



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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1.06 May 2006

APFACTS

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 telephone first!

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

Welcome to the new-look APFACTS newsletter. Through this Newsletter, we hope to keep you up to date with items of interest to parents of children attending non-government schools in the ACT.

It is no secret that parents who choose to send their children to non-government schools choose to do so for many reasons. It is also true that these parents already make a significant financial contribution to the schooling of ALL children attending school in the ACT. For most, this contribution comes at considerable personal sacrifice. APFACTS is here to assist parents in understanding how and where the government allocates its resources within the education sector and to address what APFACTS considers are inadequacies and inequities in this allocation.

APFACTS represents parents on a variety of bodies concerned with decision making on educational matters ensuring that parent views on educational issues are well known by those decision makers.

APFACTS Objectives:

- To safeguard the rights and promote the interests of parents and children in non-government schools in the ACT
- To improve the standard of education in the ACT
- To promote parents' rights to choose the kind of education given to their children without financial disadvantage being imposed on them or their children by the State
- To achieve, for all parents and children, equity in the distribution of public funds for education
- To ensure that government policies and controls do not undermine the essential characteristics and autonomy of non-government schools

What's in a name?

The APFACTS Newsletter needs a name and we want YOUR input. A \$20 Collins book voucher is yours if we use the name you suggest. Send your suggestions to apfacts@bigpond.com

Comments and Letters to the Editor are also welcome and will be published in future editions where appropriate.

ACT BUDGET 2006-07

Much has been written about the ACT government's need to 'tighten the purse strings'. APFACTS has raised a number of issues that it hopes will be considered during upcoming budget considerations. The following is the text of a letter recently sent by APFACTS to all MLA's.

The purpose of this letter is to bring to your attention matters concerning government education funding in the ACT.

The Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools (APFACTS) represents the interests of parents of students attending the 43 non-government schools in the ACT. These schools comprise 27 Catholic 'system' schools, which are administered by the local Catholic Education Office, and 16 independent schools. The latter include three congregational schools (Daramalan, St Edmunds and Marist Colleges) that are run by separate orders of the Catholic Church.

The parents of these students are major stakeholders in this education sector and it is because of their choice that 41 per cent of ACT students attend non-government schools. They contribute substantially to the cost of their children's education through fees paid with their after tax dollars, often at great personal and financial sacrifice. Conservatively, their contributions save the ACT taxpayer more than \$100 million per year and they deserve an equitable share of ACT Government education expenditure.

However, as a matter of principle, that equitable share of the government's education expenditure should not be at the expense of children attending government schools. A strong government sector and a strong independent sector are vital for parental choice. Non-government schools provide valuable diversity

to the government sector offering alternative outlooks and philosophies from a wide range of educational, religious and cultural perspectives.

APFACTS is concerned that the cost of education is increasing at a disproportionate rate and that this is forcing fees to rise markedly to compensate. This not only affects parents' ability to choose but it could also threaten the viability of some schools. We believe the ACT Government would not wish to marginalise a substantial proportion of its constituency.

In its submission to the ACT Treasurer in November 2005, APFACTS requested that the ACT Government consider the following issues in the preparation of the 2006-07 Budget:

- infrastructure support
- increased recurrent per capita funding
- indexation aligned with the real cost increases in education
- equitable funding for students with disabilities
- IT support.

Infrastructure support

The Government promised that funds that would previously have been part of the Interest Subsidy Scheme would remain in the sector. It is widely agreed within the sector that these funds should continue to be used to support building infrastructure. Accordingly, until a new scheme is devised, APFACTS requests that these funds be provided as grants for that purpose. The work generated would also continue to indirectly support the local building industry. A widely accepted mechanism for the distribution of such funds on the basis of need already exists in the form of the Block Grant Authority.

Increased recurrent per capita funding

Education funding should be equitable and represent a fairer distribution of taxpayer resources.

The ACT Government should progressively increase its contribution of per capita funding for students at non-government schools to 25 per cent of the average cost of educating a student in an ACT Government school.

Indexation aligned with the real cost increases in education.

The ACT Government currently indexes non-government school recurrent funding in line with the CPI. The CPI does not properly reflect the true increases in the costs of education. We understand that the education element of CPI is greater than 5 per cent while CPI has been around 2.5 per cent. This represents a real reduction in funding. We note that the government fully supplemented government sector teacher salary increases to the order of 4 per cent.

The report instituted by the present ACT Government on school funding, prepared by Ms Lyndsay Connors (see Inquiry into ACT Education Funding, January 2003), accepted that a CPI increase was an inadequate adjustment (see pp. 89-90) as it failed to keep pace with the real increases in the costs of education.

