



FEDERATION OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS' ASSOCIATIONS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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MEDIA RELEASE

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*P & C's Research Paper: 'Parents and P&C's – A Discussion Paper' Enabling Participation of Diverse Families*

At the Annual Conference held on 31<sup>st</sup> July to 2<sup>nd</sup> August, the NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations released 'Parents and P&C's – A Discussion Paper'. This research was commissioned by the Federation in 2008 and undertaken by Dr. Margot Rawsthorne from the University of Sydney.

Dr Rawsthorne looked at the barriers and facilitators of parental participation with the P&C movement and the school in general. Her research identified the following:

Schools actively seek the input of parents, recognising the benefits of this involvement. Participation in school activities varies with Primary and secondary student parents. The former are involved in fundraising, repairs/ maintenance and classroom assistance while the latter participate more in administration, lobbying and information dissemination. Families from non-English speaking backgrounds desire to find out more about the school and gain new skills while, for Indigenous parents, their 'involvement enabled them to influence the running of the school and facilitated social interactions'\*1 .

Factors influencing participation, when rated, suggested that demands from work and family, the timing of meetings, the time required to remain involved and the support offered to a new member were perceived as being very important.

Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse families enrich the cultural life of schools but the participation of these families is affected by factors including previous negative interactions with schools. There are also barriers such as low literacy levels, language barriers, lack of knowledge of the school system and the feeling that contact with a school indicates a problem.

So what encourages people to involve themselves with the school and the P&C? The answer to this is as diverse as the parent involvement but may include direct verbal invitations, using community leaders to link people (especially in CALD communities), acknowledging time constraints within families, rotating meeting times or even just identifying specific events that people can contribute towards without making extended commitments.

Volunteering in general has been affected by the social changes over the last three decades. People are volunteering but on a more episodic basis and for shorter periods. The NSW Federation of P&C Associations is facing these challenges and continues to encourage parental involvement, while acknowledging the priority that children's education has in the lives of their parents.

For further information on this research, please contact:

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