

Issue No. 1

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Thank you for subscribing to APFACTS newsletters; this is the first edition of a new e-format, so we welcome your feedback to assist us in refining it to what you would like to read !

This year has seen significant reform and focus on education initiatives with many new and emerging developments. There is a Review of School Funding which is to report soon, the development and implementation of the National Curriculum which is rolling out and there are numbers of programs and projects being delivered aimed at improving educational outcomes.

The substantial contribution parents make to student outcomes is being recognised more and more although there is a distance yet to travel. A very recent positive initiative was the forum "Conversation with Parents – School Reforms" where parents were invited to participate in a live conversation about schooling, with the Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, Peter Garrett. To view the session go to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=mrTlQhq_pPU.

APFACTS has had a very busy year and most recently in November delivered six successful workshops for parents of school aged children on the topic of skills to support successful student transitions. The workshops, open to all parents of school students in ACT, were conducted at six locations across the ACT and were very positively received with over 440 bookings from parents and students.

[Continue reading article](#)

APFACTS YOUTH TRANSITIONS WORKSHOPS

Over 400 parents and students booked to attend workshops in November on high school transitions and beyond.

APFACTS was proud to present a series of workshops featuring education specialist Angie Wilcock in November 2011.

The workshops targeted at parents of teens in years 9-12, saw Angie offer practical advice on organisational skills, planning and learning styles and how parents could recognise, address and work with their teenagers to achieve better schooling outcomes.

The assistance for young people with transitions is becoming a recognised need for students, parents and governments alike. The successful passage and transition of students through school enables success in high school and the workforce or higher education. Higher awareness by parents and greater parental involvement with children through this phase enables better schooling outcomes for students.

The APFACTS Youth Transitions workshops were provided with assistance from the Australian and ACT Governments under the ACT Youth Attainment and Transitions Strategic Funding Pool.

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President's Message

Welcome to the APFACTS Term 4, 2011 Newsletter.

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Executive Committee members

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President

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[Charuni Weerasooriya](#)
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Like to learn more about APFACTS and our work ?

Visit our website :
www.apfacts.org.au

Would you like to discuss any aspects of education with an APFACTS representative ?

Email our President :
[George Gamkrelidze](mailto:George.Gamkrelidze@apfacts.org.au)

REVIEW OF SCHOOL FUNDING

In April 2010 the Commonwealth Government announced a review of the Commonwealth's method of funding government and non-government schools. This review is being conducted by a Committee chaired by Mr David Gonski AC.

The review is due to deliver its final report to the Government by the end of this year, looking at, among other things, the way in which non-government schools should be funded by the Commonwealth, starting from the year 2014.

[Continue reading article](#)

Do you know of an event or resource that parents should know about?

Email us at:

admin@apfacts.org.au

NATIONAL CURRICULUM - UPDATE

ACARA in its development of the National Curriculum has had a very busy and productive year. An update of the most recent developments:

- In October, the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (all Ministers of Education in Australia) endorsed a revised version of the Australian Curriculum. For more information, [click here](#)
- ACARA has released the final paper, Shape of the Australian Curriculum: The Arts. For more information on this latest paper : <http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/arts.html>
- ACARA has released the Shape of the Australian Curriculum: Geography. For more information on this : <http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/geography.html>
- The development of the Australian Curriculum for Technologies is getting underway. Click here for further information about the curriculum development process. <http://www.acara.edu.au/curriculum/technologies.html>
- Report on the results of the 2010 National Assessment Program - Civic and Citizenship (NAP-CC) testing program is now available : www.nap.edu.au

Have you been to the on-line Australian Curriculum website and seen what all this is about ?

<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au>

APFACTS represents parents of non-government schools in the ACT on the ACT Curriculum Taskforce. This group meets each term. If you have any areas you would like discussed, please email Charuni Weerasooriya : cweerasooriya@apfacts.org.au

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2011 NAPLAN SUMMARY REPORT AVAILABLE

While the full 2011 NAPLAN National Report has not been released yet, the Summary report is available to parents via the ACARA website: [2011 Naplan Summary Report](#).

The Summary Report shows preliminary results of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) nationally, by state and territory, and broken down by each year level and learning area, and provides important information about the achievement of students in these essential areas of learning.

