



## Year 7 Health Checks

### ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations

Council is the peak body for public school P&Cs in the ACT. Council considered the public information paper for Year 7 Health Checks at a General Meeting of parents and carers in March 2019.

#### 2017 ACT Government 10 Year Health Plan

Council understands the objectives of the Year 7 health checks are to improve:

- Healthy body weight
- Positive emotional wellbeing

Council led a discussion of the Year 7 health checks, highlighting that most parents consistently underestimate their child's BMI. It was noted that health checks will from 2020 be conducted along with vaccinations occurring in a private room or screened area, although in 2019 health checks will be conducted separately from vaccinations. It was also noted that students would not be provided with their height and weight, but that BMI results would be provided to parents and legal guardians. Data collected by the electronic wellbeing survey starting in 2020, would not be provided to parents.

### Feedback on Year 7 Health Checks

- A number of parents questioned whether the BMI is an accurate and reliable form to indicate 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' body weight.
- A large number of parents felt that measuring the height and weight of Year 7 students was not a holistic measure of student health. Parents felt that students are already too focused on body image driven by media and social media.
- A large number of parents felt that 'health check' would include more than taking weight and height measurements.
- A large number of parents felt that Year 7 was not a great time to measure student weight and height, due to the number and nature of changes their bodies are undergoing, specifically physiological changes at different rates and stages. Parents also find that Year 7 is a major transition which can be disruptive in many ways.
- A large number of parents were concerned that measuring only height and weight places critical importance on numbers, when students are already highly self-conscious about body image.
- A large number of parents felt that providing a letter to parents advising them of their students' BMI would not tell them anything they're not aware of.
- A large number of parents felt that only being informed their students' BMI would not be well-received and wonder what is this information meant to achieve?

- A large number of parents would be interested in the results of the electronic survey for emotional wellbeing or mental health, however this information may or may not be shared with parents. Parents would rather this information was provided to them.

## Summary

Of 27 parents in attendance:

- 1-2 may opt in
- 1 would opt in, despite feeling the health checks (weight and height measurements) sent a message about body image which is unhelpful to students.
- A large proportion of parents would opt out on the weight and height component.

## Recommendations

- Amend the 'health check' to more holistically measure student health, including eye sight, hearing, teeth, mental health, as well as height and weight.
- Feedback to parents and carers for students with BMI's 'at risk', should include a targeted incentive, such as a rebate for seasonal sports activities or membership of \$100 or thereabouts. Council considers a rebate accompanied with BMI information on their students supports parents to support their students to be healthy and active.
- The electronic wellbeing survey results need to be provided to parents and carers, enabling them to support their students themselves and with external supports.
- Future health strategies for students need to give consideration to the student and parent perspectives.