



Association of Parents and Friends of A.C.T Schools Inc

The Association of P&F's of ACT Schools Representing the Interests of ACT
Non-Government School Parents

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1.08 June 2008

APFACTS meets on the 4th Thursday of each month during school terms. Meetings are held at the APFACTS Office, Minns Place, WESTON. All welcome.

Have you seen the new APFACTS website? Take a look!
www.apfacts.org.au

APFACTS Executive:

President:

Tony Maple

Vice President:

Ross Norgate

Treasurer:

Paul Sykes

Secretary:

Kirsten Wilkinson

Executive Officer:

Kate Lyttle

"Parents have the right to choose the kind of education that should be given to their children." UN Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26.3)"

Responsibility for election comment is taken by Tony Maple, President, APFACTS, Minns Place, Weston ACT.

2008 Budget Reviews

The ACT Budget

The ACT Government handed down its election year budget on 6 May and it contained a plethora of education initiatives for students in the ACT.

For the non-government sector, the major initiative was the announcement of an improved methodology for providing indexation for the ACT component of schools' recurrent grant funding. Indexation has long been at the top of the 'wish list' for APFACTS and other organisations concerned with the non-government education sector and this increase will go some way towards addressing the shortfalls of recent years.

The commitment to a further four years of special funding for students with disability also indicates that the Government has listened to the sector and supports our stated priorities.

In an innovative 'green' initiative, the Government announced a grant program of \$300,000 over four years for the non-government sector to assist schools to reduce their carbon footprint.

Additional budget announcements potentially benefiting students at non-government schools include the offering of additional subjects at the ANU Secondary College, programs for young people at risk of dropping out of school, VET apprenticeship programs and the commitment to continue the consultation process for the proposed ACT Schools Standards Authority.

The ACT Department of Territory and Municipal Services has also committed \$500,000 to support the Burgmann Anglican School to address crucial traffic management problems.

The Federal Budget

The Federal Budget contained no real surprises for the education sector. It was pleasing to note that many pre-election commitments were honoured. Primarily, these were:

- Digital Education Revolution - \$1.2 bil over 5 years for improving access to computers for secondary students, some online curriculum support, and a range of other ICT related initiatives.
- VET sector initiatives for on-the-job training, career education and mentoring programs.
- National Schools Assessment & Data Centre - \$17.2 mil to assist in collection and reporting of student outcome information.

Reductions to funding include a decrease of \$2.1 mil (in the first year) to Teaching Australia, the cessation of the Summer School Programs for Teachers and the program for rewarding schools for improving student outcomes in literacy and Numeracy, and the announcement that the national numeracy and literacy voucher program will continue for 2008 only.

High Standards in ACT School Education Consultation

Following on from the consultation paper released in February, 2008, Minister Barr has released a further consultation paper about the establishment of an ACT School Standards Authority. The Minister has called upon interested people to submit comments on the functions to be included in such a body, as well as the preferred operational model.

Comments are sought by 1 September 2008.

Copies of the paper are available from

www.det.act.gov.au or by

following the link from the APFACTS web:

www.apfacts.org.au. A copy of the APFACTS submission to the original review is also available here.

APFACTS members will receive a hard copy directly.

Catholic Issues Committee

On Monday, 31 March 2008, APFACTS Catholic Issues Committee met with the Most Rev. Mark Coleridge, Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn. APFACTS raised with the Archbishop:

Fee rises in ACT Archdiocesan Schools for the 2008 school year;

APFACTS noted that it had already commended the Catholic Education Commission on its efforts to keep fee increases in systemic schools down to about 3% for the current year, and urged that similar restraint be shown for next year, noting pressure from interest rates on rising living costs. The Archbishop was keen to do everything possible to keep fee increases to a minimum.

The state of non-government school funding by the ACT Government;

Noting that it was difficult to get the current ACT Government to give sympathetic consideration to the funding requirements of non-government schools, the Archbishop encouraged APFACTS to do all it could, along with the other non-government school stakeholders, to achieve this, particularly in the lead-up to the next ACT Election in October 2008. The Archbishop saw a need to come up with more engaging methods of presenting the arguments for improved ACT Government support. The Archbishop, in particular, noted the poor state of support for students with disabilities.

