

# Policy Document

June 2024



**ACT Council of  
Parents & Citizens  
Associations**

*The parent voice on public education*

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## Preface

The ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations Inc. is the collective voice of the parents and carers of children in all government schools in the ACT. Delegates to P&C Council are elected by each affiliated school P&C Association.

The objects of P&C Council are:

- to support affiliated associations in their endeavours;
- to provide a considered parent input to the ACT school system;
- to represent ACT parents in ACT and national educational matters generally;
- to encourage educational debate within the ACT.

Council believes that schooling should be a unifying influence in our society and that our future well-being as a nation depends upon the development of a public education system of the highest quality, recognising the human and educational rights of all children, as well as respecting the cultural values, religious beliefs and the democratic rights of parents.

The government school is a socially important institution in which the children of the nation gain experience in, and a commitment to, living harmoniously with the full range of fellow citizens. It is in everybody's interests to maintain and enhance the quality and morale of the public system and to ensure that it carries out its central role in Australian education.

This Council affirms its support for the basic principle that it is the government's primary obligation to provide and maintain public schooling of the highest standard; and it believes that the demand for increasing excellence and equity in schooling by the Australian community will continue.

The purpose of the document is to:

- represent the collective views of P&C Associations throughout the ACT;
- enshrine the values and concerns of the members of P&C Council;
- guide the activities of Council and its representatives;
- make possible representative and authoritative responses;
- guide the position of our delegates to ACSSO (Australian Council of State School Organizations) which is the national organization of parents in government schools;
- inform the community of the views of this Council.

This document is a dynamic one and, as such, is in a constant state of development; it therefore changes with changing circumstances and changing views.

In line with the Council's constitution, policy can only be formed at a Policy Conference. A Policy Conference will normally be held in third term every year with Special Policy Conferences called as required. Any affiliated association is entitled to give notice of suggested changes to existing policy or to propose new policies for discussion at Conference. P&C Executive and P&C Council may also submit policy agenda items. If an item is passed at Conference, it then becomes part of P&C Council Policy and the Executive is empowered to operate on the basis of this document.

No P&C Association is bound by the policies contained in this document. However, individual P&Cs are invited to consider these policies when making decisions on local school or system issues.

Unless otherwise stated, the policies in this document were adopted at the first Policy Conference held in July 1987. A major review was undertaken in 2015/16.

## **SECTION A: PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION**

### **A1. The right to public schooling**

#### **Reasoning**

It is the right of every child to be given the opportunity of a public education.

Government school education should aim to provide for the maximum development of every student without distinction due to social or economic status, ability, gender or gender preference, ethnicity, and religion or family beliefs.

#### **Policy**

Decisions regarding public schooling at all levels should focus around the provision of a caring, supportive educational environment. All students should be enabled to develop the skills and understanding necessary to shape their own life, to strive to reach their full potential and to participate constructively in shaping society.

Council should encourage other individuals and bodies to focus on the best interests of students as the most important determinant of all decisions.

(Adopted 2016)

### **A2. The nature of public schooling**

#### **Reasoning**

The object of a public school system is to ensure that all young people develop the skills and understandings necessary to shape their own lives and to participate constructively in shaping society.

#### **Policy**

To achieve this objective, a public school system should:

- a) be accessible to all irrespective of class, culture, gender, disability or geographic location;
- b) be free (that is, fully publicly funded and provided) so that access to school experience of the highest quality is not dependent on capacity or willingness to make financial contribution;
- c) be secular and promote the values necessary for the maintenance of a democratic society;
- d) be one in which full time attendance is compulsory during the compulsory years so that participation is independent of the willingness either of individuals to attend or of others to allow them to do so;
- e) recognise changing social and economic patterns and facilitate the return of students to schooling after a period away from school;
- f) encourage students to continue learning through their lifetime;
- g) ensure that the provision of schooling for country students is provided as near as possible to their homes;
- h) be based on curricula and educational processes in school which, whilst they acknowledge and build in the cultures and experience of the local children, are inclusive of the experience of all children and encourage a critical approach to all knowledge;
- i) be built on an open, public and democratic participatory process in which parents, students, teachers and other educational professionals work together at all levels within the system on the development and evaluation of policies, programs, curriculum and practice;

- j) establish system-wide policies and broad guidelines developed and agreed to through democratic and participatory processes within which all schools are required to operate;
- k) provide systematic and appropriate support to school communities to develop their own policies, programs and practices within the framework of the agreed system-wide policies and broad guidelines;
- l) ensure all children participate in a broad general curriculum which is both challenging and satisfying;
- m) give students opportunities to participate in decision-making within the operation of their schools commensurate with their age and abilities; and
- n) provide the resources necessary to ensure that the objectives to which the system is committed are achieved for all children and that inequalities are neither generated nor perpetuated.

(Adopted 1992, amended 2016)

### **A3. Inclusive and diverse education**

#### **Reasoning**

Schools have diverse populations. It is important that all students from all backgrounds feel safe and supported at ACT public schools. All students are entitled to a high quality education free from discrimination.

Students of inclusive and diverse education develop a number of 'life skills' learning how to be a good citizen, appreciation and understanding of diversity, increased interpersonal skills, increased maturity, increases in self-confidence and self-esteem.

Every student regardless of disability, ability, LGBTQI+ status, cultural, religious or socio-economic background is recognised, accepted and celebrated.

#### **Policy**

Every student is supported to access and engage with high quality learning; and be an active participant in their school community.

Every member of the school community has the right to be treated with respect and accepted for who they are.

Inclusive and diverse education means that **every student**:

- Will be supported to enable involvement and participation in all school activities (including assemblies, excursions, sports carnivals, performances, awards and extra-curricular school activities).
- Will have an accessible and safe classroom environment that supports the student's social and emotional wellbeing, that enables learning to be accessible to the student.
- Will have accomplishments recognised and publicly acknowledged as compared to their peer group.
- Will be provided with the support required to access their learning program (including physical supports, sensory supports, communication supports, technological supports, disability specialist teachers, educational support teachers, teaching assistants, speech therapist supports, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, behavioural therapists, psychologists supports and EAL/D supports).
- Will be supported to access learning as set by the Australian Curriculum for their year level or mixed peer system.
- Will have equitable access to learning opportunities as compared to their peer group and not be limited by a lack of resources that prevent attendance (transport, support, etc).

