



Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales

e-Bulletin

Tuesday, 20th October 2009 – Edition 43

THIS WEEK'S THOUGHT – Di Giblin

Welcome back

Welcome to yet another term, one that will not only be busy but rather short as it's only nine weeks long. It begins with the Higher School Certificate (HSC) the last of the assessments for our students in Year 12. Our best wishes are extended to all Y12 students in our Public Schools. You have all worked hard and should be congratulated most of all for your diligence to work through thirteen years of formal schooling – that being a great achievement. May your futures be filled with all your vision and dreams.

Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) Conference

Federation's delegation has just returned from Tasmania late last week after attending the National Education Conference and ACSSO (Australian Council of State School Organisations) Annual General Meeting and internal conference. Attending with me this year was our ACSSO VP and Publicity Officer, Helen Walton, Treasurer, Kathy Greer and Executive member, David Giblin.

It was one of the best conferences I have attended with a diverse range of speakers. Dr Neil Hawkes, a principal from a primary school in England and well versed speaker in the area of values gave a rather thought provoking presentation regarding values based partnerships. Further speakers included Professor Ian Hay, University of Tasmania, Angie Wilcock a NSW teacher and presenter and Dr Denis Muller from the Family-Partnerships Bureau who all addressed the area of Home-School Partnerships.

There were a number of presentations regarding cyber bullying and connected schools; this continues to be a hot topic amongst parents and governments alike. Greg Gerhart from Australian Communication and Media Authority was very comprehensive with his presentation and you can find many resources that can be ordered and distributed amongst your parent organisation at www.cybersmart.gov.au

The issue of chaplaincy and its effectiveness in Australian schools was discussed with mixed reaction – that report can be found on www.socialsurvey.com.au/chaplaincyeffectiveness. We note that no data was collected from NSW.

Finally, congratulations to the newly elected President of ACSSO, Peter Garrigan (representing NT) and his team which includes NSW representative Helen Walton, who has been elected to the role of Senior Vice-President. They are off to a great start; it is of the utmost importance that parents of kids in Public Schools are represented on the national front – particularly in the next twelve months as the Federal Government reviews funding to schools; reviews the many programs to schools introduced by the Howard government such as chaplaincy and begins to create the National Curriculum.

New Executive Officer

We are pleased to welcome to the Federation's Office our new Executive Officer, Ken Deacon. Ken will lead and manage the Federation's Office and add valuable support to the work of the Federation.

Take care
Di Giblin
2009.

KIDS CARING FOR KIDS – THE EXCITEMENT STARTS!

Throughout the state excitement is building for the 2010 Kids Caring for Kids Fundraising Raffle. In the past weeks all NSW schools have received the Kids Caring for Kids promotional brochure and registration form and registrations are beginning to roll in.

This is an amazing opportunity for your P&C to raise awareness of critically injured children in the community and raise funds for your school at the same time with your P&C receiving 20% of your schools gross ticket sales.

With this fundraising initiative to be driven by state wide advertising campaigns focused on increasing awareness of the Day of Difference Foundation's work with critically injured children and promoting safety around schools this is a fundraising initiative you can't afford to miss.

This fundraiser is packed with amazing prizes including \$500,000 in gold bullion, a luxury car, family holidays and incentive (early bird) raffles for the students. With a per ticket price of only \$2.50 each this raffle is designed to make ticket sales easy and fun for the students and with one ticket book of twelve tickets being distributed per enrolled student every student has the chance to win a family island holiday.

Register Now!

To download a registration form or find out more about Kids Caring for Kids visit www.pandc.org.au and click on the link.

LOCAL NEWS

SCHOOLS RELYING ON RETURNED GRANTS

Schools with projects exceeding their grant under the federal government's infrastructure program will have to downgrade their plans or rely on another school handing back part of its commonwealth monies to finish the building.

Under the Rudd government's Building the Education Revolution, primary schools received grants of up to \$3million for halls, libraries and classrooms based on the number of students at the school rather than the construction costs involved.

With construction in NSW starting in about 15 per cent of schools and fully tendered costs available for about 730, the state Education Department says about half the state's 2418 projects will cost more than the commonwealth allocated to the school.

To date, 14 schools that had planned two projects have had to drop a building or classroom refurbishment but keep their other substantial building project, such as hall and covered outdoor area. The number of schools required to downgrade their plans is expected to rise as building costs are finalised, while some schools might have to alter their plans in more minor ways such as cutting back on the landscaping or covered walkways between buildings.

