

ACT Council of P&C Associations Inc

Sports House
100 Maitland St, HACKETT ACT 2602
Ph: (02) 6241 5759 Fax: (02) 6241 8839



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

Report on P&C Council Special General Meeting 30 July 2013

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. Things to Do before next Council Meeting:

- **P&C Council's internal committees** – Any interested delegate, P&C association officer or parent are **invited to nominate for the committees/working groups** in which they are interested – see attached list.
- 2. **Illicit Drugs** – AFP officers discussed and showed the resources available to help parents and teachers identify illicit drugs. The AFP team are available to visit P&Cs /schools and give their presentation. P&Cs can request a visit by going to the ACT policing website and booking through the ACT – Community requests page.
- 3. **Migrant & Refugee parents issues** – these parents have difficulty finding a sense of belonging to the school community and some resources have been developed to assist both parents and teachers. These can be found on the Council website.
- 4. **Canteen Developments** –ACT Government allocation of \$200,000 in this year's budget for school canteens is a win for the Council's lobbying. These funds will be paid to the Council for implementation of a two part program:
Part 1 is the purchase, installation, training and integration of the Flexischool on line ordering system for all public school canteens that do not have this system (P&Cs may opt out if they prefer).
Part 2 is the registration of the ACT Council of P&C Associations with the NSWBuy procurement system.

This will allow all member P&Cs to access on line discount purchases of goods and services for their school canteens and other P&C managed activities.

It was hoped to have the Flexischool system in all involved school canteens by the end of January 2014. Given the changes to the Council's constitution approved at this meeting, it is believed we should have registration with NSWBuy within 8 weeks.

In response to questions and comments by delegates, it was advised that:

- P&Cs should not individually purchase the Flexischool or any other online ordering system and should wait for the Council's rollout program.
- Savings in canteen staff and volunteer time will result from this program.
- Cost savings in purchases could be 25% or higher.
- The experience of some P&Cs already using the Flexischool system shows an increase in canteen turnover and a return of parents to the canteen service.
- Initially, the NSWBuy system will be used for canteen purchases but this can be expanded in the future to include other P&C activities' needs.
- P&Cs will be able to access the NSWBuy online portal by using the Council's registration. All purchases of discounted goods and services will be counted towards a further bulk buying discount for Council member P&Cs.
- Implementation of this program will be overseen by the Council but we may contract Flexschools to manage it. Training will be provided for canteen staff and volunteers and no cost to P&Cs.
- An implementation and communications plan will be developed and advised to all P&Cs.
- Hub canteens could be developed which could service smaller schools in their area.

5. **Issues from P&Cs -**

- We need to enquire of ETD regarding their development of a new Gifted & Talented policy/program and ask when we will see a consultation draft of any new such policy/program.
- We need to ask ETD if English is not a compulsory subject in colleges and if not what is the rationale for that situation. Council may need to consider its attitude to this situation and what action should be taken if necessary.
- P&Cs are interested in the availability of small grants from the ACT which may be available for school canteens etc. Council to research and advise.
- The viability of College P&Cs is being questioned. What can Council do to assist College's to maintain active and useful P&Cs.

6. **Safe Schools Roundtable meeting.** This has replaced the Safe Schools Task Force. It has developed terms of reference which stated it would meet once per year (as compared to four times per year for its predecessor) but this has been changed to twice per year. Council raised the issue of public schools being subject to very tight guidelines and requirements for reporting safety issues/incidents, while private schools had no such requirements. This then leads to a poorer (and inaccurate) impression of safety in public schools compared to private schools.

7. **Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) training sessions for parents/students.** The ORS education officer is willing to provide P&Cs with a variety of training sessions on topics such as Consumer Rights & Responsibilities, Scams and Mobile Phones. These are applicable to both parents and students. P&Cs should contact the Council Office if interested.

8. **President's Report** – this attached and covers a number of important issues/meetings

Next P&C Council General Meeting will be after the Policy Conference on 27 August 13 at CTL Stirling.
All delegates and P&C officers are encouraged to attend.

Quick update: Hope start to 3rd Term has been trouble free. The office has also been working away diligently, as have other members of Executive when help was needed. Big thanks from myself and parents in the ACT public schools.

Update on Continuing Issues from last Meeting

Gonski Issues—NSW, Tasmania, South Australia and ACT have signed up, see Trevor Cobbold's (SOS) article and Parent ACTion for good points and bad points in ACT and Australia wide. Council has been talking to various stakeholders to gain a greater understanding of the ACT agreement. Recently Catholic and Independent schools have signed. This means that private schools throughout Australia will receive Gonski money, as private schools are mostly funded by Federal funds. In States that don't sign, public schools will miss out, as most of the funding for public schools comes from the states. Recently, the Coalition stated if elected they would support funding arrangements for next year, to give to schools certainty when setting fees etc. They will then reassess what needs to be changed with Labor's funding model. In the ACT the Catholic system seems to have initially done well; in the long term public schools will benefit from a needs based model.

Disability - "Who Can Help? A Disability Resources Booklet for Young People in the ACT" As we have now exhausted our 2,000 copies, we are investigating finding funding for another run of printing. Disability ACT has come good with their promise to put the booklet on their website, here is web link:

http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/disability_act/business_and_community (scroll to bottom of page)

ACTION : A policy has been developed to cover students missing school for lengthy periods, this will be voted on at our policy conference. It was also noted that our policy on Disability and Learning Difficulties needs updating and simplifying in light of recent Taskforces, Reviews and changes at a Federal level. I have tasked our policy officer to start looking at this issue for next year. It is much easier to lobby effectively if policies are clear-cut and everybody understands what we are trying to achieve. If you would like to be part of this process (via email), make sure you put your name down for Disability Working Group (you don't have to be school delegate just an interested member of a P&C).

