibilities



- share their extensive knowledge and skills from years in the workforce and raising children
- show they care
- help raise money for a great cause — children's education
- increased self worth, and fulfilment
- Number 1 reason – we need them!

5 ideas for recruiting grandparents

- If your school hosts a Grandparents Day, be sure to include a recruitment drive for your parent association or an information display, or leverage off other events where extended family may be present, such as school concerts or assemblies.
- Put a sign on the school's notice board.
- Host a coffee or tea party for grandparents. Get a local café or cake shop to supply goodies in exchange for advertising (you could hand out business cards, coupons). Advertise in the school newsletter and with posters in local shopping centres or community hubs. Perhaps the school could get on board and students could make an invitation to invite their grandparents, neighbours and so on to come to the party.
- Host a family portrait fundraising event for all family members including grandparents. Link this to your P&C recruitment drive.
- Share this article! •

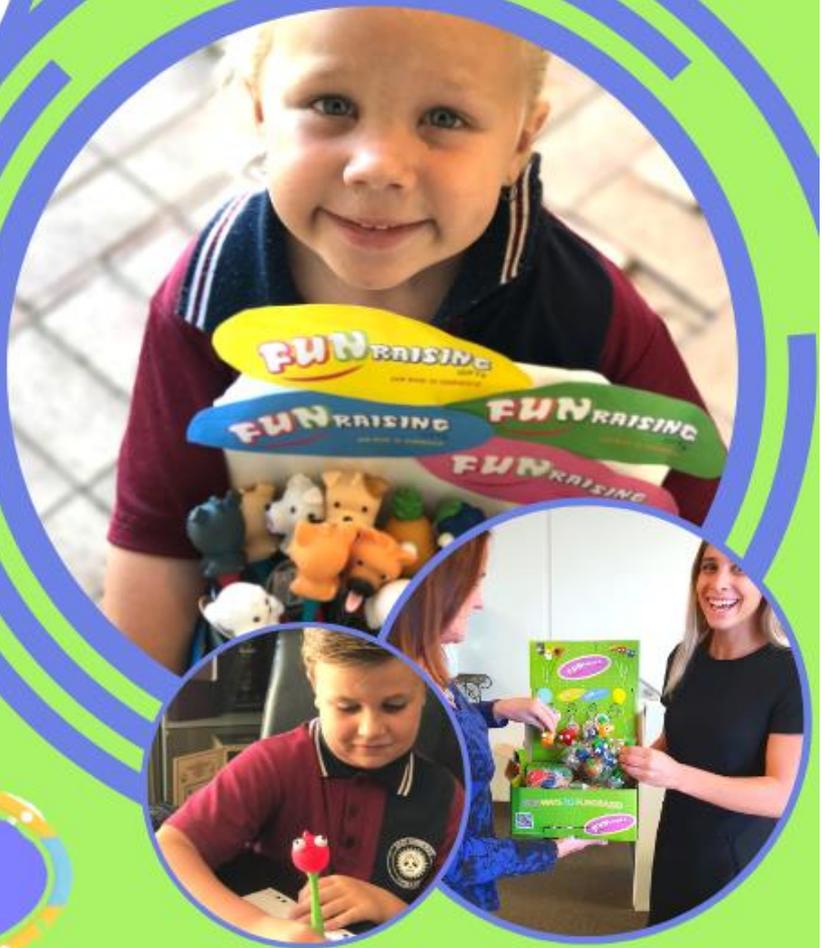
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At our P&C...

Some P&Cs provide complex services for parents which are essentially small business undertakings. What can you do when it gets too much for volunteers to manage? We spoke to several P&Cs who now employ an operations manager to oversee their businesses.

P&Cs do amazing things. Their activities extend well beyond fundraising and one-off extravaganzas like a school fete. Around 40 ACT P&Cs manage the day to day running of the canteen at their school. Even more run an in-school uniform shop. Nine have taken on the huge, but lucrative, responsibility for the school's outside hours care program.

Parents really value having these services at the school but, as volunteer numbers drop and time pressures increase, some P&Cs are struggling to keep them running. Even where the canteen employs a paid manager to order stock and make and serve all the meals, there are many regulations to keep track of and comply with, bills and salaries to pay, menus and pricing to review, and someone needs to have an overview and keep operations on track.

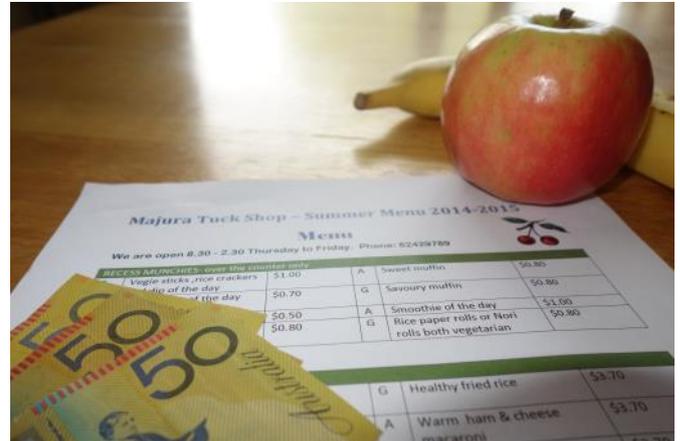
Brenda Sebastian, from Campbell Primary School P&C, knows this well. Five years ago she was the P&C President *and* Canteen Co-ordinator.