In Tasmania, the Education Department is working with schools to ensure their projects fall within the money allocated and that the entire grant is used by each school.

In cases where the building cost is higher than initially estimated, the department said it was accepted practice to make minor modifications to ensure the project proceeds within its available budget but very few schools fell into this category. A NSW Education Department

document obtained by the state opposition suggests 200 schools, mostly small, rural schools, will be unable to build anything with their BER grant but director-general Michael Coutts-Trotter yesterday rejected this claim, and said every primary school would get something.

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26216448-2702,00.html>

SCHOOL CASH 'WASTED' ON FEES

Management fees will eat up to a quarter of the \$3.4 billion given to NSW schools for building halls and libraries. Detailed cost summaries for individual schools reveal that administrative charges are far higher than the Government has admitted. Some schools will pay as much as \$250,000 each, Government documents show.

The NSW Department of Education and Training defends the extra costs, saying they are necessary to implement the program responsibly. They are in addition to the 4 per cent in project management costs, which the Government has said will be \$119.3 million, and incentive fees for on-time completion of projects of 1 per cent to 2.75 per cent, or \$50 million.

The Opposition spokesman for education, Adrian Piccoli, said the money could have been better spent on building more classrooms.

"With up to \$800 million being skimmed through management fees and incentive payments, taxpayers aren't seeing value for their dollar," Mr Piccoli said.

"School communities would rather see this money spent on bricks and mortar."

An estimated summary of costs for Annangrove Public School shows a management fee of 5.5 per cent, or \$29,864, and a profit margin of 3.15 per cent, or \$18,045. An extra 8.82 per cent, or \$26,470, is listed as the co-ordination fee for a prefabricated library.

Charges for West Pymble Primary School come to \$259,042 for a 5.5 per cent management fee and 3.15 per cent profit margin.

"The fee percentage in the preliminary cost estimate is the cost of site supervision, which includes working-with-children checks, the management of occupational health and safety, and trade licence checks, reviewing and assessing safe working statements," Mr Coutts-Trotter said.

<http://www.smh.com.au/national/school-cash-wasted-on-fees-20091013-gvq1.html>

NO TV FOR CHILDREN UNDER TWO: GUIDELINES

New federal guidelines for parents and carers say children should be banned from watching television until they turn two, warning that it can stunt language development and shorten their attention span.

The first official recommendations on children's viewing habits also say television time should be limited to an hour a day for children aged two to five.

The Australian says the drastic recommendations — which fly in the face of Australian children's actual viewing habits — are contained in the new Get Up and Grow guidelines for healthy eating and exercise in early childhood, devised by Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital as part of the federal government's anti-obesity drive.

"Based on recent research, it is recommended that children younger than two years of age should not spend any time watching television or using other electronic media (DVDs, computer and other electronic games)," a draft copy of the guidelines, obtained by The Australian, states.

"Screen time... may reduce the amount of time they have for active play, social contact with others and chances for language development.

"(It may) affect the development of a full range of eye movement (and)... reduce the length of time they can stay focused."

The Get up and Grow report - being finalised for release by federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon next week - is designed for childcare centres, but advises parents to "make a plan for reducing screen time at home".

<http://news.ninemsn.com.au/article.aspx?id=874420>

TAFE CLOSES ITS DOORS TO YEAR 10

Year 10 students will be denied a second chance to complete their school certificate through TAFE from next year, a move that will disenfranchise thousands of students.

The NSW Opposition and the Greens say it will close doors on students who are struggling in the school environment and would be better suited to TAFE.

From next year, all students will be required to stay at school until the end of year 10, after which they must continue in education, training or paid work for more than 25 hours a week until they turn 17.

A memo to TAFE staff from Marie Persson, the deputy director general, TAFE and Community Education, says provision of year 10 equivalent education through TAFE for students under 17 "will only occur in a small minority of cases where the student, parent/caregiver, school principal and the TAFE Institute Director each agree". "Students wishing to attend TAFE NSW to complete a course equivalent to year 10 will need to show they have the ability and skills to study in an adult learning environment, the ability to undertake specific vocational qualifications and the language, literacy and numeracy skills to be successful in their chosen course," she says in the memo dated September 21.

"The best place for young people to complete year 10 is within the school sector."