- Will have access to suitable facilities such as bathrooms and changerooms, based on individual circumstances.
- Will be afforded privacy and confidentiality.
- Will be protected from bullying and discrimination.

Inclusive and diverse education means every student has access to:

- a supportive and welcoming class environment
- the necessary equipment to participate in educational activities
- a compatible environment
- a compatible learning style
- compatible learning supports
- high expectations
- an Individual Learning Plan (for students' requiring additional support to achieve their potential)
- a teacher with specific training or qualifications appropriate to the student's needs (for example: gifted and talented or disability/special needs).

Inclusive and diverse education means that all parents and carers:

- are welcome to be involved in their child's education.
- are encouraged to participate in decisions concerning their students.

We expect that the ACT public school system:

- Will collaborate with parents, carers and medical professionals in the planning, setting and outcomes of individual learning plans.
- Will continue to provide school options including a range of alternative settings to meet specific needs, so that resources and teaching expertise can be considered and developed for the benefit of students such as, mainstream classroom with support, small educational units within mainstream schools and dedicated schools for students with disabilities.
- Will collaborate or seek advice from the community on a range of inclusive education issues including but not limited to First Nations People, cultural, heritage and religion.
- Will deliver programs that counter racism, discrimination, homophobia and transphobia and that recognise and respect cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds.
- Will promote awareness and understanding of inclusion and its importance within the school community.
- Will actively monitor and respond to complaints regarding culture, diversity and inclusion.
- Will provide opportunities to recognise diverse cultures and religious celebrations, including supporting students who miss school due to religious celebrations or who are fasting.
- Will provide a safe place for all students to access a high quality education and respond promptly to concerns about bullying or harassment.

(Amended 2018, 2023)

## A4. Developing education policy

### Reasoning

Both the ACT and the Australian Governments develop policies on education that impact on ACT government schools. Sound policies depend on sound policy development processes that take account of all relevant factors and input from key stakeholders. It is also important that education policy be developed co-operatively between the States and Territories and the Australian Government.

## **Policy**

When developing educational initiatives, policies and programs and making decisions, governments at all levels must examine the potential impact of each policy on issues including:

- a) overall student outcomes;
- b) social equity (for example, on access to quality education for all, on the outcomes for different groups of students, and on ensuring that funds and support are directed to those schools and students who are most in need);
- c) school-community partnerships;
- d) the supply, quality, responsibilities and morale of teachers and principals;
- e) the administrative implications for schools;
- f) accountability and whether the policy represents the “best” use of public funds.

Education policies should be developed in consultation with key stakeholders including parent groups. The views of these groups should be taken into account when developing, implementing, reviewing and evaluating the impacts of, policies.

The Australian Government should not use funding to coerce or induce the States and Territories to adopt policies that have not been agreed between the two levels of government. This includes withholding, or threatening to withhold, funds from, and providing inducement funding to, the States and Territories.

National education policies should be developed co-operatively between the States and Territories and the Australian Government. Where possible, education policies should be consistent across all education sectors: government, independent and catholic.

(Adopted 2007, amended 2016)

## **A5. Early Learning**

### **Reasoning**

The provision of quality early education and care provides students with a foundation for learning. Quality education and care has been shown to increase the number of students reaching expected social, emotional and educational outcomes in early school years and throughout school life.

### **Policy**

Council supports the provision of early education and care. Council believes:

- a) Compulsory attendance of 4-5 year old preschool signifies the importance of early education.
- b) Students must be offered a minimum of 15 hours a week of preschool, coordinated with education and care services that support modern working families.

- c) Preschool students should be offered placements in accordance with priority enrolment areas for their local school. Students attending their local preschool promotes effective transitions, and promotes equity, accessibility, continuity, convenience and builds social capital within preschool and school communities.
- d) Where demand for enrolments exceed capacity, places are to be allocated to students from vulnerable and disadvantaged families within the local priority area first. This ensures that a less convenient location is not a barrier to students from vulnerable and disadvantaged families participating in early education and care.
- e) Funding is needed to provide and ensure essential wrap-around support services are accessible for students attending government preschools, and their families. Priority should be on the identification of students from vulnerable and disadvantaged families and students with developmental delays or at risk. A combination of preventative and responsive services must be made available, including special transport needs.
- f) Council supports a broad preschool curriculum that supports teachers to tailor educational experiences to the interests of students.
- g) Engagement of parents and carers in learning improves educational outcomes for students. Preschools must offer a variety of flexible opportunities to develop and maintain relationships with parents and carers, whilst appreciating the commitments of modern working families.

(Adopted 2019)

## A6. Sustainability in schools

### Reasoning

In the face of irreversible damage caused by human-induced climate change, schools are ideal places to practice and teach environmental awareness and to demonstrate sustainability principles. Schools can be models and leaders within their community to show how society can have a more sustainable future.

Schools can educate our children and broader school community by addressing the environmental issues associated with their infrastructure and surroundings, using school activities, their day-to-day management and through the content of the curriculum. The goal is to improve the ecological and carbon footprint of our schools and to educate the school community about the importance of sustainability.

When new schools are built they must meet sustainable design principles. Existing schools may need more support to achieve sustainable outcomes.

The overall school community should strive to provide action, support and leadership to achieve sustainable outcomes.

### Policy

Council strongly supports efforts to make schools and communities sustainable. Council is concerned about the environmental issues that our students face. Education is a critical to assisting both the current and future generations to meet future challenges.

Council encourages the consideration of alternative and more creative strategies for sustainable solutions to environmental issues, including:

- a) challenging and engaging governments to develop students' capacity and knowledge through education to better equip them to understand and deal with the challenges of environmental sustainability;
- b) sustainability education embedded across the whole school including in all subject areas and school years, following the national curriculum framework;
- c) implementing ecologically and carbon neutral sustainable practices in schools by encouraging them to better manage their physical infrastructure in the areas of energy use, waste, water use, biodiversity, landscape design and through behavioural and infrastructure changes;
- d) opportunities, work experience and training for students interested in working in sustainable industries; and
- e) seeking additional funding to assist disadvantaged schools and students in working towards sustainability.