ACT Government Discussion Paper 'High Standards in ACT school education - Discussion paper for an ACT School Standards Authority' issued in February 2008;

APFACTS gave the Archbishop a short briefing on its response earlier in the month to this discussion paper.

The review by the former Federal Government of the 'socio economic status' funding mechanism and its apparent acceptance by the incoming Federal Government for the 2009-2012 quadrennium

The Archbishop agreed with APFACTS that it was very important to preserve 'funding maintained' (or equivalent) protection for ACT non-government schools during the 2009-2012 quadrennium of federal funding.

APFACTS' servicing of the interests of ACT Catholic school parents and friends associations;

APFACTS informed the Archbishop that it was seeking to do this through Catholic

Issues Committee. APFACTS appreciated its engagement with the Catholic Education Commission, as well as with the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT. APFACTS was seeking to attract new affiliates. It was noted that, in some Catholic system schools, P&Fs were being merged with school boards into so-called 'school community' councils. It was suggested that small attendances at P&F meetings may be indicative of a general level of satisfaction from parents with the running of their schools, though it was probably more a sign of heavier time demands on parents.

The involvement of APFACTS with the national peak non-government school parents body, the Australian Parents Council;

APFACTS gave the Archbishop a brief account of the national membership of the APC. APFACTS said that it had encouraged affiliates of the APC with Catholic school membership to liaise direct with their local bishops, as well as with the local Catholic Education authorities. The Archbishop saw merit in direct contact with the bishops, particularly from a pastoral perspective.

The implications for local Catholic schools of the pastoral letter of the NSW and ACT bishops entitled 'Catholic Schools - at a Crossroads';

The Archbishop observed that the pastoral letter had been well-received in the local Catholic education community.

The review of the religious studies curriculum in Archdiocesan schools 'Treasures New and Old'.

The Archbishop said he saw a need to improve the curriculum, particularly in the secondary sector.

AISACT News

At its recent AGM, the following people were appointed to the Board of the Association.

Chair: Christine Harrison

Deputy Chair: David Garratt

Executive Committee:

Carl Palmer

Ruth Underwood

Heather Walsh

Congratulations to Trinity Christian School, Brindabella Christian College, Emmaus Christian School, Orana School and Covenat College who were all successful in receiving funds under the first round of the Digital Revolution grant program. Further information is available at:

www.digitaleducationrevolution.gov.au

APFACTS welcomes Bev Galloway, who takes over in an acting capacity from Paul Browning of Burgmann Anglican School, following Paul's move to Queensland.

Upcoming events at member schools include the Radford College Fete 8 November, Orana School Spring Fair 9 November, Canberra Grammar School Annual Quiz night 21 June, Canberra Montessori School Trivia night 28 June, CCGS School Fete 25 October.

Changes to School Bus Timetables

Most parents and students will be aware of the recently introduced changes to ACTION busses – both dedicated school routes and general routes. If not, details can be found by following this link:

http://www.action.act.gov.au/school_bus_services_for_2008.html

For your information, the process for requesting a school bus service is as follows:

- Parents requesting a service contact their School Principal.
- You will need to provide your child/s address.
- Your school will coordinate the request for a bus service.
- This information will be forwarded to ACTION for consideration
- The decision is reported to the particular school and the School Transport Liaison Committee **
- ACTION will advise your school of the timing of the introduction of a new service, or adjustments to existing services.
- The school will then forward this information to parents.

** APFACTS is represented on The School Transport Liaison Committee, along with other stakeholders such as ACTION, TAMS, DET, AISACT, ACT C of P&C's, CEO etc. For further information, contact the APFACTS Office on 6287 3538

DEEWR ACSSO/APC Forum

In August, APFACTS will be attending another forum of representatives from the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEEWR), the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council.

These forums are funded by the Department and are highly valued by all participants as a way of directly communicating with the departmental staff who oversee the range of programs for schools.

Plans are also underway to include a joint ACSSO/APC meeting immediately prior to this forum.

MS Readathon

This worthwhile event is currently underway. For more details go to www.msreadathon.org.au.