"It was nearly a full-time job," Brenda recalls. "I used to joke that my kids were doing 30 hours of school a week, but that I was doing 35!"

"As president I was keeping an eye on everything we did, including our outside school hours care service. As canteen co-ordinator I was overseeing the detail of canteen operations as well as reworking the menu and how we ran the business – it was losing about \$6000 a year at the time."

"I thought to myself – if I wasn't a full-time mum and prepared to do this, what would we do instead? It just didn't seem sustainable. So I proposed an Executive Officer model and carefully wrote a job description and duty statement for a new position and the P&C endorsed the move."

"It is now set up like a multi-faceted business, run by the paid Executive Officer and overseen by a Board of Directors. The P&C has moved from a



volunteer *run* organisation to a volunteer *led* organisation. We don't do the day to day running of the businesses. Instead the P&C is a managing Board of Directors which directs the activities of the Executive Officer."

The Executive Officer ensures the compliance of all the P&C's businesses. She drafts and updates policies and manages all the other P&C employees including recruiting, appointments and pay roll. She conducts stocktakes and looks after volunteer rosters.

"She works very closely with the P&C Treasurer, who approves payments, as well as the President and Vice-President," explains Brenda.

"Our Executive Officer also looks at the big picture – what we want to do and how to do it. For instance we recently started Active Afters and the kids can do judo, dance, hockey."

So what are the keys to success in setting up the P&C this way?

"You need to be really clear what the Executive Officer's role is and to document what they have the authority to do, and what decisions need approval," says Brenda.

Miles Franklin Primary School P&C use a similar model and agree that a carefully set-up and very

well defined structure is essential. Selina Harman, their Business Operations Manager told us “it’s important to have clear boundaries, to understand and document who does what and who is responsible.”

“It is also important to work well, and very closely, with the P&C.”

Getting the right person for the job is obviously essential.

“You need to be very good at planning and very organised,” Selina admits. “Communication skills and a focus on customer service is also important. It is essential to have a real attention to detail, especially when it comes to ensuring the businesses comply with all the regulations. Significant office experience would be helpful.”

Brenda agrees.

“They are juggling across multiple businesses with complex regulatory requirements so they’ve got to be well organised. People who have previously managed their own businesses often have the mix of skills needed.”

So how do they afford this highly-skilled employee?

“We took a close look at our services,” Brenda explains. “It’s all about how much they are valued. Make sure the canteen sells things that people want to order. We asked how much people would pay for what they valued and discovered they’d pay up to three times what we had been charging!”

“Schools needs to get their uniform shops back,” Selina advises. “We make up to \$10 profit on each item and that helps subsidise the canteen.”

Both Brenda and Selina also agree that paying the Operations Manager/Executive Officer probably wouldn’t be possible without the After School Care business, which is the most profitable.

“Our Executive Officer works 40 hours a week, with a package of around \$100,000,” says Brenda. “It’s a big undertaking.” ●

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 87 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:	Kirsty McGovern-Hooley
Vice President:	Andrew Bidwell, John Haydon
Secretary:	Cecilia Shlegel
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Committee:	Sharon Ding, Jane Koitka, Vivienne Pearce, Jayne Trustum, Bonnie Rappola

Life members

Grant Battersby, Pam Cahir, Trevor Cobbold, Graeme Evans, Ian Morgan, Richard Scherer, Vivienne Pearce

Contact us

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

Maitland House
100 Maitland Street
Hackett ACT 2602

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

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

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

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

22 Dec - 28 Jan Council office closed for school holidays

P&Cs: in pictures

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inundated with entries showing the many different activities P&Cs run, the fun you have and the wonderful things you buy for your schools. It showed the many different ways that parent groups contribute resources, learning opportunities, valued connections, and a sense of community to our public schools.

Many thanks to everyone who entered. You made choosing winners very difficult!

Congratulations also to our lucky draw winners: Caroline Chisholm School P&C, Franklin Early Childhood School P&C, Pearce Preschool Parent Association, Maribyrnong Primary School P&C, Malkara Specialist School P&C, Mawson Primary School P&C, Ngunnawal Primary School P&C, and Southern Cross Early Childhood School P&C.



Above: Never too old or too young to volunteer your time. Below: Our runner-up from Charnwood-Dunlop school. The P&C is all about giving back to the school... even if handing over the hard-earned funds is hard sometimes!



Left: Weekend working bee and new rocks thanks to the Pearce Preschool Parents Association. Below: Best dressed at Torrens Primary P&C trivia night.