Council is committed to:

- a) recognising collective responsibility to act sustainably in everything that Council does, such as reducing the necessity for travel to meetings through the use of online communications, car-pooling, reducing the use of single use items, recycling, reduced paper consumption etc;
- b) supporting professional development for teachers and other staff (i.e. business managers and building service officers) in the area of environmental sustainability;
- c) supporting appropriate funding for programs that encourage sustainable practices within schools;
- d) lobbying government to provide sufficient new funds to make the transition to sustainability practices achievable;
- e) support for any savings brought about through the implementation of sustainability measures to be reinvested within the school to encourage a sense of community ownership and to fund further sustainable initiatives;
- f) supporting specific funding for a dedicated position in the Directorate to promote:
  - i) sustainability in schools through curriculum development;

- ii) sustainable infrastructure;
- iii) the implementation and continued support of sustainability programs.

(Adopted 2009, amended 2011, 2012, 2016, 2024)

## **SECTION B: THE SCHOOL AND ITS COMMUNITY**

### **B1. The role of parents**

#### **Reasoning**

Parents and carers are partners in schooling by virtue of their role as the central provider/carer and the role they play in their children's learning and development.

Parents have the right to be involved in all aspects of education of their children, at the home, school and system level.

Parent involvement can take many forms: for example, participation in decision making at the school and system levels; consultation on educational and school management issues; representation on committees and advisory groups; involvement in school and classroom programs; the support of learning at home; communication between school and home on student progress; the operation of school canteens and out of hours care programs; and assistance in fundraising.

Parent participation:

- a) is a democratic right;
- b) contributes to better outcomes for all students;
- c) enables the school system and individual schools to respond more effectively to community values, aspirations and needs; and
- d) enhances the strength and vibrancy of the public education system.

Parent participation requires quality time. Many parents find it difficult to be as involved with their children's lives as they would wish due to work commitments and other pressures.

Allowing parents time to meet their family commitments provides overall benefits both at the organisation/business level and for society generally.

#### **Policy**

Council believes that the Government (ACT and Federal), the Directorate and schools should:

- a) promote the involvement of parents as partners at all levels of the public education system;
- b) involve parents through participation in decision making at the school and system levels, consultation on educational and school management issues, and representation on committees and advisory groups;
- c) welcome and encourage parent involvement in school and classroom programs;
- d) promote clear two-way communication between schools and families about all aspects of school programs and policies, and on student progress;
- e) develop system and school level strategies, techniques and programs to enable parents to participate actively in their children's education and to assist learning at home, taking account of different family and cultural backgrounds;
- f) provide resources and training to make parent participation most effective;
- g) promote integration of community and support services for children and families; and
- h) support programs and activities designed to develop parenting skills.

Council believes that parents should actively participate with teachers as partners in their children's education. It is recognised, however, that the extent of participation by parents may be affected by factors such as their own educational, family and cultural backgrounds, as well as by other demands on their time.

The ACT Government should make statutory provision for parent participation in student learning, including requirements for a system level policy and individual school policies to support parent participation in schools.

The system policy statement should include:

- g) the rationale for parent participation;
- h) an outline of the nature and scope of parent participation;
- i) system policy objectives; and
- j) requirements for school level policies on parent participation and mechanisms schools should consider.

The legislation should also specify system support for parent participation in schools. This includes training opportunities, personnel policies and dissemination of information on successful practices. It should provide for a Directorate sponsored program to assist parent involvement in student learning at home. It should also provide for a training program for teachers and parents.

Schools should be required to have policies on parent participation in decision-making, policy formulation and in student learning. Schools should be required to develop parent participation initiatives as part of their school development process. Policies on involvement in student learning should include provision for plans to support partnerships in learning.

System and school policies should be complemented by action plans detailing:

- a) system and school initiatives in support for parent participation;
- b) guidelines for successful parent participation in schools;
- c) suggestions for breaking down barriers to parent participation; and
- d) provision of resources to support parent participation.

Implementation of system and school action plans should be reported on annually and plans should be revised on a regular basis.

The Directorate should:

- a) establish a parent participation advisory committee at the system level to advise on policy development and the design of programs and strategies to support parent participation;
- b) liaise with universities to introduce pre-service training for teachers in parent participation in schools and develop in-service training for teachers and administrative staff through local universities or other programs;
- c) adopt personnel policies to support parent participation; and
- d) maintain an information base on examples of successful practice in parent participation in schools, sponsor research on successful programs and practice and disseminate information on parent participation through the school system.

Schools should be encouraged and supported to:

- f) establish action teams of teachers, parents and students to investigate and develop recommendations on school problems and issues as they arise;
- g) appoint a parent participation co-ordinator to facilitate training and promote partnerships between teachers and parents; and
- h) establish parent centres as a way of providing information to parents and a range of opportunities for parent involvement in schools and student learning.

The ACT Government should provide additional funding to the government schools budget for central office support for:

- a) parent participation in schools;
- b) in-service training for teachers, principals and administrators in parent participation; and
- c) staff time for parent participation co-ordinators in schools and the appointment of home/school liaison officers.

Council calls for more family friendly workplaces. Council supports moves to make workplaces more flexible in when, where, and how people are employed.

Furthermore, Council calls on the Federal and ACT governments, as major employers in the ACT, to take the lead in creating conditions for their employees which enable them to participate reasonably in their children's educational experiences.

(Adopted 1998, amended 2000, 2004, 2005, 2016)

## **B2. Community representation and participation**

### **Reasoning**

Effective representation is the key to a successful process of participation. The following conditions are essential for effective representation:

- a) the representatives must be chosen by those they represent;
- b) the views put forward by the representatives must be consistent with the policies (or accepted views) of the people they represent;
- c) those who are represented must be kept informed of views being expressed by their representative, decisions being taken and the reasons for them.

