



Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales

# e-Bulletin

Tuesday, 2nd June 2009 – Edition 37

## THIS WEEK'S THOUGHT – Di Giblin

This fortnight has been jammed packed with events particularly through *Education Week* and *National Reconciliation Week*.

During Education Week I was pleased to be *Principal for a Day* at Strathfield South Public School. Under the capable stewardship of Annette Udall, Strathfield South accommodates in excess of 800 students.

Recent work of the schools P&C Association is evident with beautiful new gardens. The staff, students and parents eagerly await the news of the upgrades and new buildings as a result of the Building the Education Revolution.

In the classrooms I was privy to some outstanding teaching and learning – I observed as stage three students created artwork responding to reconciliation and connecting it to the many cultures that make up Strathfield South and witnessed the wide eyes of early stage one students saw for the first time the newly hatched chickens and examined the growth of their seedlings in the classroom. The place was alive with enquiry and enthusiasm.

The principal of this school had many things to smile about, but much work to do – it was an outstanding opportunity to participate in this program and I thank Annette Udall, the staff, students and parents of Strathfield South.

*Flueless gas heaters* are making it into the news and we report that the P&C Federation is part of the stakeholder group monitoring the current investigative work being carried out. This will be a topic on the agenda of this year's Annual Conference.

*Swine Flu* updates are being regularly place on our website and distributed to affiliates through your P&C web mailbox. The latest ones are included in this e-bulletin

Please check our website for the *Annual P&C Federation Awards* –there is great stuff happening in our schools please consider nominating parents, principals and communities.

### Annual Conference 2009

The Federation's Annual Conference will be held at Penrith Panthers, Mulgoa Road, Penrith on July 31, August 1 and 2. P&C Associations across the state are encouraged to send up to three delegates to this conference.

Details have been mailed and emailed to all P&C Associations affiliated with the P&C Federation. Details are also up on our website: <http://www.pandc.org.au/annual-conference.seo>.

Take care  
Di Giblin 2009.

## SWINE FLU UPDATE FROM THE DG

We've had further discussion today with NSW Health to clarify how to best implement the exclusion of staff and students who've been in greater metropolitan Melbourne, Mexico, Panama, USA, Canada and Japan.

As previously advised, **children** who have travelled to these locations will be required to stay away from school for seven days after their return to NSW. It is important that we take this advice seriously and make sure we follow it in all our schools.

If there are other members of the family who DID NOT travel with the child to the locations I've mentioned they can continue to go to school.

These arrangements also apply to the Department's preschools.

NSW Health advises that anyone returning from one of these locations who develop flu-like symptoms should seek medical advice in accordance with the guidelines published on our influenza website at:

<https://detwww.det.nsw.edu.au/adminandmanage/ohands/hsi/index.htm>

NSW Health has this afternoon advised that **school staff** returning from travel to greater metropolitan Melbourne, Mexico, Panama, USA, Canada and Japan should be treated a little differently.

If a staff member has been to one of these locations *and* has been mixing with local school children (in a group of 10 or more) then they should be excluded from school. Principals should make every effort to enable these staff to perform some work from home during their exclusion.

If the staff member *has not mixed* with a group of 10 or more school children then they may return to school, but be excluded if they develop any influenza-like symptoms.

This updated advice from NSW Health is based on an assessment of the current risk of transmission. For the full message: <http://www.pandc.org.au/latest-news.seo>

## ROUTINE OPERATION MAY BE A CRIME

Once routine, now often thought unkind, the cut may also be illegal. Parental consent might not be enough to protect the circumcisers of baby boys from later legal action.

In a rare legal analysis of the medical procedure, the Tasmanian Law Reform Institute found that criminal and civil law lacked certainty, and may abuse the rights of a child.

No specific laws regulate the removal of the foreskin in Australia, and there are few clear answers in general law, according to an institute researcher, Warwick Marshall. "What is clear is that the current laws were not framed with male circumcision in mind," he said in an issues paper released yesterday.

