



Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales

e-Bulletin

Tuesday, 11th August 2009 – Edition 41

THIS WEEK'S THOUGHT – Di Giblin

The 2009 Annual Conference was held in Penrith this year and brought together between 150 - 200 people (different number each day) from P&C's across the State to debate and vote on current issues in our schools and to hear about a range of educational initiatives and issues.

Guest speakers included the Minister for Education, Verity Firth; the Director-General of the DET, Michael Coutts-Trotter, Judy Bundy; Acting President of the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the A/CEO of Service Skills Australia, Kit McMahon.

Resolutions included:

That the Federation's Council will now be elected from the Regional Councils rather than at Annual Conference. Elections are now taking place in all the Regions. For further details affiliated should contact the Regional Convenor and our website.

The motion moved by Darlinghurst Public School to support a pilot of an ethics based program for students who choose not to attend scripture was highly supported. Pilot programs in conjunction with the St James Ethics Centre are about to begin.

Much controversy has surrounded the replacement of all unflued gas heaters. The conference voted to call on the Department of Education and Training to have them removed from classrooms by the end of 2011.

There was also unanimous support for Hurlstone Agricultural High School in its fight to prevent sale of school lands.

Conference 2009 was unanimous in its call to reject School League Tables based on a single measure.

The dinner guest speaker was the Astronomer in Charge of the Anglo-Australian Observatory at Coonabarabran, and ABC radio regular, Professor Fred Watson, who gave an enlightening and humorous presentation, to the delight of over 100 dinner guests.

At the dinner, Awards were presented to high achieving individuals and schools:

P&C Member of the Year	Sharon Bryant
Primary Principal of the Year	Luke Witney
Secondary Principal of the Year	Judith Thompson
Environment Award	Gwynneville Public School
Community Achievement	Noni Wilson
Technology Award	Griffith High School

Four of the eight Office Bearer positions are up for election each year for two year terms. The results of this year's elections were:

Senior Vice-President:	Steven Carpenter
Metropolitan Vice-President:	John Webb

Country Vice-President:
Publicity Officer:

Tracy Robertson
Helen Walton

As a result of Helen Walton's election to the position of Publicity Officer, a vacancy was left in the position of Country Vice President; this was filled by Mary Lawson.

Take care
Di Giblin 2009.

LOCAL NEWS

JULIA GILLARD BACKS SCHOOL-BY-SCHOOL REPORT CARDS

Julia Gillard has strongly backed the move by Queensland to release a school-by-school report card on literacy and numeracy, saying it was "time we stopped averting our eyes from poor performance" in the classroom. The Deputy Prime Minister and architect of Kevin Rudd's education reforms spoke out yesterday after Queensland made public what was trumpeted as the most comprehensive list of national test data to be released by a state government. The move will ramp up pressure on the other states to give parents greater detail on how individual schools stack up on national benchmarking of literacy and numeracy.

"I understand there are still some people that remain opposed to greater transparency in our schools," Ms Gillard said in a statement to The Australian.

"The Rudd government believes it is time we stopped averting our eyes from poor performance and ensure every Australian child is receiving a world-class education.

"I think there are some schools out there, both government and non-government, that are doing some fantastic things with their students but we are only going to find that best practice through greater transparency."

While all the states have signed up to Canberra's school transparency reforms, differences remain on how much information should be made public and the need to avoid so-called league tables that rank schools on raw test scores.

Victoria has flatly refused to follow the Queensland lead, saying yesterday it would not release school-by-school results in National Assessment Program -- Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing.

Queensland Education Minister Geoff Wilson said the NAPLAN results for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students at 1713 state, Catholic and independent schools, provided snapshots that were useful at the classroom level for teachers to see how their students performed against their peers elsewhere in Queensland and interstate. "This information is already available on individual Queensland schools' websites," he said. "The new format will help parents to see where their school sits in relation to the national results."