P&C Associations are the representative organisation of parents and members of the school community. Genuine representation of the community on local and ACT bodies can only be achieved by members of the Council or P&C Associations elected for that purpose and directly accountable to their electorate.

Because of the participatory nature of the ACT system, effective representation of parents' views is an integral part of the policy formulation process. It is therefore essential that representatives of Council attend all scheduled meetings of the committee which they have been invited to attend, or arrange for a well briefed proxy to do so.

Effective representation requires a commitment by the Minister and the Directorate to genuine consultation, including the timely provision of information and opinions.

### **Policy**

The governance of the school system should include:

- a) a community-based committee which serves as governing council, advising the Minister and specifying policies for the management of the school system;
- b) school boards in each school, with representation of the parent, teacher and, as appropriate, student communities, which determine the educational policies that are to be implemented by the school; and
- c) in the absence of a community-based governing committee, community participation at the system level provided through a community-based Ministerial Advisory Committee which advises the Minister on longer term issues for the management of the school system.

The task of the Council nominees on the Ministerial Advisory Committee and other bodies is to advocate and work towards outcomes which are consistent with Council policy and which are in the best interests of students in ACT government schools.

The Government should adopt a community first consultation approach in regards to relevant operational policy and procedural decisions.

#### ***A. P&C REPRESENTATIVES TO COUNCIL***

Representatives to Council share the responsibility of ensuring effective decision-making for the benefit of all students in the ACT government school system. Council should support representatives by provision of:

- a) information;
- b) a copy of Council policies; and
- c) opportunities to discuss local and system-wide problems, and to help formulate policy solutions to them; comments on reports with educational implications for the ACT government school system.

#### ***B. REPRESENTATIVES OF P&C COUNCIL***

Representatives should:

- a) report regularly to Council highlighting issues of concern;
- b) contribute to the development of appropriate policy both in Council meetings and in the forums where they represent Council policies;
- c) assist in the training of other representatives of Council, in particular, a representative to the forum they attend; and
- d) always request time for consultation on issues where there is no clear policy direction.

Council representatives participate on the basis of the transferred authority of parents whom they represent. They have the vital task of informing, reporting and justifying to their constituents the positions they have adopted.

Council continues to espouse the principle of participation with its implications of openness ensuring parental input at the system level and on all committees on all policy issues.

#### ***C. AT THE SCHOOL LEVEL***

It is the responsibility of the parent representatives to:

- a) consult closely with those whose views and interests they are representing;
- b) communicate well with those less directly involved;
- c) alert other parents to significant issues or developments;
- d) be committed to involving other parents and to encouraging them to discuss educational issues; and
- e) contribute to developing education policies which reflect parents' priorities.

#### **D. DISCIPLINARY MEASURES**

When a person is elected to represent Council, an alternate should be nominated at the same time. Failure to attend three consecutive meetings or to report back on them, will result in the position being reviewed.

Any elected representative of Council who misrepresents policies adopted by Council at any forum to which s/he has been nominated must report back and justify his/her action to Council or have the position reviewed.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 2016)

### **B3. Student representation**

#### **Reasoning**

In a democratic society, the public education system has the important function of empowering future citizens so that they are able to participate fully in the life of the community and contribute meaningfully to society. Student participation in school management, including by representation on the School Board, particularly at secondary level, is fundamental to this process.

#### **Policy**

Council believes that students must be full voting members of School Boards in secondary schools. Elections of student representatives to School Boards should, preferably, be by all students of the school in question.

Each secondary school and College should have a Student Representative Council (SRC). Student members of the School Board should be ex-officio members of the SRC (if not already members). Council supports the establishment of Student Representative Councils at upper primary level with access to the School Board.

Formal student representation at all school public functions should be encouraged. P&C Associations should also invite representatives of the SRC to attend meetings and to report to parents on issues of student concern.

(Amended 1988, 1990, 2016)

### **B4. Managing declining enrolments**

#### **Reasoning**

Council believes that with effective planning and management, the impact and extent of excess capacity in ACT schools can be minimised.

The management of excess capacity is possible, in sympathy with the goals of public education and other social goals, through innovative and imaginative approaches. Surplus space must be recognised as an opportunity to strengthen the community role of schools by using such facilities to meet other community needs for so long as the space is surplus to schooling requirements.

#### **Policy**

Council believes that declining enrolment must be addressed by a complementary set of measures to be implemented in the short and long terms. Main elements include:

- a) an agreed approach to the estimation of excess capacity in schools which recognises changes in education and teaching practice;
- b) measures to reduce any observable inefficiencies in the operation of schools where this does not adversely impact on the provision of quality schooling;
- c) the identification of reasons for declining enrolment, which are then used to make evidence-based decisions on action to improve enrolments;
- d) implementation of several measures to stabilise enrolments in government high schools, including a high school improvement program, a more formal system for sharing enrolments between schools, programs to better assist community understanding of government school education and programs of increasing suburban density;
- e) use of “excess space” to improve the quality of education in schools;
- f) innovative programs, based on principles of community participation, to facilitate community and commercial use of available space in schools as long as this does not inhibit the educational activities of the school; and
- g) planning for new schools and for refitting of existing schools including zoning of utilities (heating, cooling, electricity, etc) so that only the sections of a school in use at any time are heated, lit, etc.

(Adopted 1992, amended 2016)

## SECTION C: STUDENTS REQUIRING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

### C1. Learning assistance

#### Reasoning

Every student has the right to access high-quality education services that meet their needs. All students should be able to reach their academic potential no matter what their personal circumstances or situation. However, at times some students may require additional support to achieve their goals.

Groups of students that may require additional support include (but are not limited to):

- a) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- b) English as an additional language students;
- c) gifted and talented students;
- d) students with a disability;
- e) students with certain health conditions;
- f) students who move frequently due to postings or parental job requirements;
- g) students who start school at an early age; and
- h) students from various disadvantaged backgrounds.

Council recognises that the groups above are inherently different in many ways. However, there are a number of areas where these groups share common policy considerations. This policy should not be read as a shallow grouping of students but rather as a tool to consolidate Council's approach to the shared needs and concerns of these students. This policy does not replace Council's individual policies which cover the groups listed above.

