



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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2.06 September 2006

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:

Phil Gibbons

Vice President:

Tony Maple

Vice President:

Peter August

Treasurer:

Paul Sykes

Secretary:

Kirsten Wilkinson

Executive Officer:

Kate Lyttle

The APFACTS Office is located in Room 36, Weston Primary School, Minns Place, WESTON. Office hours are generally 10.00am – 2.00pm Mon-Thurs during school terms. Visitors welcome but it is advisable to 'phone first!

Responsibility for election comment is taken by Phil Gibbons, President, APFACTS, Minns Place, Weston ACT.

The 2006 ACT Budget

The ACT Budget delivered on 6 June 2006 will be remembered for a long time to come for the government school closures it announced, and the resulting controversy which that has caused in the ACT community.

Very little mention was made in the media on what the Budget provided for the non-government school sector. In short, there were no announced improvements in the ACT Government's funding of the non-government school sector.

The only increase to recurrent grants was the CPI Adjustment of 2.5%. Given that the education element of the CPI is actually around 5-6%, funding for the sector is decreasing in real terms. Shortfalls are made up from increases in fees - parents' after tax contributions.

Regrettably, no improvements were forthcoming for students with disabilities.

Overall, education in the government sector received an overall increase of funding of 15% compared to the non-government sector's 2.5% CPI increase.

The Chief Minister and Treasurer, Jon Stanhope, in his budget speech, made some strong statements to the effect that the Government was basically seeking to stem the tide of students shifting to non-government schools. This does not bode well for the future financial treatment of non-government schools by the current ACT Government. This makes it all the more important that the difficulties being suffered through inadequate ACT funding continue to be voiced to the Government.

The ACT Govt contributes only about 17% of the total and saves more than \$100 million per year because these children do not attend government schools.

APC Affiliation

At its Annual Conference held recently in Sydney, the Australian Parents Council ratified the re-affiliation of APFACTS to the national body. APFACTS welcomes the opportunity to become involved with the only national, cross-sectoral organisation providing a voice for non-government schools parent organisations.

At the conference, the following people were elected to the APC

National Executive:

President

Caz Bosch (SA)

Senior Vice President

Robyn Christmas (NSW)

Secretary

Brian Watson (Tas)

Treasurer

Malcolm Pound (NSW)

Vice Presidents

Ann Bliss (SA), Chris Morris (WA),

Graham Hedges (QLD)

Executive Director

Ian Dalton

Members: Peter Bardos (NSW), Bill Button (Tas), Pennie Blazely (SA), Fleur Creed (QLD), Laurie Eastwood (WA), Kate Lyttle (ACT), Russ Nelson (QLD)

APC Conference

The three day annual conference was attended by APFACTS representatives Paul Sykes (Treasurer and Convenor, Catholic Issues) and Kate Lyttle (Executive Officer). The conference incorporated the APC AGM and elections of Office Bearers and National Executive for the coming year.

The Conference was opened by the Hon Julie Bishop MP, Minister for Education, Science and Training. Ms Bishop spoke about the Government's support for the principles of choice and equity of funding for all children and their schooling. She reported on the successful Family/School partnerships Project, a cross-sectoral initiative involving APC, the Australian Council of State School Organisations and DEST. She noted that the Government had set aside \$300 million for non-government schools for the "Investing in our Schools" grants program which seeks to improve school infrastructure by providing grants (\$75,000) for small capital developments. The Minister reiterated the Government's support for a consistent approach to reporting student outcomes, and the desire to improve young peoples understanding of our Australia's historical context. Of particular importance to APFACTS members was her invitation to provide comment on the upcoming Socio-Economic Status (SES) review. She made it clear that input would be accepted from any interested parties.

Dr Craig Emerson MP, Member for Rankin (ALP), was also a conference guest speaker. He spoke of the Labor Governments commitment to education, including support for non-government schools. He emphasised that under a Beazley Government, there would be no decreases to the

level of funding currently received. Dr Emerson spoke on a number of student-based funding models that he felt resulted in a more equitable allocation of funds.

Other guest speakers included Professor Stephen Farish, who spoke informatively about the SES indicators used by DEST; Ms Fran Hinton, who gave an update on activities and future directions for Teaching Australia, and Malcolm Mackerras AO who entertained the delegates with his predictions about Australia's political future.