The immediate result of this has been that fees have risen substantially. Already, fee increases at ACT non-government schools for the current school year have significantly increased (around 8 per cent in the Catholic system schools), principally because of previous teacher salary increases.

In addition, as you know, salary claims by government and Catholic system teachers are presently being negotiated. The outcome in the government sector will inevitably flow on to the non-government sector as a whole. The net effect of the ACT Government's offer to its teachers of 9 per cent over three years will be that, in the absence of improved ACT Government

funding, non-government school parents will suffer another major fee increase only a year after the last.

Equitable funding for students with disabilities

The non-government sector values participation by students with disabilities but struggles with the costs associated with those students. It is unreasonable to expect a relatively small school community to meet these costs when the entire taxpaying community meets these costs in government schools. Parents of students with disabilities do not have equitable choice and accordingly, APFACTS has requested that when a student with disabilities changes schools or sectors, the full funding allocation follow the student.

IT support

This is an area of high capital expenditure where there is real need. Grants for IT support should be on the basis of specific needs identified through a rigorous and transparent process.

APFACTS looks forward to cooperative consultation with the ACT Government in the interests of maintaining high quality education for all ACT students and the right of parents to choose.

We would appreciate any representations you are able to make to the government or the Legislative Assembly in support of the requests outlined above.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Signed: Kate Lyttle, Executive Officer, APFACTS, Minns Pl, Weston, ACT

Public Comment Requested:

The Australian Government wants feedback on the newly released report on a Australian Certificate of Education (extracts in next column). The full report and the questionnaire can be accessed on the Department of Education, Science and Training web site:

www.dest.gov.au/ace

Comments will be accepted until **4 August 2006**

Australian Certificate of Education – Exploring a Way Forward

The Australian Government has just released the report on its investigations into the models and implementation arrangements for an Australian Certificate of Education (ACE). The report, written by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), noted that there were significant inconsistencies in senior secondary school across Australia in such matters as:

- terminology relating to curricula, assessment and reporting;
- requirements for the award of the senior certificate;
- what is taught in particular subjects;
- how vocational learning is incorporated;
- how student achievement is assessed; and
- how student results are reported.

The report includes analysis of four models:

1. A national certificate as an alternative to the existing state-based final year certificates;
2. A national certificate which evolves from the existing state-based certificates;
3. A national certificate which is a general aptitude test similar to that used in the United States;
4. A national certificate modelled on the International Baccalaureate.

Six recommendations are made in the report:

1. That curriculum essentials be identified—at least in some nominated mathematics, English, science and social science/humanities subjects—to ensure that all Australian students have opportunities to engage with the fundamental knowledge, principles and ideas that make up these disciplines. Essential elements of subject curricula should be identified by national subject panels comprising subject matter and assessment experts and members of the relevant professional subject associations.
2. That achievement standards be developed—at least in some nominated English, mathematics, science and social science/humanities subjects—to ensure that students' results in these subjects can be compared throughout Australia. Achievement standards should be benchmarked internationally and could take the form of A to E grades in a subject
3. That, as part of the Australian Certificate of Education, all students undertake a national Key Capabilities Assessment part way through Year 12 of a number of key skills.
4. That an ACE Award of Excellence be introduced. This Award would be issued by the Australian Minister for Education, Science and Training to students who meet international standards of excellence in their school subjects and on the Key Capabilities Assessment.
5. That a national standards body be established for this purpose. This body would not be an awarding body, but would be responsible for identifying essential curriculum content in nominated school subjects, developing achievement standards and managing the annual Key Capabilities Assessment.
6. That all students in the final years of secondary school be given access to the Australian Certificate of Education. Following agreement to incorporate essential curriculum content in nominated subjects, to report against common achievement standards, and to incorporate the Key Capabilities Assessment, each of the existing senior secondary certificates would be eligible to become the Australian Certificate of Education.

APFACTS Activities

- Informing parents in non-government schools of education developments in the ACT and within Australia via publication of regular newsletters and the making of public statements on matters of concern to parents and students at non-government schools.
- Representing non-government school parents on bodies concerned with decision making on educational matters ensuring that parents' views on educational issues are well known by educational decision makers.
- Making representations to educational authorities in the ACT, the Government and the Minister concerned with education in the ACT.
- Conducting media and other campaigns in support of our aims.
- APFACTS works closely with the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT and the Catholic Education Office of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn.