Parent engagement is crucial to meet the specific needs of these students. Council believes that parents know their children best and can provide invaluable advice on how to engage with their children to assist with their education. Similarly, if parents are engaged with their child's education a useful exchange of information, resources, methods and programs will be initiated with the Directorate, schools and teachers.

#### Policy

Council believes that students flourish when their individual educational needs are adequately met.

The Directorate, schools and teachers should ensure that all students are achieving their personal best by:

- a) ensuring the early identification of students who require additional support;
- b) providing specific and proactive additional support and resources to these students;
- c) providing opportunities to these students to attend/participate in extra activities/programs within the school's available resources;
- d) communicating with parents when students are nominated for specific programs and liaise with parents to discuss individual learning plans, enrichment and/or extension programs, student progress and any issues where appropriate;
- e) using varied resources that cater to different learning styles;
- f) using teaching strategies that encourage a personalised and interactive education for all students;
- g) encouraging students, staff and the school community to display sensitivity, empathy and respect towards all students no matter what their individual circumstances; and
- h) providing on-going practical training for teachers and other professionals on the identification and needs of each group of students.

Council believes that any method used to meet and address the needs of students requiring additional support should not detract from the education of other students. Additional resources (not merely the reallocation of existing resources) are required in schools to meet the special requirements of these groups of students.  
(Adopted 2014, amended 2016)

## C2. Students with disabilities

### Reasoning

Like all students, every student with disabilities has the right to an education in an inclusive full-time school setting which enables the maximisation of the student's potential.

Disability is a developmental delay, or developmental, intellectual, mental health, sensory or physical impairment or a combination of those impairments, which causes a significant restriction in the way that the student is able to function at school. Disability may involve communication, learning or mobility needs, with the need for continuing support services.

An educational setting may involve one or more of the following options:

- a) a local, mainstream class or school;
- b) a dedicated or specialised unit or centre, providing an educational program specifically for students with disabilities, within a mainstream school – this may not be the local school for the student;
- c) a school equipped and dedicated to providing programs for students with disabilities; or,
- d) support from specific programs or services provided to address a specific impairment.

Inclusion is the full and active participation of a student with disabilities, as a valued and respected member of their school community, in all aspects of school life. It drives growth and development, and provides a stimulus to learning and maximising potential. It gives the student a sense of ownership and empowerment. It involves a sense of belonging, being included in decision-making, and having a valued role in the school community. Inclusion benefits the school community as a whole, encouraging diversity. Inclusion may require active and timely intervention and/or support to enable access for a student with disabilities.

Integration is the participation of a student with disabilities in a mainstream class or school on a part-time or sessional basis, as a means of exposing the student to educational experiences in a mainstream class. Integration may form part of a transition process.

Meeting the individual educational needs of a student with disabilities requires a broad range of different services in a variety of educational settings, with appropriate and well planned curriculum, programs and environments based on the student's level of need. These services should be subject to regular and ongoing monitoring and review.

Choice is fundamental in the inclusion of all students with disabilities. Inclusion should be strongly encouraged and fully supported to ensure success for the student with disabilities and the whole school community. Smaller class settings in mainstream schools provide inclusive environment for students who need more intensive support to access education.

Curriculum adaptation or individual curriculum development is often an essential element to ensure that students with disabilities can achieve their educational potential and participate fully in all aspects of their education. This requires detailed and up to date professional knowledge, which may be particular to specific impairments or disabilities. Individual teachers in schools are not currently trained to have this detailed expertise in their base tertiary training.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) provides resources such as assistive technologies to students who need them for their whole of life. Education is expected to fund assistive technologies that are only used while at school or for the purposes of education.

Transition is the planned and resourced process of introducing a student with disabilities to a new educational or post-school setting. As a student with disabilities develops there will be the requirement to move from one educational setting to another. Apart from the normal transition through the various levels of education, this could be as a result a number of events such as improvement or reduction in functioning or the student with disabilities not achieving appropriate learning outcomes. Any unscheduled or unpredicted changes in

*Policy Document*

educational placements must be achieved with particular care to attention to the ability of the student with disabilities to manage the change successfully.

## Policy

Council believes that the Government, the Directorate and schools should:

- a) Provide equitable access to inclusive education
  - i. Appropriate education programs and support should be provided as soon as disability or impairments are identified and/ or suspected. There should be a continuum of appropriate and timely programs throughout the student's school life;
  - ii. Education must be provided by well-trained, professional personnel in partnership with parents. It is required that professional personnel have the appropriate tertiary training qualifications in disability and special needs education;
  - iii. A program or service must be proactive and flexible in design to cater to the individual needs of all students using the service or program;
  - iv. All programs and services must be evaluated regularly to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness;
  - v. All students with disabilities should be provided the opportunity to enrol at their local school, on the same basis as a prospective student without a disability. It is the responsibility of Government to provide the resources and structure to enable access. Council recognises that there are students with disabilities whose educational needs and social growth require the support of special facilities, smaller classes, equipment, expertise and support provided in a special education setting which may at that time enable the most educational, personal and social programs for the student; and
  - vi. The Directorate should enable parents and students to exercise choice over the most appropriate setting, which may include:
    1. Mainstream classroom;
    2. Small educational units which specialise in meeting the specific and different needs of students, which are attached to or placed within mainstream schools;
    3. Dedicated school for children with disabilities.
- b) Provide a safe environment that supports best practice, positive behavioural management
  - i. Council expects The Directorate to provide a safe school environment for all children and teachers and to support students who have ongoing behavioural issues to remain engaged with school;
  - ii. The Directorate should have a set of governing policies and procedures that the management of complex behaviours and protect teachers and students from violent behaviours;
  - iii. The Directorate should have open and transparent communication with all stakeholders around positive behaviour support; and
  - iv. In particular, withdrawal spaces require specific regulatory framework that governs the appropriate and safe use of such a space for the student's benefit.
- c) Provide adequate and appropriate funding for successful student outcomes
  - i. Adequate funding and training must be provided to ensure that inclusion in education covers the social, physical and sensory needs of students with disabilities;
  - ii. Government must fund the education of all students with disabilities enrolled in a Government school until the end of their school program, usually the completion of year 12;
  - iii. Students with disabilities are entitled to the same level of specific support for their disability, irrespective of the school, or school sector in which they are enrolled. However, the parents of students with disabilities who opt to send their child to a non-government school should be responsible for the payment school fees;
  - iv. The amount of support required from the ACT Government to a student with disabilities in a non-government school to ensure equitable support should take into account support

received by the school for the student from all other sources, including Commonwealth and ACT Government sources. There should be tight accountability provisions to ensure that the funding allocated to support students with disabilities in the non-government sector is used for that purpose; and

- v. The appropriate and timely provision of resources is an essential component of the successful education of students with disabilities. These resources must be provided on the assessed educational needs of the student with disabilities to ensure that all goals of their education are successfully met.

d) Provide adequate funding and appropriate resources to enable the student to access the school setting.

