

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 23 Feb 2021 (attended by 35)

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: P&C delegates briefing & Hot Topics General Meeting 6.45pm Tues 23 Mar 21 at HBCTL Stirling face to face and via Zoom. All new and existing delegates and P&C officers encouraged to attend and network.**

1. Yvette Berry ACT Minister for Education & Ross Hawkins Executive Group Manager, ACT Education Directorate.

The Minister explained less than 10% of students participate in the current school banking program. She understands the decision to cease school banking may not be supported by all parents. So she wants to work with parents and school communities about how we transition away from this program and what a really useful financial literacy training program can provide.

Ross Hawkins they were quite troubled by the ASIC report and the Royal commission into Banking. We've got six months now to work through the transition process. We want schools to be working closely with P&Cs and that to be done together in a concerted clear and coherent way. A number of schools can transition out with little support and our help with communications and working through with the community. The Directorate is happy to speak to individual P&C meetings, talk with schools around about how we can help manage those transition arrangements. Our view on financial literacy is very different from school banking, and there is no evidence that school banking leads to improved saving behaviour.

EDU is now looking at the kind of financial literacy that students need at each level of schooling and is working with the ASIC MoneySmart program to build that financial literacy about the handling of money, the notion of transactions, tech scams, after pay credit cards, debit cards, payday loans, and all the complexities that exist. He also advised that the ASIC MoneySmart program is providing teachers with development, professional learning and Curriculum Units to be able to put that into practice in our schools.

The Chair suggested that Council form a financial literacy working group and Ross offered to have one of his staff involved in this. Anyone interested in participating in this working group should contact the Council office.

Esafety. Ross explained that there has already been much work done in this area and that EDU was continuing to work with students and schools to develop better understanding of what they want and need to build trust in the system. The Directorate will support students and schools where Esafety issues are reported by students to teachers or parents and will work through the Esafety Commissioner to have inappropriate material/websites etc removed. Parents can also approach the Esafety Commissioner directly at: esafety.com.au. It was noted that students need to self-censor ematerial but need advice and support in doing so and in some schools eg Belconnen HS, the P&C is developing with the school a plan for Esafety and culture for students.

Ross agreed to also join a Council working group on Esafety.

2. Changes to School Board's elections of P&C and parent representatives

Letters from EDU about the changes to elections for school boards had complicated what should be an easier matter. Legislative changes had made the process different for schools without P&Cs. There were concerns that the system was unworkable. EDU have agreed to work with Council to resolve the issues identified for next year when the bulk of elections for parent representatives will be due. This may involve legislative changes as well. P&Cs should consider what they want from their parent representatives on the school board and what role the P&C should have in nominating/electing them. Delegates to be prepared to discuss this at the March Hot Topics meeting.

3. Update on the EDU Complaints Handling Procedures

There had been significant changes to how EDU handled, recorded and managed complaints. Now complaints would be directed to the appropriate subject area in EDU and case managed, with tracking and reporting of each complaint and a two day time limit for phone calls back to the parent/complainant. There was more work to be done but it is pleasing to see the difference between critical incidents and complaints being recognised.

4. Update on Supporting Parent Engagement Grants & new round of applications

The Chair noted that Round 5 of the grants was now open with a closing date of 4 April. She encouraged those who had not yet applied to do so now and those who had an application rejected to consider submitting an amended or new application. Where EDU advised that other sources of funding an activity were available, the P&C should speak to the school Principal and seek funding through that other source.

5. Discuss successes for public education in the recent ACT budget

The following outcomes for public education were in the recent budget:

- a. Priority families access to 48 weeks (not 40) of early childhood learning for 3 year olds.
- b. A high school in Taylor, expand Margaret Hendry school and a new high school in Gungahlin.
- c. 50 teacher librarian scholarships over 5 years.
- d. Continue the Chromebooks roll out to new high school and college students.
- e. Free internet to households that need it for students to have access to resources.

6. Update on Conflict of Interest & Declarations for P&C committee members

P&Cs should have received letters from Access Canberra about the changes to legislation on declaration of interest (conflict of interest) by committee members. The Council website has been updated with details of the changes and the requirements that now need to be met by associations.

7. Discuss further actioning of Council's RAP & cultural Awareness training

We would welcome some new nominations to that RAP Working Group. Delegates were encouraged to contact the Council office to join the group (contact@actparents.org.au). We are working with EDU to provide cultural awareness training for P&C members. This would offer online and face to face training, the details of which were likely to be advised shortly. Expressions of interest in the cultural awareness training will be requested from all P&Cs shortly.

8. Other issues from P&C Associations

- a. **Sun Burn.** High school students recently returned home badly sunburnt after the school swimming carnival. Council would raise this issue directly with EDU and seek their support to have high schools (and colleges if necessary) enforce better sunburn protection for outdoor activities.

9. Any other Business

- a. **ACT Legislative Assembly Enquiry into school Infrastructure.** This is an opportunity for schools with concerns about aging buildings, hazardous materials, capacity issues to highlight them & seek action.
- b. **NAPLAN.** Teachers will be actively questioning the need for NAPLAN and we are likely to need to review our own policy on NAPLAN and national testing. She noted Council's policy was in favour of national testing but in a way which avoided the stress and other problems produced by NAPLAN in its current form. All delegates/P&Cs asked to consider what we want from national testing and be prepared to review our policy later in the year.
- c. **Suspensions policy.** There had been a one third increase in suspensions last year and this was in a year where we had school closures for most of a term. We are seeking from EDU a breakup of the suspension data to identify any trends or problem areas. Delegates to advise Council of any experiences they had with student suspensions.

10. Close – The next General meeting is a Hot Topics meeting on Tuesday 23 March 21.