Australian Certificate of Education

APFACTS responded to the Federal Government's call for feedback on the report on its investigations into the potential models and implementation arrangements for an Australian Certificate of Education (ACE). APFACTS supported the principle of having a methodology to reduce inconsistencies in the current state-based final year certificates. However, it was concerned that the co-ordination of current differences in the essential curriculum content would take significantly longer than the proposed 2-3 years. APFACTS did not 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 in curriculum essentials.

Funding for Students with Disabilities

DEST has announced that it is undertaking an investigation into the portability of funding for students with a disability. The first stage of the project includes consultations with stakeholders across education sectors within Australia as well as a review into methodologies used throughout Australia and

overseas. The second stage of the investigation will include the development of possible funding models with consultation on the pros and cons of these models. Included will be plans for pilot studies and an economic stimulation model. The results of the report are due by the end of January 2007.

APFACTS applauds the decision to investigate what it considers to be inequitable funding models currently in place.

DEST – ACSSO/APC Forum

APFACTS was invited to attend the recent forum of representatives from the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST), the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council. Agenda items included a report from DEST on the recent History summit, the proposed disability funding review, a report on the recent Family School Partnerships Project, a review of the "Investing in our Schools" funding program, discussion on a common school starting age, Indigenous education funding applications and developments in the Australian Technical Colleges. Details of these discussions relevant to APFACTS are included elsewhere in the newsletter.

Common Minimum School Starting Age

At its July 2006 meeting the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) agreed to further examine a common minimum school starting age. The financial implications of a common school starting age of 4 years and 6 months will be investigated, together with whether this would have an educational benefit when compared with starting ages

currently in place. Pending the outcome of the investigation, State and Territory Education Ministers have made a commitment to implementation of a common school starting age (and associated nomenclature) by 2010.

SES review

APFACTS will shortly be submitting comments to DEST for consideration in their review of the Socio-economic Status (SES) funding model currently used to determine the level of grants to schools. This review, originally announced in 2004 by the then Minister for Education, Brenda Nelson, is being conducted in-house by DEST but the current Minister, Ms Bishop, has indicated that external submissions will be considered. A report on the review is expected to be completed in early in 2007.

Awards for excellence in family-school partnerships

This year, for the first time, Teaching Australia is offering awards for excellence in Family-School Partnerships through the National Awards for Quality Schooling.

The awards are substantial – 1 school prize of \$50,000 for best national achievement and 7 school prizes of \$15,000 for highly commended national achievement. These funds would provide welcome assistance towards supporting effective family-school partnership initiatives in your school.

Any Australian pre-primary, primary or secondary school **and** its parent or governing body is eligible for an award with the application process involving the following:

- nomination by someone in the school community, for example a teacher, the governing body,

parents' association or district supervisor;

- preparation of an application statement providing evidence of the benefits to the school community of the family-school partnership and why it is worthy of special recognition;
- verification by two referees;
- endorsement of the application by the principal and chair of the governing body or parents' association;

Selection of these awards will be based on a demonstrated partnership between a school and its parent community that contributes to better learning opportunities or outcomes or well being for students.

The closing date for applications is 16 October 2006. Further information is available on the Teaching Australia website at <http://www.teachingaustralia.edu.au/>

Invitation to participate in the National Languages Education Survey

With a chance to win \$500 for Languages Resources at Your School

You are invited to participate in the National Languages Education Survey which the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and the Australian Parents Council are conducting on behalf of the Department of Education, Science & Training (DEST).

This study seeks to find out more about what people think about Languages education in schools, and their views on the importance of Languages to young people's learning and development.

The focus of the survey is directed to parents and families

in government and non-government schools. It will also seek to compare their views with those of students, Language teachers, Principals and others.

The Survey should take 20 to at most 30 minutes to complete. It is a web-based survey. Most questions simply require a quick response ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The perceptions and opinions of all participants from each sector are both valuable and valid. All contributions are in complete confidence, and the anonymity of all participants is assured. All findings will be aggregated and no individuals or school community will be able to be identified. Plus a chance to win \$500 for your school!