APFACTS Representation

APFACTS has representation on the following forums/committees:

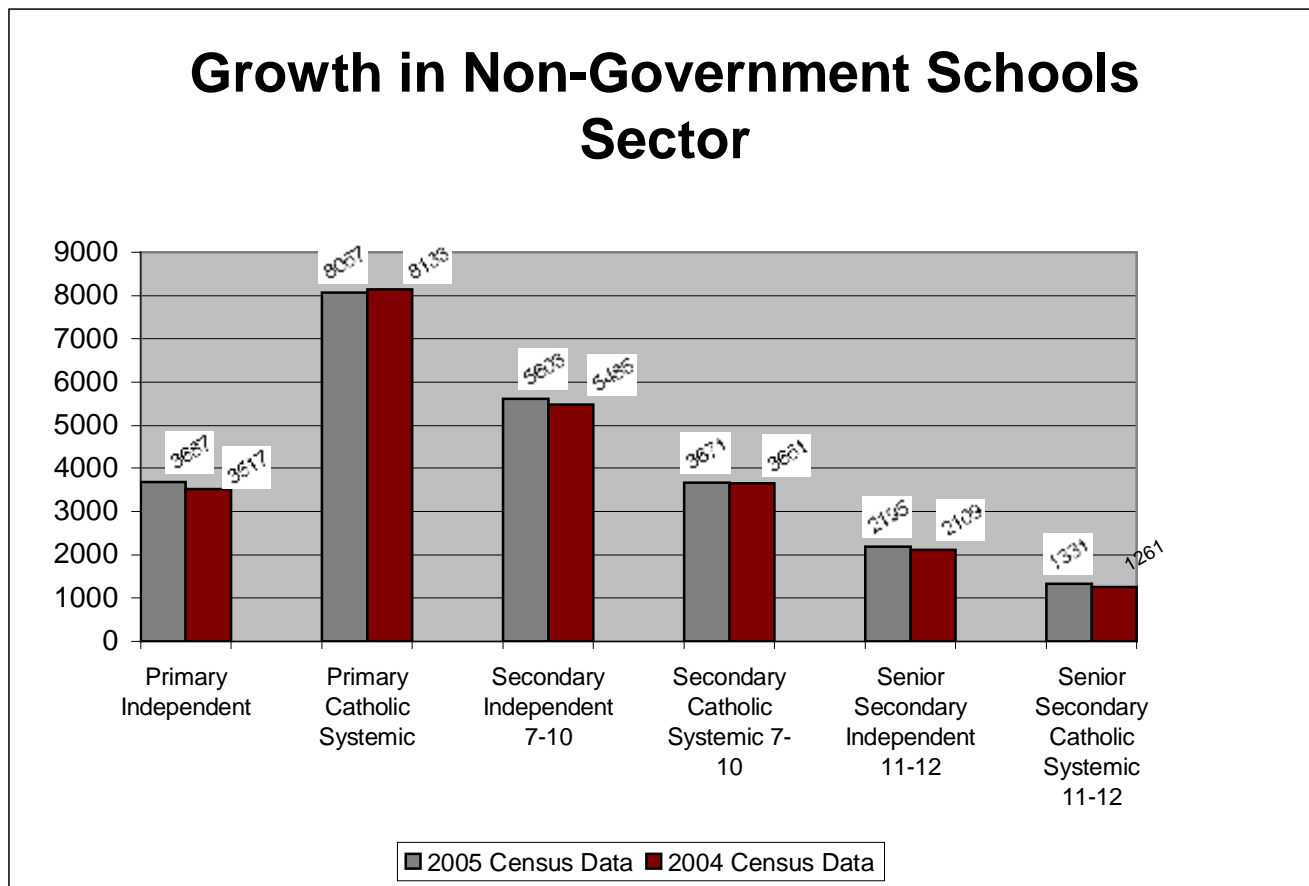
- Non-Government Schools Education Council (NGSEC)
- Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS)
- School Transport Liaison Committee
- ACT School Sport Association
- Curriculum Advisory Committee
- Values and Drug Education Advisory Committee
- ACT Block Grant Authority

Non-government School Census 2005

Numbers of children at Non-government schools in the ACT continue to rise. The figures below, from the ACT Department of Education and Trainings annual Non-government School Census (February 2005) represent a 1.6% increase across the sector. The increase in Independent schools alone was 3.4%. Although the 2006 figures have not yet been released, indications are that this trend has continued.

According to a report in 'The Australian' newspaper (24 Feb 2006) quoting Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures, over 200,000 children have moved from the public sector to the private sector in the past decade. This trend is strongest in Year 11 and 12, where 41 per cent of teenagers now attend private schools, according to the ABS.

APFACTS will keep you up to date when the 2006 figures are released.



Source: ACT Department of Education and Training Non Government Schools Census 2005