- i. A strengths based assessment system that supports the student, family and teacher, should be used to determine the appropriate resource allocation for the student. Assessment of educational needs must be undertaken in partnership with parents in a collaborative and transparent process and should examine the need for human, physical and technological resources as part of the one process. Support and opportunities for skill development must be provided for parents to support their active involvement in this partnership;
- ii. The allocation of available resources provided on the relative educational needs of students with disabilities must be undertaken in a consistent and transparent manner at the system level and within individual schools;
- iii. Parents should be informed at the time of assessment of the resource requirement as assessed, and of any subsequent changes in resource provision. The withdrawal or addition of any resources should be fully explained to parents to ensure their understanding of the likely impacts of such changes on the education of the student with disabilities; and
- iv. The Directorate must ensure timely access to both the expertise in assistive technology and other resources and the technology itself for all students with disabilities who require this support to access the curriculum. Assistive technology resourcing should form part of the assessment of educational needs assessment for each student with disabilities.

e) Provide every student with disabilities with an Individual Learning Plan (ILP)

- i. An ILP must be formulated and agreed immediately upon a student with disabilities enrolling at a school or commencing a particular program;
- ii. An ILP must be developed in partnership with parents taking into account long term planning for the student with disabilities. Other relevant people or agencies should participate in the development of the ILP on an as needed or as desirable basis. Support and opportunities for skill development must be provided for parents to assist their active involvement in this partnership;
- iii. The ILP must specify the educational outcomes, including key performance indicators, strategies and interventions for the student, monitoring and assessment arrangements, utilization of resources and timing for review and revision of the ILP. Every ILP must be reviewed and if necessary revised at or before the review date;
- iv. Implementation of any individual learning plan, and associated behavioural management, eating or other plans should not begin without the consultation, support and the written permission of parents;
- v. Therapy and other services from outside the school may be necessary to support the achievement of educational outcomes included in the ILP or to assist with the continued functioning or overall development of a student with disabilities. These services may be provided directly to the student on the basis of individual needs and assessments. Consultancy services to a school are not a substitute for direct intervention requiring professional skills from a discipline other than education;
- vi. Service providers should be an integral part of the team involved in both the ILP and assessment of needs of each student with disabilities;
- vii. During the school day, services should be provided in a manner which is least disruptive to the student's inclusion in other educational activities. Parents should be informed of therapy, other support services or programs provided for their child, including specific information about desirable follow-up or non-school activities; and

viii. Regular contact between parents, therapy and other support service providers should be actively encouraged and supported as one aspect of the partnership with parents in relation to the education of students with disabilities.

f) Provide transparent, individualised assessment and reporting on student performance

- i. The needs of each student with disabilities should be assessed continually and formally reviewed at least every six months;
- ii. This review should consider, but not be limited to, placement, resource requirements and ongoing planning of each student's ILP. This review should be in partnership with parents, STAs and other relevant service providers;
- iii. Prior to a review meeting, the school should provide a written report to be circulated, addressing implementation and outcomes for each aspect of the ILP. This will provide participants with an understanding of what has been achieved, where additional resources or efforts must be focussed or the level of support maintained;
- iv. Assessment of and reporting on programs and services must also occur on a system wide basis. The review of programs or services should be primarily to ensure that educational outcomes for the students with disabilities are being achieved. Review processes should be conducted in partnership with parents and involve expertise from outside the Directorate to ensure that quality, relevant, efficient and effective programs and services are provided; and
- v. Data should be collated by the Directorate on the number of students with disabilities on performance compared to ILP's so that program outcomes can be evaluated and improved.

g) Adapt the Australian Curriculum only when required for the student's needs.

- i. The Australian Curriculum should be used for all students with a disability. The supports and settings provided enable learning and participation in the Australian Curriculum;
- ii. Where the individual student may not have the capacity to engage with the Australian Curriculum, a detailed program will be provided; and
- iii. The number of students with Australian Curriculum adjustments will be documented and evaluated by the Directorate.

h) Vocational and independent living education within schools

- i. Students with disabilities must be able to access and be supported in undertaking pre-vocational and vocational courses in accordance with the general guidelines for the provision of such courses within schools; and
- ii. Programs which develop independent living and leisure skills of students with disabilities must be provided.

i) Provide Teachers, Learning Support Assistants (LSA's) and Special Teacher Assistants (STAs) with the appropriate special needs or disability qualifications. This may include further tertiary study or professional learning qualifications.

- i. All teachers and Assistants in ACT schools should have ongoing training and professional training in relation to disability;
- ii. Therapists, families and other service providers are encouraged to share their skills with Directorate staff as part of their professional learning opportunities; and
- iii. The Directorate must ensure the development and maintenance of a body of staff with this expertise. The Directorate need to meet the growing demand for inclusion support in every classroom in the ACT.

j) Students are provided with safe and suitable transport to and from school.