About 12 per cent of newborn boys are believed to be circumcised in Australia, down from 90 per cent in the 1950s.

Routine circumcision is no longer performed in most Australian public hospitals, and Australian medical colleges combined to conclude in 2004 that "there is no medical indication for routine neonatal circumcision".

However, according to the law reform institute, most practising Jews still consider it a requirement of their faith, to be conducted by a specially-trained circumciser eight days after birth, while Muslims are the largest identifiable group who do it today.

"There is uncertainty as to whether the consent of a parent for the circumcision of their child is sufficient to allow a circumciser to legally perform the procedure," it said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/routine-operation-may-be-a-crime-20090602-bueh.html>

## SITES FOR CHILDCARD CENTRES REVEALED

Nine childcare centers will be build on the grounds of NSW primary schools after the Rudd Government pulled off a deal to create 450 places.

The project follows Labor's promise before the last election to build childcare centres to end the dreaded "double drop-off" - one child at school and the other at childcare. The Parliamentary Secretary for Early Childhood Education and Childcare, Maxine McKew, will today announce nine Early Learning and Care Centres to be built in NSW. The Council of Australian Governments is scheduled to consider the national early childhood development strategy and the childcare centre rollout at its next meeting. The new centres will provide additional childcare places for up to 450 children. "These centres represent another down-payment by the Rudd Government on the future of Australian children", Ms McKew said. "They will play a key role in delivering our education revolution in childcare, in particular our goal of a high-quality early education system that is affordable and accessible for children and their parents." Setting up the centres will be the joint responsibility of the Rudd and NSW governments, with the commonwealth allocating about \$14.4 million.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25566550-5013871,00.html>

### **SCHOOLS MISS OUT ON LAB UPGRADES**

Hundreds of high schools will miss out on a \$1 billion federal government program to upgrade science laboratories after the Government refused to widen guidelines for eligible schools. Under the program, schools needing new science buildings are favoured over those asking for improvements to existing facilities.

NSW had proposed the Government spread the funding among more schools.

A working group of parents, teachers and principals in conjunction with the NSW Government argue a more cost-effective way to spend the money is to refurbish existing laboratories rather than construct new buildings from scratch.

But federal Education Minister Julia Gillard has rejected NSW's push to revisit the guidelines. A spokes woman for Ms Gillard said it was always intended the program would focus on the construction of new or "substantially refurbished" science labs "to support the maximum number of jobs possible" at 500 of the nation's neediest schools.

In a letter to Ms Gillard last month, the NSW group of parents and teachers urged the Government to revisit the funding arrangements "to enable more schools and a greater number of students to benefit".

The letter is signed by Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW president Dianne Giblin, NSW Secondary Principals Council president Jim McAlpine, NSW Teachers Federation president Bob Lipscombe and NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group president Cindy Berwick.

"Now only about 150 schools will benefit from \$2 million each while about 280 schools will miss out completely. The federal Government's intransigence on this matter is astounding."

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25566558-601,00.html>

### **EDUCATION MINISTER VISITS**

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2009 the NSW Minister for Education and Training Verity Firth and Monaro MP Steve Whan visited Monaro High, Cooma Public School and Cooma TAFE to mark Education Week.

Ms Firth said she was keen to see first hand how Monaro schools were displaying leadership in public education.

"Education Week is an important time for public schools and is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the values, the achievements and the initiatives that continue to see public schools at the forefront of the sector," she said.

Monaro High School received \$840,000 science lab refurbishment and year nine students are about to receive new laptops in the coming months under the 'Education Revolution' funding rolled out by the Federal Government.

<http://www.coomaexpress.com.au/news/local/news/general/education-minister-visits/1525480.aspx>

### **PARENTS WARNED OF WIKIPORN RISK**

Parents have been warned not to let children use the website Wikipedia unsupervised after an entry on a popular children's book was edited to contain pornographic material.