If you are willing to participate, and when you have a small window of free time, please click on

<http://www.questionpro.com/akra/TakeSurvey?id=525017> and you will be taken to the survey

If you need further information you are welcome to contact Rupert Macgregor (ACSSO) on 1800 183 066; or Rob McConchie, who is conducting the research, on (02) 6258 3925.

Useful Web Sites

These DEST sites are a 'must-see' for parents of students about to finish schooling:

<http://www.year12whatnext.gov.au>

Here you will find a guide to help Year 12 students plan their post-school education and training:

<http://www.jobguide.dest.gov.au/>

Site includes a "Job Guide – Parents Pack" to assist parents when talking to their children about career choices.

APFACTS Meets with the CEC

APFACTS representatives met with Mr Geoff Joy, Executive Secretary of the Catholic Education Commission of the

Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (CEC) on Thursday, 29 June 2006.

Principal discussion items were:

(1) The respective approaches of the CEC and APFACTS to ACT Government funding issues, following the delivery of the ACT Budget on 6 June 2006.

(2) The Federal Education Minister's review of the socio-economic status funding mechanism and recent developments in school education funding policy of the Federal Opposition.

(3) The latest CEC data on the impact of the withdrawal of 'funding maintained' protection for Federal recurrent funding as at 31 December 2008, in ACT Archdiocesan schools.

(4) The Federal Government report on an Australian Certificate of Education.

(5) The fee arrangements for ACT non-government school Year 11 and 12 students undertaking special courses at the Australian National University.

New Archbishop

On 17 August 2006, the new Catholic Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn, the Most Reverend Mark Coleridge, BA, DD, DSS, was installed at St Christopher's Cathedral, Manuka.

Archbishop Coleridge, aged 58, prior to assuming his current role, had rendered distinguished service to the Church in many capacities, including as Auxiliary Bishop to the Archbishop of Melbourne, and a member of the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC), as well as a chaplain to His Holiness, the late Pope John Paul II, and member of the staff of the Vatican Secretariat of State.

On 3 August 2006, APFACTS wrote to Archbishop Coleridge's predecessor, the Most Reverend Francis Carroll, DD,

DCL, congratulating him on his dedicated service as Archbishop of Canberra and Goulburn for some 23 years. As required under Church canon law, Archbishop Carroll submitted his resignation after turning 75 in September 2005. Having previously been Bishop of Wagga Wagga, Archbishop Carroll's retirement marked almost 39 year's service as a bishop.

In APFACTS' letter, gratitude was expressed to Archbishop Carroll, among other things, for his special commitments to Catholic school education, including as Chairman of the NCEC in its early days, and, at various times, a member of the Committee on Education of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Locally, in the ACT, the Archbishop oversaw the establishment of new Catholic schools in Tuggeranong and Gungahlin, as well as consolidations in the existing schools. These developments and others have laid a sound foundation for the continuing viability of local Catholic schools.

Archbishop Carroll is retiring to Wagga Wagga.

Every Chance to Learn:

The ACT Department of Education and Training has released the Curriculum Framework to be used as a reference document for professional learning, validation, school trial and consultation during 2006-07. The document provides the basis for community discussion about what is *essential* for all ACT Students, preschool to year 10, to know, understand, value and be able to do.

The 26 Essential Learning Achievements are:

The student uses a range of strategies to think and learn
The student understands and applies the inquiry process
The student makes considered decisions

The student acts with integrity and regard for others.

The student contributes to group effectiveness.

The student uses information and communication technologies effectively.

The student reads effectively.

The student writes effectively.

The student critically interprets and constructs texts.

The student speaks with purpose and effect.

The student understands and values human diversity.

The student understands and applies number.

The student chooses and uses measures.

The student recognises and represents patterns and relationships.

The student takes action to promote health and wellbeing.

The student is physically skilled and active.

The student manages self and relationships.

The student understands and applies scientific knowledge.

The student acts for an environmentally sustainable future.

The student understands about Australia and Australians.

The student understands and values what it means to be a citizen within a democracy.

The student understands world events and issues.

The student makes informed choices about money and finance.

The student designs, makes and appraises using technology.

The student creates artistic works.

The student understands and values artistic works.

Taken from: Every chance to learn. Curriculum Framework for ACT Schools Phase 2 Trail Draft 2006. ACT Department of Education and Training.