Pre-Employment Checks for New Teachers

Minister for Education and Training Andrew Barr has announced new, standardised preemployment checks for teachers in both the public and non-government school sectors. As a result there will be a common set of pre-employment checks will apply to all teachers seeking employment in ACT schools from 2009.

Representatives from the ACT Department of Education and Training, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools will work collaboratively to determine the personal history and qualification checks that will apply to all teachers

2008 Pacific School Games Canberra 30 November – 6 December

Hockey, Diving, Athletics, Swimming and Basketball (including ID Basketball) will be played at the games. The Games' organisers are expecting over 3000 competitors and 500 officials for the week long event. Volunteers are still required to assist with many aspects of the games so if you are interested in being part of this fantastic event, go to:

www.pacificschoolgames.edu.au

NB: APFACTS is a member of the 2008 Pacific School Games Steering Committee.

Post School Options Expo Pathways and services for students with a disability):

Tuesday 24 June 2008, 4.00pm – 8.00pm at CTL – admission free. Ph 6207 1086

Drug Action Week 2008

22-28 June is Drug Action Week. For a list of Canberra based activities go to: http://www.drugactionweek.org.au/calendar.php?page_id=31

APC News

Values Education

The Australian Parents Council is currently undertaking Stage 2 of its Values in Education Project. Stage 2 involves the collection throughout Term II of quantitative data to support the information derived through the consultations in 2007. APFACTS will make this information available to members upon completion of the project.

Annual Conference

This year's APC Annual Conference is being held in Adelaide with of the Federation of Catholic School Parent Communities (SA). It will be held at the Old Adelaide Inn from 12-14 September.

The Conference includes the APC AGM.

Family School Community Partnership Bureau

In February 2008, Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard announced that the government will set up a national bureau to encourage high levels of parental and community involvement in schools.

The \$800,000 Family-School and Community Partnership Bureau will research and develop pilot programs to make schools more welcoming to parents.

The funds will be provided over four years for the two national parent organisations, APC and ACSSO, to run the bureau, conduct research and develop pilot programs.

Principles Guiding the Activities of the Bureau

- Parents are the primary educators of their children.
- Good schools play an integral role in assisting parents to nurture and develop their children.
- Effective partnerships are predicated on the

understanding that the contribution of parents and the community commences from the time of a child's birth.

- Parents bring unique perspectives and capacities to the schooling enterprise.
- When parents and teachers work in partnership the personal, social and academic development of children is significantly enhanced.
- Real and effective partnerships between families and schools have beneficial outcomes for parents, teachers and school leaders.
- Effective family-school and community partnerships contribute to Australia's growth as a nation by building social capital, fostering social inclusion and boosting productivity.
- Parent organisations bring support, expertise, confidence and empowerment to both parents and teachers.

Objectives of the Bureau

- To ensure that all Bureau activities have their foundation in the above principles.
- To complement the principles, policies and activities of ACSSO, APC and their affiliates.
- To model the elements of collaborative relationship that foster respect, trust and transparency.
- To communicate in plain language that is respectful of, and accessible to, all parents.
- To be innovative and inventive.
- To develop knowledge and understanding of, and promote, appropriate mutual expectations and clear

boundaries between parents and schools.

- To expand knowledge about what constitutes good schools.
- To build positive, productive and supportive connections between families, schools and communities.
- To put into practice the National Family School Partnerships Framework at school level by: identifying, analysing, promoting and replicating good practice in family-school and community partnerships and pulling and building the skills and expertise of parents and the community into schools.
- To consolidate and use learnings from other research and program/service activities of ACSSO and APC and relevant international groups/individuals.
- To research, develop and promote teacher pre- and in-service training curricula in respect of parent engagement and family-school and community partnerships.
- To research and develop a model for service delivery that maximises parental engagement in the personal, social and academic development of children.

support the introduction of a general aptitude test similar to that used in the United States. APFACTS also recommended that ICT be considered for inclusion in the curriculum essentials.

APC Review

Volume XXXIV, May 2008, of the national publication of the APC has been released. APFACTS Members will receive complimentary copies. Additional copies are available by contacting the APFACTS Office