Greens MP John Kaye said instead of "trapping students in schools", the Government should ensure that TAFE had adequate resources to provide the year 10 equivalent option.

Dr Kaye said the Government was allowing NSW schools to be used to suppress unemployment figures without concern for related educational outcomes and teacher stress levels.

A spokesman for the Department of Education said young people below the school leaving age would still be able to enrol in the TAFE equivalent of year 10 "under certain circumstances".

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/national/tafe-closes-its-doors-to-year-10-20091011-gsdt.html>

RUDD'S LEGACY ON LANGUAGE STUDIES

Mandarin is becoming a centrepiece of foreign language teaching in NSW public schools, with Chinese language teachers being brought to Australia and at least one Australian teacher setting up in China.

It is part of a Department of Education and Training push to put Mandarin at the forefront of language teaching in NSW public schools.

So far 25 primary and secondary schools have linked with schools in the Yangzhou province and in Shanghai's Pudong District.

Mandarin is a language used by the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

Mandarin teachers are working in NSW state schools while teachers in China give visiting Sydney pupils language lessons as well as training local teachers and students in English.

Education Minister Verity Firth said yesterday Asia was critical to the future prosperity of NSW.

"It's important our students are familiar with Asian languages and culture," she said.

Sydney regional director Phil Lambert said schools used technology such as video-conferencing and the internet to link with China.

Penshurst Girls' Campus principal Anne Ross said most of the students who went to China were not from an Asian background.

"These are students who are interested in immersing themselves in the Chinese culture and taking part in lessons with their sister-school peers," Ms Ross said.

Board of Studies data showed Chinese with 1243 enrolments in the HSC is now the third most popular language after Japanese and French.

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/rudds-legacy-on-language-studies/story-e6freuy9-1225784483819>

AUSTRALIA PROMOTES INDIGENOUS EDUCATION WITH STUDENT TEACHER SCHOLARSHIPS

The Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, today announced the establishment of the Governor-General's Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarship to assist one Indigenous student in every State and Territory to undertake Education studies at university.

These prestigious scholarships will see \$25,000 per year awarded to successful recipients for the life of their teaching degree (up to four years). This will enable scholarship recipients to concentrate solely on their education studies whilst at university and fully develop their teaching skills and knowledge.

In addition, all scholarship recipients will be provided with the support of a highly accomplished teacher or teacher educator as a mentor throughout the duration of their studies.

Applications for 2010 Governor-General's Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarships are scheduled to open in November this year. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations will consult with Indigenous groups to develop the criteria, application and selection process.

These scholarships are a prestigious award that form part of the Government's continued commitment to closing the gap in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Government is determined to Close the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in education, including supporting Indigenous participation in teacher training. More information on the Governor-General's Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarships is available on the [DEEWR Website](#).

http://thegovmonitor.com/education_and_skills/australia-promotes-indigenous-education-with-student-teacher-scholarships-9979.html

FUNDING PUSH FOR SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS

South Australia's Education Department is concerned by the cost of a union call for a massive funding boost for children with special needs.

A group of teachers and parents has rallied on the steps of Parliament House in Adelaide to demand more special education classes and extra staff.

It is an issue the Education Union and the State Government are still negotiating in talks on pay and conditions.

The Union's Correna Haythorpe says the requirements of special needs children are not being met.

"There is a massive injection of funds required to ensure that teachers and support staff have the necessary training and support to cater for these students," she said.

But the Department's chief executive, Chris Robinson, says the Union's demand of one teacher to every four students would come at an extra cost.

"That would be in addition to what's currently provided," he said.

"We provide a very high level of resources compared to other places for students with special needs already."

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/08/2708601.htm>

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

HOME EDUCATORS' WORRY AT REGISTER

People who educate their children at home rather than sending them to school say they are against having to register annually with local authorities. Home education lobby groups told a committee of MPs that a register would lead to interference by officials.

But the Association of Directors of Children's Services told the committee of MPs that a register was necessary to ensure children's safety. There is currently no way of measuring how many children are educated at home.

A review of home education in England which was published in June suggests home educating families in England should have to register annually and demonstrate they are providing a

suitable education. The review recommended children are sent back to school if parents do not meet certain standards.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/8306730.stm

SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES GET BOOST

More and more students are being diagnosed with autism in The City's school district, and it's costing more money.

This year the San Francisco Board of Education added about \$2 million from the general fund to pay for resources for students with special needs. Autistic children make up about 8 percent of that population, according to the San Francisco Unified School District.

