

ACT Council of P&C Associations Inc

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To: All P&C Delegates, P&C Presidents & Secretaries

Report on P&C Council General Meeting 25 May 2021 (attended by 27)

This report is issued after Council meetings to assist delegates in reporting back to their P&C associations and to inform parents generally about the activities of P&C Council.

Notices: Tues 7pm 15 June 21 P&C Constitution Workshop via zoom
Tues 7pm 20 July 21 Grant Application and Management Workshop
Wed 7pm 23 June 21 P&C Council Schools Canteen Committee via Zoom

1. Presentation on Complaints Handling Procedures by Kristen Laurent, ACT Education Directorate, Acting Manager Service & Delivery Group. Kristen explained the importance the Directorate placed on having an effective complaints management system that worked for everyone and noted the work done with the P&C Council in recent years on challenging behaviours, bullying and violence, which preceded the development of the new complaints handling procedures. She noted the importance of parents raising concerns through the step process starting with the school and escalating as necessary to the Education Support office and other external avenues of support. The phone number for the Feedback and Complaints teams is 62055429. The Directorate is placing greater emphasis on more tracking of timelines for responses to complaints and the monitoring of their progress. Complainants should receive an initial response within 2 days and completion of the process in 30 days or agreement to extend or escalate if not satisfied. Use of the online complaints report is strongly encouraged and parents are asked to advise all that they want to achieve from the complaint. Complaints, incident reports, decision and other issues will be resolved using the same procedures.

The next step is to strengthen how schools handle complaints and make it seen as an opportunity for the school not a negative. In response to questions, it was advised that:

- Parents with complaints should be able to access information about the investigations.
- For a complaint to be “resolved” EDU must justify the rationale for closing the complaint and provide advice to parents if they want to escalate the complaint.
- EDU may work with us to go back to parents who have had a previously bad experience of the complaints system, including those who gave evidence to the ACT Government Inquiry.
- Accountability and transparency were requirements of the new procedures.

2. Reconciliation Week 27 May- 3 June, what it really means. There are 20 actions suggested on the Reconciliation website for P&Cs to consider. Also noted are the online 10 hour cultural competency training course and various workshops available to P&C parents eg indigenous food and medicines workshops coming up on 8 June from 3.30pm to 5pm and 15 June from 3.30 pm to 5pm. Interested P&C members can register by emailing EDUIndigenousEd@act.gov.au

3. Update on P&C Council’s Submissions. Council has two submissions in progress:

- a. Infrastructure** submission to the ACT Legislative Assembly Inquiry submitted following input from P&Cs, delegates and our own research.
- b. ACT Budget** submission nearing completion. It concentrates on issues raised in our ACT elections priorities and concerns raised by members.
- c. Media responses.** Any P&C that wanted to respond publicly to such media reports could contact, Janelle, the Council Communications Officer and get assistance.

- 4. EDU's Volunteers & Visitors' policy.** This has been returned to EDU again with our request that they review our earlier input. It seems to apply from time to time to P&C parents.
- 5. Enrollment and attendance policy.** This is a comprehensive and clear policy from EDU about what needs to happen when and who is responsible for what eg when a parent's responsible, when a principal is responsible, what information needs to be collected, how that information will be collected without necessarily all of those intricate details. Parents may see this policy coming into their schools.
- 6. Supporting Parent Engagement Grants, update on applications.** No advice yet of the successful Round 4 grant applications
- 7. Update on P&C Council's new 5year strategic plan.** Now developing, with the Executive and staff. The draft when complete will be shared with delegates & P&Cs.
- 8. Other issues from P&C Associations - Hazardous Materials in schools.** Many parents were unaware of the briefings provided by EDU in four locations around the ACT. It appears many schools did not notify parents of these sessions and a number only found out about them from the Council's enewsletter.
- 9. COVID exemptions for school fetes.** P&Cs wishing to hold school fetes this year will need to have a COVID safe plan and apply for exemption to the ACT Chief Health Officer if they expected more than 500 people to attend the fete. See the Council website for templates.
- 10. Capacity issues in schools.** The Palmerston School's population nearly doubling and the prospect of further increases was raised. They had had a good open dialogue with EDU and realised there was no easy fix to the problem. Agreed Council raise this issue with the Minister and EDU with an increased priority on providing sufficient toilets for the number of students. Also seek a briefing on the school refurbishment program and its priorities, particularly in respect of high schools.
- 11. Facebook Groups.** To control inappropriate Facebook comments in P&C run groups, introduce a code of conduct for users, noting the purpose of the group is to share P&C activities & information, not to be a means for airing individual grievances. Another option is to turn off the comments facility on the Facebook group or direct such grievances to a separate Facebook site.
- 12. Cleanliness of schools.** Some P&Cs have reported concerns about the standard of cleaning in their schools, including toilets and canteen areas. Despite action by the Principals, the problems continue. It was agreed that we will raise this issue with the EDU.
- 13. Close – The next General meeting is on Tuesday 22 June 21. Please note the calendar of meetings in 2021 and try to avoid clashes with your own P&C meetings.**