- Further information, including support materials to assist in interpreting the results, is available in the National Assessment Program's website www.nap.edu.au.
- The new timetable for NAPLAN testing has been released : www.nap.edu.au/Information/Key_Dates/index.html

As a parent, how do you feel about NAPLAN testing? APFACTS values your opinions on how we can make this a better experience for parents and students. Email your thoughts: admin@apfacts.org.au

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UNDERSTANDING ASIAN LITERACY

Parents unite to build demand for asian languages and studies

Learning about Asia is an increasingly important part of the personal, social and academic development of all young Australians.

Would you like to be a part of an innovative project that will establish a network of parents who can work collaboratively with school leaders to build student demand for knowledge, skills and understanding of Asia and increase opportunities for them to be exposed to high quality and sustainable teaching programs? The date for expressions of interest has been extended, to learn more about this project, please go to:

<http://www.pual.org.au/furtherinfo.html>

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AITSL TEACHER PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS - PILOT PROJECT

Exciting pilot project will see valuable information generated to strengthen teacher training and professional practice in the area of parent engagement.

In response to the growing recognition of the crucial role parents and the home environment play in influencing student outcomes the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and Australian Parents Council (APC) have been invited by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to conduct a pilot of the recently released National Professional Standards for Teachers.

Although effective collaboration between parents and teachers connect student learning at home and school to maximise of student outcomes, many teachers feel ill-equipped to engage positively and meaningfully with parents.

This pilot project has the potential to provide valuable information to strengthen teacher training and professional practice in the area of parental engagement. Seven focus groups were conducted across Australia with the aim of identifying the ways in which teachers engage parents in teaching and learning, with a particular focus on identifying the particular teaching knowledge, skills and practices that underpin effective teacher practice in respect of parent engagement. The focus groups were facilitated by Dr Janet Smith, Director of Luminocity Pty Ltd and Associate Professor at the University of Canberra.

The Canberra focus group contained four parents and three teachers representing both government and non-government schools. The group discussed The National Professional standards for Teachers 3.7 and 7.3 which outline the encouragement of parent engagement in schools. Although Dr Smith reported that the themes identified were similar to those discussed in other states there were some useful perspectives put forward which reflect the ACT education environment.

For further information on the outcomes of the focus groups please contact: Ian Dalton, Australian Parents Council on Ph.03 63348886

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NEW ANU PRINCIPALS RECOMMENDATION ENTRY SCHEMES

ANU introduce two new ANU entry schemes available to students immediately:

1) Indigenous Australian Principals' Recommendation Scheme:

As part of a review of Indigenous higher education entry at ANU, a new principals' recommendation entry scheme for any Indigenous students completing school this year receiving an ATAR between the usual entry score of ANU degrees and a minimum ATAR of 70.

2) Pasifika Students Principals' Recommendation Scheme:

As part of ANU's commitment to Pacific Studies and to encourage the participation of young Pacific Islanders in higher education, the Principals Recommendation scheme has been extended to young people of Pacific Islander and Māori heritage.

Other Indigenous students are eligible as usual for the ANU Indigenous Australian Admission Scheme.

For more information about these programs, please contact: Tania Willis, Manager, Admissions, on 02 6125 2260 or email: tania.willis@anu.edu.au

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WHAT IS THE ACT YOUTH COMMITMENT ?

Through the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, the ACT has agreed to meet a range of targets to improve participation, lift qualifications and support successful transitions.

The ACT has committed to a number of key reforms under the National Partnership, one of which is the establishment of the ACT Youth Commitment.

The ACT Youth Commitment requires all agencies that serve young people to the age of 17, including schools, to be committed to ensuring that no young person is lost from education, training or employment.

The ACT Youth Commitment is underpinned by recent changes to the Education ACT 2004, including a change in the mandatory participation age of young people to 17 years.

This change has seen the compulsory school age of 15 replaced with mandatory participation to 17 come into play. Commencing since 1 January 2010, all young people are now required to participate in full-time education until they complete a year 10 program of study and then participate in full-time education, training or employment until completing year 12 or equivalent or turning 17, whichever occurs first.

Young people who have completed year 10 and are looking to undertake work-related training or employment instead of continuing with full-time education until they are 17 need to seek an Approval Statement from the Education and Training Directorate to ensure the training or employment meets the Directorate's guidelines.

Further information on Approval Statements and other changes to the Education Act 2004 can be found [here](#).

Further information on the ACT Youth Commitment can be found at: <http://www.det.act.gov.au/actyc>

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ASSIGNMENT AND RESEARCH SKILLS HANDBOOK

A great new resource for students in secondary school has been released

by education specialist Angie Wilcock.

ACT parents who attended the Youth Transitions Workshops will be familiar with Angie's hands-on, practical approach to education topics.