"The most substantial challenge is the cost as the district continues to develop and implement research-based programs to best meet the educational needs of students," the district's Special Education Supervisor Pam Macy wrote in an e-mail.

The Autism Society, a national organization that seeks to raise awareness about the disorder, describes autism as "a complex developmental disability that ... impacts development in the areas of social interaction and communication skills."

People with autism tend to show difficulties in verbal and nonverbal communication, social interactions and leisure or play activities, according to the organization's Web site.

Nationally, about 1 percent of children have been diagnosed with autism. In 2003, about one out of every 150 children was diagnosed, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The school district has reported a percentage slightly lower, but that number is increasing nonetheless.

Spending the money now on early education interventions, such as the district's new preschool class for autistic children at John Muir Elementary, is an investment for both the district and students, Commissioner Rachel Norton said.

"If we spend the money now, it will help save money later," she said. There's no evidence that can properly explain the increase, Norton said, while speculating about one possible reason.

"I think there are a lot of kids on the more mild end of the spectrum who wouldn't probably have been diagnosed as autistic 20 years ago or 30 years ago," she said.

<http://www.sfexaminer.com/local/Special-education-resources-get-boost-64192677.html>

UPCOMING EVENTS

GLOBAL SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

On October 24 schools are invited to join a global creative effort around the issue of climate change. It's a day devoted to, of all things, a scientific number – the number many scientist view as the parts per million carbon dioxide in the atmosphere which represent a 'safe' limit in terms of global warming. But it's also a day for students to get a better understanding of international relations, global communications, and the role of arts and creativity in public life.

The idea is that communities create their own individualised response to the number 350. Schools can organise a fun, simple activity that students can participate in and send a photo of the activity to the '350' global team who are collating actions from all over the world.

People in more than 1000 communities around the globe have already announced plans—there will be school children planting 350 trees in Bangladesh, scientists hanging banners saying 350 on the statues on Easter Island, 350 scuba divers diving underwater at the Great Barrier Reef, and a thousand more creative actions like these. You can find plenty of ideas for schools at the international and local 350 sites www.350schools.com/ and www.350.org/people/schools

SCHOOLS SPECTACULAR 2009

The Schools Spectacular, the world's biggest youth variety event an inspirational performing arts showcase choreographed, costumed and musically performed on an epic scale. www.schoolsspectacular.com.au.

Venue: Sydney Entertainment Centre

Dates: Friday 27th November 2009 – 8pm

Saturday 28th November 2009 – 2pm

Saturday 28th November 2009 – 8pm

Tickets are available from Ticketmaster.com.au or 1300 883 622



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.

SUNRICE'S CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN CAMPAIGN

SunRice is helping to make a difference by joining forces with UNICEF Australia to support a program in the Pacific Islands to help prevent children dying from preventable diseases. We are working together on immunisation programs that cover 900,000 children across 14 economically disadvantaged countries. By joining SunRice's Children Helping Children schools competition, Australian primary school children and their friends and families can also help make a difference, simply by collecting the blue UNICEF logos from specially marked SunRice

packs during September and October 2009. The competition has a \$100,000 prize pool, which includes a first prize of \$20,000 cash and a swimming clinic with SunRice brand ambassador and triple Olympic gold medallist Stephanie Rice for the winning primary school. By supporting Children Helping Children, the first 33,000 logos collected by primary school children and their communities will help us fund up to 33,000 vaccine doses for children in the Pacific islands. It's part of SunRice's broader commitment to the region, which includes a substantial donation to fund on-ground training and infrastructure and the distribution and maintenance of vaccine equipment to support UNICEF's work there. To take part in the competition, primary schools need to register online at www.sunricedifference.com.au and collect blue UNICEF logos from selected SunRice products.

FAQS: CHAIRING MEETINGS

Who should Chair P&C meetings?

Chairing the meeting is generally the role of the President. However in the absence of the President, one of the Vice-Presidents will chair the meeting.

What is the role of the chairperson?

The chairperson (Chair) has a responsibility to remain neutral, allowing all sides of an argument to be heard, and as many people as possible to speak. Order is vital in a democratic forum where the rights of every individual member should be respected and protected. The Chair must preserve order, including ruling on contentious matters of procedure and assisting the progress of discussion by preventing irrelevant or repetitious discussion or offensive remarks.

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.