- i. Students with disabilities who are not attending their local school because it does not provide an appropriate educational program to meet their needs, should have suitable transport provided to enable them to attend an appropriate educational program;
- ii. Students with disabilities requiring transport to school should be provided with a service that ensures their safety, comfort and wellbeing, minimizes the amount of time spent in transit and, most importantly, ensures attendance at school for the full school day; and

- iii. The provision of transport for students with disabilities is in transition from an ACT Government initiative administered through the Directorate to a funding model under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). Council supports a consultative approach that would help promote open and collaborative communications along with development of new initiatives to ensure the provision of a high quality, flexible, safe and sustainable transport service that would meet the needs of all the relevant stakeholders.
- k) Meet growing demand for placements in appropriate disability specific settings
  - i. The Directorate must undertake adequate planning to ensure the additional special settings are opened to meet anticipated needs based on known and projected enrolments. Decisions must take into account the social and educational needs of students with disabilities and the desirability of educating students as close as possible to their local school when education at the local school does not occur; and
  - ii. Decisions about opening of additional special settings must be taken sufficiently far in advance to provide parents with detailed information about new settings prior to the annual review meetings at which placement for the following school year will be considered.
- l) Provide supported transitions for students with a disability to minimize negative impacts of changes in school settings.
  - i. All transitions must be well planned and supported by parents, staff and the current and future locations and other agencies that have roles in relation to the student's needs;
  - ii. Transitions should be clearly documented and planned in the best interests of the student with disabilities. Planning must take account of the student's ability to cope with change and may require a period of days, weeks or sometimes months, to be effected successfully;
  - iii. Appropriate funding and resources must be identified and provided to assist in the transition. Adjustments and resources provided in the original setting, should be maintained in the new setting; and
  - iv. After the transition has been completed follow-up meetings should occur to ensure that the new arrangements are suitable and that the student is receiving appropriate educational and other support.
- m) Provide reasonable access for interstate children with disabilities to appropriate high needs settings.
  - i. A written agreement with the NSW Government for provision of ACT special services to NSW students with disabilities should be negotiated by the ACT Government, assuming funding arrangements between state and territory are fairly attributed.
- n) Transparent definitions provided for disability eligibility and placement criteria
  - i. Development of criteria should occur in consultation and with awareness of the key ACT Directorates, Federal Departments, and the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and be clearly outlined, described and easily accessible to parents; and
  - ii. Placement of students with disabilities into educational settings should occur in partnership with parents. Criteria for placement should be based on the amount of support required by the student and the student's Individual Learning Plan.
- o) Directorate policy and procedure, disability and placement criteria should be clearly accessible and publicly available to all parents.

(Adopted 1987, amended 2009, 2016)

### C3. Gifted and talented students

#### Reasoning

Giftedness refers to a student's outstanding, innate ability in one or more of the following domains; intellectual, creative, socioaffective or sensorimotor. Significantly beyond that typically seen in children of the same age. Giftedness comes in many forms and levels. It is found in students of all socio-economic groups, and of diverse personalities and backgrounds. It can be combined with other exceptionalities/special needs such as learning or physical disabilities, socio-economic disadvantage, or having English as a second language.

Talent refers to outstanding performance in one or more of the following fields; academic, the arts, business, leisure, social action, sports and technology. Talent emerges from giftedness as a consequence of the student's learning experience.

Council's philosophy is that government school education must encourage and support all students to reach their potential. Gifted students in one or more areas present particular challenges in school education. To support these students to reach their potential Council recognises that the government school education system needs to provide appropriate differentiated learning curriculum and opportunities across the full spectrum of academic, social and emotional needs of the students.

#### Policy

Council acknowledges the different needs of gifted and talented students. In the absence of adequate provision of a differentiated curriculum these students may not reach their potential.

Parents play a vital role in partnering with schools to achieve appropriate outcomes for these students. Parents of gifted students often recognize their students need educational plans and options to reach their full potential, some parents benefit from additional help understanding the benefit of different programs for gifted students.

##### a) Identification

Gifted and talented students need to be identified. Schools must recognise that many factors may inhibit the expression of giftedness or talent, and that gifted and talented students are found in all communities regardless of their socio-economic, cultural or ethnic background. Gifted and talented students can also include students who are under achieving, those with disabilities and those with specific learning difficulties.

Council acknowledges that there is an issue of under identification of gifted and talented students in ACT schools. Identification of all gifted students should start as early as possible and continue throughout the student's schooling. Schools should use a variety of strategies and consider a range of evidence to ensure all gifted and talented students are identified. Identifying gifted and talented students should be a systematic, inclusive, equitable and culturally fair process. Parents should be involved in the process of identification.

Council supports greater transparency measures into the identification of and support for gifted and talented students. Consultation should occur between parents and the school. Every school should have an identified and trained teacher to facilitate this communication. Parents should be encouraged to communicate with the appropriate teacher.

##### b) Diversity of Gifted Education across all Learning Domains

Council supports the use of a wide range of school options for gifted students where appropriate. These include, but are not limited to: gifted athletic programs; gifted programs for students in the performing arts (e.g. music, dance); gifted programs for arts (e.g. photography, painting); gifted leadership programs and gifted programs for academic subjects (e.g. English, History, and Mathematics).

c) Appropriate placement opportunities

Gifted students flourish when provided with learning opportunities in many group situations. These include but are not limited to: the establishment of selection criteria for individual or multiple class programs; the provision for students to move through the curriculum for all or any subject at a more rapid rate than the average age-related student; flexible grouping strategies both within and across schools; open-ended extension activities; and the ability for a student to be enrolled at two or more schools (e.g. Yr 8 Maths at High School and Yr 6 at Primary school for the remainder of the subjects).

d) Differentiated Curriculum and Teaching Strategies

Once identified and placed in the appropriate class or group within a class gifted students need differentiated curriculum and benefit from appropriate teaching strategies to reach their potential. Priority should be given to the use of curriculum and teaching strategies proven in research to support the needs of gifted students and considered best practice.

e) Social and Emotional Characteristics

Gifted children often come with asynchronous behaviours. These may be mistaken for social immaturity. At other times they may lead to traits of perfectionism, hiding their giftedness and emotional intensity. Council recognises the social and emotional environment is as important as the curriculum content in having the student reach their potential.

f) Responsibilities of the Directorate

Council notes that the ability of the Directorate and schools to identify and meet the needs of gifted students is constrained by the availability of appropriately skilled teachers and support staff. The Directorate has an important role to manage its workforce to identify and meet the needs of those students identified as gifted, through adequate staff training and support. The Directorate should increase pre service training for teachers so teachers can properly identify and support gifted and talented students.