Sexual and violent acts between characters were added last week to the online plot summary for *Mrs. Frisby And The Rats Of NIMH*, which is recommended for students in years 5 to 9.

The edited page for the book, on the list for the Premier's Reading Challenge, was visible for about an hour before it was changed to the original text.

NSW Parents Council executive officer of communications, Michelle FitzGerald, said "all parents" should be concerned.

"It is a concern to the council that the internet, if used inappropriately or not supervised, can lead children into areas where they really should not be," she said. "It really comes back to parental supervision on the internet."

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2009/05/23/1242498976065.html>

### **IS CYBER-BULLYING A CRIME?**

Cyber-bullying is back in the spotlight. Earlier this month the federal government announced it had established a Youth Advisory Group, consisting of young Australians, to advise it on cyber-bullying and other online issues.

Within a week came the report that two year 9 students had been forced to leave a Sydney girls' school for cyber-bullying. There are some laws which cover the most aggressive forms of cyber-bullying but, unless you want to start filling jails with 15-year-olds, criminal sanctions are not the answer.

Bullying has been around for a long time. Recently, many schools have really focused on the issue and there has been some success in reducing the incidence of traditional school yard bullying. However, the internet is the bully's new school yard. Studies have shown that cyber-bullying is widespread, with at least one in three teenagers the victim of cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bullying presents new challenges to young people, their parents and society. Cyber-bullying is different to traditional bullying in a number of key respects:

1. Anonymity:
2. Geography:
3. Impact:
4. Permanence

Where cyber-bullying is serious, it may be appropriate for the law to step in to impose penalties on bullies. In cases where bullying involves a threat to kill or seriously injure a person, state-based criminal legislation could be used to lay criminal charges against bullies. However, where bullying does not include such threats, but is more in the realm of emotional cruelty, legal protection offered to the victims is irrelevant.

<http://www.smh.com.au/news/technology/biztech/is-cyberbullying-a-crime/2009/05/21/1242498854929.html>

### **ONE IN FOUR SCHOOL STUDENTS AROUND AUSTRALIA ARE BULLIED**

Bullying is spiralling out of control in the nation's schools with one in four children from Year 4 to Year 9 claiming they are regularly attacked.

*The Daily Telegraph* can reveal that bullying peaks in the final years of primary school, where 32 per cent of students are targeted by playground thugs.

New data documented in Australia's largest study of bullying in schools shows Year 8 students are also major victims, with 29 per cent reporting attacks.

The research, commissioned by the Federal Government, shows NSW has some of the highest levels of bullying in the country - well above the national average in Years 4, 5 and 6.

Many of the 7000 children from 124 schools surveyed across Australia said they had lost faith in the ability of teachers to protect them.

The report, recommending an overhaul of the way in which schools handle the issue, found almost half of all children in Year 9 are both being bullied and bullying others.

*The Daily Telegraph* also has learned that some parents, desperate to protect their children, are inflaming cyber exchanges by confronting bullies in online chat rooms.

<http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,22049,25566186-5001021,00.html>

## **LAPTOPS FOR LEARNING – LATEST NEWS**

The test drive of the new laptops using a wireless network has started in three schools. The students and teachers will be using the laptops in lots of different ways to see how the technology environment works and more importantly how it impacts on teaching and learning.

### HOW MANY LAPTOPS WILL OUR SCHOOL GET?

The formula for calculating student laptop allocations is consistent for both regular and special purposes schools. The National Secondary School Computer Fund Rounds 1 and 2.1 form the basis of funding for the NSW L4L Program. The number of student laptops allocated to schools for 2009 is based on the 2009 Year 9 census data together with a pool allocation minus laptops replaced with flexible funding for alternative equipment for students with disabilities.

### WIRELESS INSTALLATION SCHEDULE

In the coming weeks, an IBM representative will be contacting schools to arrange the installation of the wireless system to support the L4L Program. No action is required by the schools as it's the IBM's responsibility to make contact to:

- arrange installation dates
- gather necessary local information to assist with installation planning
- provide a 'statement of work' detailing what will be done at each site.

### TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT OFFICER UPDATE

The provision of Technology Support Officers (TSO) to support the rollout of the L4L Program is progressing. The agreed model allows for a school-based TSO at every High and Central school with more than 100 students in Years 9 to 12. Schools with fewer than 100 students in Years 9 to 12 will receive a partial allocation (a minimum of 0.4). The model also includes a selection of regional L4L support positions. Final numbers of TSOs for each school are available on the L4L intranet.

**For more information contact:** T 9561 8636 [leave a message] Email:

[laptops4learning@det.nsw.edu.au](mailto:laptops4learning@det.nsw.edu.au)

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### **KOREA TO HIKE SPENDING ON PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Prime Minister Han Seung-soo pledged Friday the government will expand investment in public education, saying better educational services are key aspects to raising the country's global competitiveness.

“The most effective way to build a competitive nation is to nurture talent through aggressive investment in public education,” Han said in a ceremony in Seoul to mark Teachers' Day.

“Improving educational services is one of our key policy goals. We will do our utmost to ensure autonomy of schools, improve services for students and parents, and take better care

of students from less-privileged families so that they can continue studying without worrying about money."

[http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/05/113\\_44965.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/05/113_44965.html)

### **BRINGING QUALITY BACK INTO PUBLIC EDUCATION**

This article examines the quality of one's education today in the Phillipines and how it is measured in a lot of ways by the price tag one has paid for it. Private schools, including the best of them which charge tuition most Filipinos cannot afford, are able to build the best facilities and hire above-average teachers. In contrast, most public schools have poor facilities and have overworked, underpaid and less qualified teachers who have to teach up to 80 students per class in two batches. In the Philippines, there is a belief that the best gift parents can give to their children is a good education.

It's a pity then that free, public education is no longer synonymous to good education. If it were, we'll have a lot less harried parents.

Part of the problem—a big part of it—is funding. Congress simply needs to secure more funding for the public school system. The Constitution mandates that education be given the highest budgetary priority, but still we have one of the lowest allocations for education in the Asean. The more and better educated our people are the greater their chances of qualifying for 21st century jobs, thereby also uplifting our country's economy.

<http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2009/june/02/yehey/opinion/20090602opi2.html>

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

#### **CELEBRATING SCHOOL CANTEENS - FRIDAY 19 JUNE**

This is a day for individual schools to celebrate their canteens and the volunteers and staff that run them. It is also an opportunity to raise awareness of the wider role that canteens can play in the community.

Canteens take the pressure off busy families. They can introduce children to a wide range of foods that they may not have access to at home, and model healthy eating behaviours that can extend beyond the school gate. Canteens can also generate profits that go back into the school to buy sporting equipment, library books and other extras.

#### **ANTI-POVERTY WEEK – HELP FIGHT POVERTY AND HARDSHIP 11 – 17 OCTOBER 2009**

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians. Around the world more than a billion people are desperately poor. Participate by:

- Organising a display, stall or award
- A workshop, lecture or forum
- A fundraiser, fact sheet or petition.

For more information please visit [www.antipovertyweek.org.au](http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au)

### **POSITIVE PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM**

The *Positive Partnerships* program is a series of free workshops which build partnerships between families living with autism and their school so these students' school years are as productive as possible. Teachers too – in all states - are invited to attend professional development programs as part of the Federal Government's *Helping children with autism* initiative. The program is being run nationally by a consortium - Australian Autism Education & Training Consortium (AAETC) – which competitively won the \$11.3 million contract last year. The workshops began in February and will continue until November. We have had some amazing feedback from the workshops so far. Many parents saying they now feel less isolated and more equipped to cope with the challenges autism presents. There was a lovely story in Melbourne where three parents met each other at the workshop and discovered that their

children were at the same school! Since the workshop they have formed their own support group which has made a tremendous impact on their lives.