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25906788-5013871,00.html>

CALL TO CLOSE FAILING SCHOOLS

Chronically underperforming schools should be closed and principals sacked under "tough love" proposals to be put to Education Minister Julia Gillard by leading education policymaker Ken Boston.

The former head of England's curriculum authority and a one-time Australian teacher, Dr Boston yesterday urged school principals and his former colleagues to embrace greater scrutiny of their schools' results to avoid the problems of league tables experienced in England. At a forum hosted by the Australian Primary Principals Association, Dr Boston strongly supported national testing and reporting of results, and said the schools identified as underperforming had to be given support and resources to improve.

"If it doesn't change then quite drastic action should be taken, even if it involves replacing the head, replacing teachers or closing the school," he said.

"Every kid has one chance in life and school, and it has to be good. There's no question of fluffing that one. I'm on a tough-love agenda.

"No one wants to support underperforming schools."

In Australia at the invitation of the APPA, Dr Boston yesterday addressed the first of a series of forums around the nation. He told the Sydney forum about the effects in England of league tables ranking schools according to their performance; and measures Australia could take to provide parents and the community with transparent information about school performance.

Dr Boston, a former director-general of education in NSW and South Australia, will make the same points in meetings with Ms Gillard tomorrow as well as state ministers and advisers in the Prime Minister's office. Dr Boston yesterday said league tables were often claimed to be transparent reports of school results but they were, in fact, "opaque", providing little contextual <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25911151-5013871,00.html>

INTERCULTURAL TRAINING VITAL FOR INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

New research has found the performance of Indigenous students could be significantly improved by ensuring all teachers, teaching assistants and principals receive thorough intercultural training. The inter-cultural training being suggested aims to ensure all parties understand and respect the differences between cultures.

Associate Professor Lyn Fasolof of the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education led a four year collaborative study that has produced a report titled, "Linking Worlds - Strengthening the Leadership Capacity of Indigenous Educational Leaders."

"Nearly 40 per cent of our kids are Indigenous and many of them are in those remote communities.

"And yet we have a fairly mainstream leadership approach.

"We basically said a different form of leadership is needed to address the cultural differences and the cultural contexts of these remote Indigenous schools."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/08/10/2650934.htm?section=australia>

TIME RIGHT FOR MEDOWIE SCHOOL: PARENTS

Medowie parents have renewed calls for a high school in the rapidly growing area.

Medowie parents said the NSW Government had gone quiet on the subject since forming a working party to review high schools in west Port Stephens in 2008.

The working party produced a proposal to turn Hunter River High into a senior school that would be fed by a junior high school based at Irrawang High and a new junior high school at Wirreanda Public school. The population of Medowie is expected to increase by about 9000 over the next 20 years. Medowie Public School P and C president Bobbie Antonic said more than 500 students travelled as far as Newcastle each day and parents wanted to know what the Government was doing.

Wirreanda Public School P and C president Kate Washington is hoping to form a joint parent group to lobby the Government to get a move on.

She said a recent circular to parents at Irrawang High had assured them their children would finish school at that campus.

"That just makes me worry this is not going to happen for another seven years," she said.

It comes after Port Stephens MP Craig Baumann called on Education Minister Verity Firth last week to clarify the Government's planning rules for new high schools.

The Government said the guideline in greenfield areas was one high school for every 6000 to 7500 new houses.

A NSW Education Department spokesman said community consultation about the proposal was still under way and the working party's final report was due later in 2009.

"The working party's advice will go to the department to be considered, in terms of the educational needs of the area and arrangements for aspects such as staffing and assets," he said.

<http://www.theherald.com.au/news/local/news/general/time-right-for-medowie-school-parents/1591082.aspx>

PROPOSAL FOR SCHOOLS TO GO FULLY SOLAR

EVERY NSW primary school could eliminate its carbon footprint with a \$40-million annual investment over three years, a leading Australian education economist has found.