Angie's new book takes students step-by-step through processes in planning, researching and completing their assignments and projects.

Learn more about this practical handbook that could help your teenagers with Assignment and Research skills. [Click here](#).

To order your copy, please go to : www.highhopes.com.au

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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

(cont ...)

APFACTS actively supports parents' capacity to positively influence their students' progress through their school years and we were delighted to offer the workshops conducted by respected education consultant Angie Wilcock.

The workshops were made possible through support from both the Commonwealth and ACT Governments through the Youth Attainment and Transitions Funding Pool.

A big thanks to the Principals of all ACT schools for their efforts in promoting the workshops to parents. A special thanks to Radford College, Daramalan College, Burgmann College and the Headley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning who provided venues for the seminars free of charge.

In respect of the Review of School Funding, APFACTS has been consulted with and closely involved in the Australian Parents Council (APC)'s submissions to the Review this year.

At the heart of the submissions is the importance of parents' right to choose the type of schooling best suited to their children. The submissions covered many areas of potential concern for the non-government school sector and did not acknowledge the sector's performance both in efficiency and in achievement of schooling outcomes.

In the ACT, non-government schools make up about 40% of the student population, higher in secondary schooling. This means parents' choice for this type of schooling needs to be taken seriously.

An examination of the Review of School Funding from an APFACTS perspective is contained in a separate article in this new sletter or you can visit <http://www.apfacts.org.au/site/links> to read more about the Review and its progress.

We welcome your feedback and hope you find the new sletters and our website a valuable source of information on school education issues and parents' perspectives.

George Gamkrelidze, President APFACTS

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APFACTS YOUTH TRANSITIONS WORKSHOPS

(cont'd)

As a parent of a teen it can be a challenging time.

Traditionally a stage filled with a number of physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes, this is a time when teen brain development is massive and swings in behaviour and moods can be confusing for both parents and adolescents.

Alongside these changes our young people are thrust into arguably the most important part of their education where results count and future directions are mapped.

These same young people are struggling to balance their school work with all of life's 'other' demands such as friends, part-time jobs, social networking, computer games, extra-curricular activities and the list goes on.

During this time, many parents suddenly find themselves feeling more like 'onlookers' rather than 'participants' in their child's education.

So, what can parents DO?

Over 440 ACT parents of years 9-12 showed their commitment to continued engagement with their teens by booking an APFACTS Youth Transitions Workshop in November.

Angie Wilcock, expert on transitions worked with parents on tips and developed some hands-on techniques to assist their children through high school and beyond.

Angie explained, 'One of the secrets to surviving stress and coping with the increasing demands of school is to understand the importance of balance. Striking that balance between work and play is a life skill – not just a skill for school.'

'Today's kids experience new social networks, new educational expectations, different teachers and teaching methods, increased responsibilities - these are not necessarily negatives, but they are changes, and adjustments need to be made. We can make a powerful and positive impact on our kids coping skills by offering support rather than frustration!' said Angie Wilcock.

The two workshops across six locations were titled: 'Successful Transitions .. Parents making a difference' and 'T.O.P.S Program'. Angie shared tips and techniques, some popular tips were:

- Promote a positive attitude to school and school work.
- Don't DO your child's assignment but make sure they understand what THEY have to do. Help them understand the process of what is required and encourage them to make a start on an assignment as soon as you they receive it.
- Be a role model in areas like organisation and time management – teach how to prioritise in order of what needs to be done, not in order of preference.
- 'Chunking'- encourage your child to break down projects and assignments into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- Limit distractions for your children when they are working or studying. Ensure they have some personal space to do homework.
- Goal setting and how to get the most out of what you do.
- Look for ways to help provide balance in your teen's life - develop a routine for work and play- and try to keep to it!

Attendees were asked to evaluate the workshops and provide comments. The feedback was very positive, some comments were:

'It was nice to hear a presenter who understands the challenges or parent-child issues around study discipline and approach'

'It's good to know that most parents are experiencing the same attitudes, behaviour, motivations'

'I really enjoyed the workshop. Angie was motivational and engaged her audience'

George Gamkrelidze, APFACTS President was happy the workshops were so well attended. 'It was brilliant to see over 440 people book for the workshops, parents in the ACT have a strong commitment to their children's education and this was demonstrated by the enthusiasm towards these workshops.

Angie's practical and hands-on approach to topics such as balance,

organisation and time management, learning styles, goal setting were enthusiastically received by parents and the feedback we have is fantastic. We hope to hold more workshops and seminars next year'.