Objections to Planning Process for New Private Schools Applications

Minister's reply to the joint letter we sent re planning process for private schools has been received via AEU. We did not receive a separate reply, which I thought was poor. Essentially the Minister indicated an internal ETD review would take place; terms of reference have not been outlined. Council would like to see a change in legislation and implementation procedures. At present, it is virtually impossible to deny an application. Some minor changes, such as giving us a copy and putting things on ETD website, have already occurred. Council holds the view that we wanted a proper planning process and efficient use of public money. To get this we need a proper review of planning process. I contacted the Ministerial advisor to seek information on what we can put in the review. A submission has been prepared, thanks John H. to be submitted this week.

Parent Participation

Feedback welcomed on reform of Council meetings' format and mechanism for communication to P&Cs. Facebook, Twitter etc. initiatives being implemented. P&C Workshops 1st and 3rd August have been cancelled. Council will look at running these valuable workshops early next year.

Submissions –Council's input to the Royal Commission –Issues Paper 1, Working with Children Check due mid August. Review into planning process for private schools due this week.

Office- new work stations now installed, increasing general office efficiency. New server is still on order.

Meetings Attended: since last meeting

Ministerial Learning Difficulties Taskforce 29.7.13. Final meeting, report was well received by Minister and ETD. Diane Joseph, Director-General of the Directorate and Steven Gniel, Executive Director, Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement offered their thanks and all Taskforce members were presented a copy of the final Report. Copy of report will be found on Directorate website, as soon as Minister has released it.

AEU and SOS- John H. and Viv P. - networking around issues of common interest such as planning and approval of private schools, school autonomy and promotion of public schools as school of choice.

Meeting Federal members - Zed Seselja, 19.6.13. Attended Viv.P, Jena D, Tim L, Terry S. and Amanda B. Meeting was productive in that Zed was interested in our views while not offering his or the Liberal position. He admitted he is on a learning curve with regard to educational matters and his knowledge of educational issues was limited. Our main aim was to provide information on Council's view on various Federal issues in education list in below paragraph.

Meeting Andrew Leigh M.P.28.6.13. Attended by Viv.P, Amanda.B and John.H. Meeting covered Federal issues listed, **resourcing gap public/private, an increasingly income stratified education system**, effects the need to maintain a **well resourced, free and secular educational option**. Council's concerns over **lack of specialist teachers** e.g. science, maths, music, librarians, as Universities are federally funded, how training can this be improved. Leigh saw Gonski funding as solution for all of the above. We explained problems with **planning approval of new private schools**, a state responsibility but funding a federal responsibility (over 55% of total funding for private schools), resulting in poor planning decisions. We also highlighted problems with **school autonomy** and **NAPLAN**. Leigh really wasn't interested, as he supports what government has done and is doing in these areas. No reaction to loss of **AuSSI funding**.

A little interest in cases where **Chaplains in schools** had been less than optimal. Leigh encouraged us to promote Gonski but seemed very blinkered on listening to views, which differed from his.

Excellence and Enterprise Meeting 28.6.13 alternate Matthew Williams attended.

Curriculum Taskforce Meeting 30.7.13 – Amanda Bichard attending.

Safeschools Roundtable 30.7.13. Email was sent last term to ETD to find out what is happening in this area and why there have been no meetings this year. Result- Safe Schools Roundtable was held today, I raised issue of road safety around schools and lack of regulations and reporting in private schools compared to public with regard health and safety of students. Speakers on following topics- School Climate, policy and Student congress. Detailed report will be given at meeting.

GSEC –Hugh B. 30.7.13 contributed our review into planning of private schools as GSEC is putting in submission to Review.

EALD (English as an Additional Language), Literacy, Numeracy Reference Group - Meeting 24th July. Sussana Mulholland can no longer attend, replacement to be found. ACTION: promote Companion House Awards.

Meetings still to come

Canteen Taskforce. Meeting soon to finalize recommendations. We are waiting on paperwork and approval from NSWBUY before implementation of Council plans can be started. Changes to constitution needed by NSWBUY, these will have to be voted on at July 30th meeting. Hugh B. has met with online operators in the school holidays. We will eventually receive \$200,000 through ACT Budget to help make P&C canteens viable businesses. **DERG(Disability Reference Group)** Carey Doyle, 6.8.13 If there are issues you want raised at meeting ,please contact Carey through office.

ETD Meeting, 7.8.13,10am**Education Minister Burch, 21.8.13,10am**

Later in Year

2020 Vision Project Parliament of Youth on Sustainability & Competition: 2nd- 6th Nov 13 competition due 23rd August.

Council is hosting the **ACSSO National Education Conference 17-18 Oct 2013**, volunteers welcomed.

Education Forum for New and Emerging Communities 20 Nov 13 (Co-sponsored by P&C Council and Companion House) and presentation of Companion House Awards for good practise in the EALD area.

Media Contacts

Canberra T. 9.7.13 article Re Planning private schools, the need to review process

Canberra.T. 23.7.13 Article Re Review Planning for Private Schools, biased nature of panel to assess registration application for new school at old Charnwood High campus, unknown effect on future running of Charny Carni Fundraiser.

Canberra.T. 24.7.13 article re pulling back of School Autonomy around finances in ACT. Vindication of Council's opposition to the recent push in the ACT for autonomy for school finances, all the evidence in other countries and places like Victoria show that school autonomy does not improve student outcomes. It has not worked in ACT either. Contact from ABC TV News re canteens and other possible news worthy items