Adam Rorris, a fellow of the Centre for Policy Development, said the Federal Government had made \$50,000 grants available to schools for solar panels. But he said the average primary school of 300 students would need about \$120,000 to make a full conversion to solar power.

Mr Rorris urged the NSW Government to consider investing about \$40 million each year over three years to convert its public primary schools to solar power.

"With this modest allocation, the NSW Government will co-ordinate and deliver 100 per cent scalable solar energy capacity to each and every one of its 1600 public primary schools that [would] make it one of the largest school systems in the world," he said.

"[Savings] will grow significantly over time as the real cost of electricity rises," Mr Rorris said.

A spokesman for federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett said schools were eligible for a grant of up to \$50,000 under the National Solar Schools Program if they installed a minimum two-kilowatt solar power system.

"It was never the aim of the program to fund schools to completely convert to solar power. If schools want to fund further installations using other funding sources then that's a matter for them," the spokesman said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/environment/energy-smart/proposal-for-schools-to-go-fully-solar-20090808-ediw.html>

NSW STUDENTS PIONEER WINDOWS 7

The NSW government was distributing about 5000 Lenovo netbooks each week, NSW Department of Education chief information officer Stephen Wilson said, and about 200 netbooks running Windows 7 "release to manufacturing" were being used at Arthur Phillip High School in western Sydney.

The school was one of three that began testing Windows 7 in May. More than 200 Arthur Phillip High School students were given their Lenovo IdeaPad netbooks, and the set-up process was "seamless", Mr Wilson said.

"We got the machines shipped in from China, we opened the (netbook) boxes on site and asked the students to log in wirelessly.

"They weren't configured to the wired network at all.

"The computer was configured on the spot.

"When they logged in, it bound their user ID to the network and the Active Directory system and we allocated that device to students wirelessly."

More than 9000 teachers had already received netbooks with the Windows 7 release candidate version, but those machines would be easily upgraded, he said.

The process was well planned. Before the Lenovo machines were shipped their serial numbers were already known to the department.

"They unpack the box, we know the serial numbers, we know the student has got their permission slip from their parent. When they type in their user ID and password, it associates the serial number, MAC (Media Access Control) address, user ID and password all to that user, and verifies it.

"Every time that user uses that machine we're continually monitoring the fact that it's their computer and they're using it."

The Lenovo IdeaPad S10e netbooks also have a smart battery and tamper-resistant and theft-resistant features that are not available elsewhere in the world.

Lenovo Australia won a \$150 million contract to supply 267,000 netbooks to NSW secondary school students and teachers. IBM Australia bagged a \$70million contract to build Aruba wireless networks in 232,000 secondary schools.

"Next year will be Year 9 again and we'll do that as soon as school starts."

Another 9000 teachers would receive their devices before the end of this financial year.

According to Mr Wilson, IBM has installed wireless networks in more than 290 schools and the full rollout will be completed by the start of term next year.

The department previously said that all netbooks as part of the digital education revolution program would run on Windows 7, making it one of the largest user bases in the world for the operating system.

<http://www.australianit.news.com.au/story/0,25197,25910722-15306,00.html>

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION SECTOR AT 'CRISIS POINT'

The Federal Government yesterday announced former Liberal MP Bruce Baird would head the review of Australia's third-biggest export industry.

The sector's image has been damaged by revelations of scams and exploitation, the collapse of a number of colleges and violent attacks against some students.

National Union of Students spokesman David Barrow says reform is urgently needed.

"It's been a long time coming and the previous government should have acted in regulating this sector," he said.

"This Government is slowly moving towards it, but we need to see a bit more haste on their part to make sure that we can fix this sector before something really terrible happens."

He says students have been fighting for reforms for more than 10 years.

"These issues that have been affecting international students for more than a decade are getting to crisis point now," he said.

"Already in the last couple of months we've seen these attacks, we've seen these collapses of these colleges, leaving students who've paid upwards of \$20,000 for a degree left in limbo.

"We don't want to see more events like this continue."