APFACTS gratefully acknowledges the assistance from the Australian and ACT Governments under the ACT Youth Attainment and Transitions Strategic Funding Pool.

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REVIEW OF SCHOOL FUNDING

(cont'd)

APFACTS champions the cause of parents to choose the school they consider most suitable for their child, and, if that be a non-government school, that they not be unduly financially burdened. Forty percent of all ACT school students attend one of the ACT's 44 non-government schools. Non-government school parents recognise that they pay a premium for their choice. A good many families make a considerable financial sacrifice to achieve this. Contrary to popular belief, they are generally not wealthy. These parents are taxpayers and they save governments in Australia, approximately \$5 billion annually (about \$4,650 for every non-government school student).

The responsibility for school funding is shared by parents, the Commonwealth Government, and the State and Territory Governments. State and Territory Governments have primary funding responsibility for government schools. They own the schools and manage them. Since 1985, governments (Commonwealth and State or Territory) have been the primary source of funds for non-government schools.

On recent figures, about 88% of the cost of a government school student comes from the State or Territory Governments, about 9% from the Commonwealth Government, and about 3% from private sources. For a non-government school student, about 42.5% comes from the Commonwealth Government, about 15% from the State or Territory Governments, and about 42.5% from private sources.

APFACTS has argued that the Commonwealth, and the States and Territories, should continue to bear their current responsibilities for the funding of school education. The discharge of these responsibilities sees the Commonwealth providing the majority of funding for non-government schools, and the States and Territories providing the majority of funding to government schools.

In April 2010 the Commonwealth Government announced a review of the Commonwealth's method of funding government and non-government schools. This review is being conducted by a committee chaired by Mr David Gonski AC. The review is due to deliver its final report to the Government by the end of this year, looking at, among other things, the way in which non-government schools should be funded, starting from the year 2014.

In December 2010 the national peak non-government school organisation (of which APFACTS is an affiliate), the Australian Parents Council ('APC') made a submission to the Gonski Committee in which it addressed the question of fairness in non-government school funding and proposed a framework for the funding of non-government schooling that APC believed would be fair and provide consistency. This framework comprised the following components:

- A basic funding entitlement for students attending non-government schools which should be set at a percentage of the total real recurrent cost of educating a student in a government school at an equivalent level of schooling ranging from 20% to 80% depending on an agreed socio economic profile score, allocated and paid to the school of choice or the relevant non-government schooling authority.

- Levels of funding for additional educational need should be commensurate with those that apply in the government schooling sector.
- Levels of additional funding required to address particular educational needs of individual students should also be commensurate with those that apply in the government schooling sector. This additional funding, sourced from the Commonwealth Government, should be allocated for payment to the non-government school authorities for distribution and monitoring of outcomes.

Both the basic funding entitlement and the educational needs component of funding should be supplemented each year in line with movements in actual government school per pupil cost.

The real average total cost of educating a child in a government school could be the benchmark for calculation of a basic funding entitlement and additional needs funding, with the latter being calculated according to the cost of funding additional educational need.

It is strongly predicted that the Gonski Committee in its recommendations will discard the current 'funding maintained' protection for the Commonwealth funding for those non-government schools that, before 1 January 2001, enjoyed a higher level of recurrent funding under the then Education Resource Index ('ERI') than they attracted, as of that date, under the then new 'socio-economic status' mechanism.

Under the current Commonwealth funding arrangements, the great majority of ACT non-government schools depend upon 'funding maintained' protection for their current level of recurrent funding.

If, in the absence of any more beneficial funding arrangements which the Commonwealth might implement in the light of the Gonski Committee review, these schools were required to be funded under the existing 'socio-economic status' mechanism, they could stand to lose a significant level of funding.

For some, including the Catholic system schools, this could be in the order of a 30% loss or even greater.

A perception that appears to have recent currency is that 'funding maintained' protection is some special 'featherbedding' for non-government schools. The real fact is that the 'funding maintained' level of funding was what the schools in question were entitled to be paid under the ERI mechanism, which governed the allocation of Commonwealth non-government school recurrent funding from the mid 1980s until 1 January 2001 (and, in the case of Catholic system schools, 1 January 2005).

The Federal Schools Minister, the Hon Peter Garrett AM, has stated that 'no school will lose a single dollar per student as a result of [the Gonski Committee] review'. APFACTS will be closely scrutinising the Review's outcomes.

For more information on the developments of the Review of School Funding and submissions of interest visit : <http://www.apfacts.org.au/site/links>

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