For information, dates, venues and to register a few weeks ahead of dates, see [www.autismtraining.com.au](http://www.autismtraining.com.au) Please call 1300 881 971 with other queries.

### **CANCER COUNCIL AND YOUR FAMILY, ALL AT NO COST!**

Cancer Council NSW invites parents and carers of primary school children in the Hunter region to participate in a groundbreaking new trial aimed at increasing consumption of fruit and vegetables. Free 'Fruit 'n' Veg \$ense' sessions will run from April to July 2009, in local schools and community centres across the Hunter region addressing issues such as fussy eaters, stretching your food dollar further, menu modification and planning. Sessions are free to attend and you will receive handy resources and new recipe ideas to use at home. The trial requires you to complete two short questionnaires and attend one session. To enrol and participate, please contact the Cancer Council (Hunter) Research Hotline on: 4923 0710 and leave your name, postcode & best contact phone number. Alternatively send an email to:

[eatittobeatit@nswcc.org.au](mailto:eatittobeatit@nswcc.org.au) .

### **YOUTH ROAD AND TRAUMA FORUM**

Youth and Road Trauma Forum Westmead Hospital and NRMA Motoring & Services holds a Youth & Road Trauma Forum for students in Years 10 to 12, to reduce the risk of severe injury and death as a result of potentially preventable road crashes. The event will be held at Acer Arena in Homebush Olympic Park on 18th 19th and 20th August 2009. For bookings or more information on the forum can be found on our website

[www.australiayouthandroadtraumaforum.org](http://www.australiayouthandroadtraumaforum.org).

### **SCHOOLS FIRST**

Schools First is a fantastic new initiative that is about improving outcomes for young people. At its heart, Schools First is about bringing together students, teachers, parents and community members, to support each other and help improve student outcomes.

With a prize pool of \$5 million every year for three years, Schools First is a national awards program that provides:

- Financial recognition of success in establishing effective school-community partnerships; and
- Financial support to build stronger school-community partnerships.

In support of the awards and their objective, Schools First will also:

- Provide regional workshops to support schools and communities to form or strengthen partnerships and prepare submissions for an award;
- Showcase successful partnerships as a means of inspiring other school communities; and
- Assist in developing a "knowledge bank" of resources on which school communities can draw.

And it's open to all Australian primary and secondary schools, whether they're public or private, special needs, religious or independent. There are over 60 regional awards, eight State/Territory awards, and one national winner. Register for workshops across the country at <http://www.schoolsfirst.edu.au/>

## MS READATHON CLICK, FLICK & COLLECT

The 2009 MS Readathon will be celebrating 30 years of encouraging children to have fun reading to change the lives of Australians living with multiple sclerosis (MS). Each year the MS Readathon inspires children to help people living with MS by collecting sponsorship from family and friends for the books they read in the month of June. It's free for children to register online at [www.msreadathon.org.au](http://www.msreadathon.org.au). Schools, volunteers and participants are needed NOW! For more information, contact the NSW on 02) 9468 8302.

### FAQS: Annual Conference

#### Q: When and where is it?

Federation's Annual Conference is generally held at the end of July in Sydney. However, one out of every four conferences is held in a country region. Regional delegates are entitled to propose their own area as the site for that conference.

*The 2009 Annual Conference will be held on 31 July, 1 & 2 August.*

Registration packs and nomination forms will be issued to all affiliated P&C Associations. If your P&C Association has not receive your registration form or have any inquiries please have the P&C Secretary or President contact the Federation's office on 1300 885 982.

#### Q: Who goes?

At their annual general meeting, P&C associations which are affiliated with Federation are encouraged to elect up to three delegates to represent the association at Annual Conference. These delegates will receive the appropriate papers for the conference, including the agenda. It is recommended that associations go through the agenda and advise their delegates how they should vote on those issues which are important to their particular school community.

*The Federation of Parents and Citizens Association would like to thank the following sponsors for their ongoing support of Parents and citizens and public education in NSW.*

