

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 26 October 2021 (attended by 40 people)

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.

1. School Psychologists: Presentation by Tej Kaur, Manager, Clinical Practice, Student Engagement, ACT Education Directorate

Most schools are allocated a school psychologist for two to three days a week, with bigger schools having a full-time allocation. Individual school psychologists are now supported by two clinical services teams within the Education Directorate, providing additional supports to students and allowing school psychologists in schools to maximize their efficiency.

School psychologists are usually allocated to schools every three years based on factors such as enrolments, data sets, mental health referrals, child protection service referrals, and child development service referrals. They are supported by other allied health professionals including occupational therapists, youth health nurse practitioners, youth workers and social workers. Parents and carers seeking wellbeing, mental health or education supports for their students can contact their student's class teacher (primary), or year coordinator (secondary and college). Currently there are 81.6 FTE school psychologists across ACT public schools.

Questions from delegates around services school psychologists provided (eg. Assessments for dyslexia, crisis interventions etc), relationship between school psychologists and external providers, further clarification of the telehealth service and mindmap portal.

2. Return to school after COVID lock down

Delegates reported that the information from schools was good and for those who have returned it has been a relatively smooth transition. Giralang PS noted that the air quality plans were late in being released and when they were there was not the level of detail expected, plans were general and not specific to the school. Others agreed with this experience in their own schools. Schools have done a lot of work in their individual plans but this seems not to be reflected in the documentation provided to parents. School bus crowding was also identified as an issue as students return to school

The overall mood in school communities was generally feeling ok, children were excited to be back at school and seem to be adjusting but there is still some level of caution and anxiety among parents. Most P&Cs had seen Council's information on returning P&C services, canteens, uniform shops, OSHC services and they appreciated the timely advice. Most P&Cs who run canteens, uniform shops and OSHC services reported a good level of collaboration with their schools in negotiating how and when to reopen these services. (Except Narrabundah College P&C who were told they could not open their canteen without consultation).

3. Council's new 5-year Strategic Plan

Kirsty McGovern-Hooley provided an overview of Council's 2022-26 strategic plan, including rewritten vision and mission statements, our organisational goals and values. The plan will be circulated to all P&Cs for comment and the final document approved at the General Meeting on 23 November 2021.

4. P&C Early Learning Representative

All primary P&Cs are asked to appoint an early learning representative to their committee. This role will operate similarly to Council delegate and will provide feedback from the P&C to Council on early learning matters. Council has developed a range of resources to support parents in this role.

We will provide information (Facebook, Communicator, email) on how P&Cs can access a small amount of Children's Week funding to run parent engagement activities for parents of students beginning preschool or kindergarten (COVID permitting).

5. Heal Country Awards

The Council RAP committee is planning to host a garden design competition for schools to develop outdoor learning areas, bush tucker gardens and yarnning circles. Covid has delayed plans but it is hoped the competition can be underway at the beginning of Term 1 2022 and run until Reconciliation Week. Any interested member is welcome to join the RAP committee to help progress the plans.

6. Mental Health in your family resources

There are links to a range of mental health services and resources which can be accessed through the covid19 information page on the Council's website, including the recently released youth mental health portal 'Mindmaps' (www.mindmaps.act.gov.au), complete with waiting list times.

7. Board of Senior Secondary Studies review of C courses

The BSSS has proposed removing C courses from the college curriculum. The three college P&Cs strongly oppose this move as C courses are a valuable pathway for students to gain a recognised vocational qualification. Their submission is on the Council's website (under 'submissions' in the 'parent voice' tab).

8. Other Business

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Alliance Launch

Council is a member of the RSE Alliance providing the parent voice to this important area of education reform. The Alliance was successfully launched today by Yvette Berry, Minister for Education and Youth Affairs.

Capacity issues, follow up

Council will seek an update on the inner north schools capacity issues and also a regional meeting of P&Cs with EDU in the Gungahlin area to address serious College capacity issues.

9. Close – Next General Meeting is on Tuesday 23 Nov after the Annual General Meeting.