A peak organisation that represents the Indian community in Australia has welcomed the review.

The United Indian Association represents 18 different groups based in Australia.

Its president Aruna Chandrala says the Federal Government needed to take action.

"We can't just ignore the facts, we have to deal with it and because some colleges are closed and the students are very much distressed," he said.

"We do have to deal with the situation and I think it's a good idea to review the situation."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/08/09/2650298.htm>

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

POORER STUDENT GRADE PLAN BACKED

Campaigners have welcomed an idea to give poorer students a two grade "head start" to help them get places at the leading universities.

Business Secretary Lord Mandelson is looking at the idea, and a variety of others, to increase social mobility.

Les Ebdon, of university think tank Million+, said it was important to widen the social mix in universities. However critics said the onus should be on schools to produce better candidates and added that the idea was unfair.

One consequence of the "head start" idea would be middle class students from successful schools being "bumped" from places on popular courses.

In a speech delivered in July, Lord Mandelson said that limited progress had been made in widening access to higher education.

He said there was a strong case for using more contextual benchmarks for talent spotting which look at the way candidates have exploited the opportunities open to them.

Mr Ebdon said: "I think what all universities are in the business of looking for is potential among the students rather than achievement."

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/8192234.stm

UPCOMING EVENTS

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

NUTRITION AUSTRALIA

Nutrition Australia is currently offering **free** nutrition presentations to parents, carers and teachers of primary school aged children. The presentation called Eating For Education, runs for 30 minutes and would be ideal to run at a P&C meeting or during school hours. Eating For Education covers topics such as healthy lunchboxes, breakfast and healthy eating guidelines for children. Nutrition Australia has nutritionists ready to present to schools in Western Sydney and the Blue Mountains regions now, with other areas in Sydney and Greater Sydney commencing soon. If you would like to receive more information about the presentations please contact the Eating For Education Project Officer on 0419 970 865 or na.alex@gmail.com.

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 Please call 1300 881 971 with other queries.

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.

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 for 30 days in the month of Jun, July or August. It's free for children to register online at www.msreadathon.org.au. Schools, volunteers and participants are needed NOW! For more information, contact the NSW on 02) 9468 8302.

THE HUMAN BRAIN ADAPTS VERY SENSITIVELY TO THE ENVIRONMENT. IF THAT ENVIRONMENT IS CHANGING, WHAT MIGHT ACTUALLY BE IN JEOPARDY?

First, attention span. If the young brain is exposed to a world of fast action-reaction, then continued rapid interchange might become the normal time scale of operation. Related to this change might be a second area of potential difference, - a much more marked preference for the here-and-now where the immediacy of the experience trumps regard to any consequences. A third possible change, is one in empathy. Compare a computer game to rescue the princess where the goal is for the personal experience of feeling rewarded, with the aim of reading a book, to find out more about the princess herself! A fourth issue relates to identity. Perhaps with fast-paced, instant screen reactions the next generation will themselves be defined by the responses of others, as evidenced by the increasing popularity of Twitter.

DATE: 4 OCTOBER

TIME: 1pm

PRICES: \$39* (\$29* for Festival Pass holders)

VENUE: Sydney Opera House, Concert Hall

FAQS: VOTING RIGHTS

Question: Can the Chairperson vote?

Answer: A Chairperson possesses normal voting rights. Typically, however, a Chairperson often abstains from voting in order to preserve the impartiality of his/her position. The current prescribed and standard constitutions make no provision for the chair to exercise a casting vote in the event of an equality of voting. Consequently, in the event of an equality of voting the motion should be lost.

Question: Are proxy votes or absentee votes acceptable at P&C meetings?

Answer: No. Under common law special provision must be made in an association's constitution to provide for proxies. No provision exists in the Prescribed Constitution for Incorporated P&C Associations or the Standard Constitution for P&C Associations for proxy votes. Absentee votes are proxy votes by another name and are also unacceptable

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.