The Directorate should develop outcome measures for the identification of and support for gifted and talented students. These measures should address the identification mechanisms and the type and quality of support the Directorate is providing gifted and talented students to reach their potential.

(Adopted 2008, amended 2012, 2016)

## C4. English as an additional language or dialect students

### Reasoning

English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D) students have a right to access and engage with the curriculum in a way which is mindful of their different cultures, experiences and needs.

While EAL/D students have already acquired a language other than English, they enter the ACT education system at a disadvantage in regard to their educational opportunities. English language proficiency is essential for social, personal and academic success not only in the school context but also in regards to participation in the broader community.

Engagement with parents (who may be EAL/D speakers), local communities and organisations is crucial for the sustained educational development of EAL/D students.

### Policy

Council endorses the provision of:

- a) intensive English language instruction conducted in primary and secondary introductory English centres, thereby reducing the stress on schools;
- b) EAL/D support in all ACT schools in the form of specialised staff and specific programs;
- c) whole-school approaches to English language learning;
- d) differentiation in instruction, catering to the direct needs of EAL/D students;
- e) on-going monitoring in order to reflect upon the language learning needs of students and to adjust particular teaching strategies and programs;
- f) strategies to engage parents of EAL/D students and report on student achievement and progress; and
- g) accessible publications and documents from the Directorate.

Council believes that school systems should provide support to schools with parents from a non-English speaking background to enable them to:

- a) provide all school information to such parents in their own language;
- b) provide a qualified interpreter for parent interviews or meetings; and
- c) arrange meetings with such parents at a time, place and in a format culturally acceptable to such parents.

(Adopted 1987, amended 2014, 2016)

## **SECTION D: SCHOOL FUNDING**

### **D1. Funding of public schools**

#### **Reasoning**

A good basic education from infancy onwards is essential for the social, economic and political development of our nation. Council believes that Government (ACT and Federal) has a primary responsibility to fully fund and provide a broad, high quality education until Year 12. This education should incorporate a diversity of programs to meet the interests and needs of all students. Public schooling should be free, that is, without direct cost to the parents.

#### **Policy**

This philosophy (that is, fully-funded public education) should be enshrined in legislation.

Funding systems should be designed to ensure that funds are directed to schools and students on the basis of need. To ensure accountability, all funding agreements and policies should be transparent and made available to the public at large.

Council considers that greater priority should be given to funds for education because of its basic importance.

Council opposes the funding of education or educational services through school voucher schemes. Voucher schemes cannot be shown to be effective in raising educational outcomes and are also likely to have significant adverse impacts, including on social equity, school-community partnerships and the efficient use of public funds.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 2016)

### **D2. Parental contributions**

#### **Reasoning**

Parent participation and contribution to schools are important components in the education system and in many cases schools are dependent on the contributions of parents, financially or otherwise.

Parents have a legal and moral right to be informed of the voluntary nature of parental financial contributions to schools.

Students should not be excluded from school services and benefits because their parents do not make financial contributions to their school nor should students be approached by school staff to get their parents to make contributions.

#### **Policy**

Council encourages parents to contribute in whatever capacity, financially and otherwise, to the work of their school.

Council believes that Government should fund the necessary materials, supplies and equipment for school programs based on a legitimate education rationale.

Parents should not be expected to fund school programs (and their associated materials and resource costs) offered as part of a comprehensive learning experience for all students.

Council also believes that the collection of parental financial contributions must adhere to legal requirements and moral standards. In particular:

- a) schools should be required to acknowledge in communications with parents the voluntary nature of parental financial contributions, both general contributions and those called subject or materials 'fees' and 'levies';
- b) schools and school staff should be prohibited from discrimination against students, by way of denial of benefits or services because their parents do not make financial contributions; and
- c) schools and school staff should be prohibited from approaching students, either individually or collectively, to get them to ask their parents to make financial contributions.

Schools should be required to meet confidentiality requirements in the keeping of records of contributions. Information as to who has, or not, made financial contributions should be strictly confidential and should not be made available to any school staff beyond those required to administer the process. Schools should be required to make public the processes put in place to ensure confidentiality on parental contributions.

Transparent system-wide procedures should be employed by schools to collect parental financial contributions. Schools should be required to use pro-forma communications in the quest for parental contributions

Council supports regular reporting by schools to their communities on the use made of parental financial contributions. School accounting systems should be developed to facilitate public accountability for the use of contributions. The annual reports of school boards should provide a financial report on the amounts collected from different types of contributions (general, subject or materials contributions and fundraising) and a general overview of the uses made of contributions. The annual report of the Directorate should report on the system wide financial contributions received from parents.

Financial donations to government schools should be tax-deductable.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 1990, 1995, 2016)

### **D3. Non-government schools**

#### **Reasoning**

Council recognizes the democratic right of parents to choose non-government schools for their children. The purpose of the involvement of the Commonwealth and ACT Governments in the funding of non-government schools should be to assist in the raising of the resource levels of those schools which are inadequately resourced.

#### **Policy**

All grants to non-government schools should be means-tested, their purpose being to raise the resource level of those schools who are inadequately resourced. The basis for determining whether schools are inadequately resourced should be decided on the level of government school resourcing, as this provides the measure of what the community believes is appropriate to invest in education.

Council believes that, if a government wishes to assist non-government schools, it should attach transparent and publicly available conditions of accountability to the provision of funds. Acceptance of the funds would signify agreement with the conditions and schools would be free to accept or reject the funds. Because of the

special nature and wider responsibilities on government systems, the resource level targets for non-government schools should clearly be less than the standard government school costs.

Governments should establish guarantees and/or safeguards that ensure government money to non-government schools is used to expand their ability to provide basic education or improve the educational standards of the students at these schools.

(Adopted 1992. Amended 1998, 2016)

## **D4. Sustainable school transport**

### **Reasoning**

Students should be provided with a safe and efficient transportation network to get to and from school. Directorate policies and procedures should be based upon active travel principles, encouraging and supporting walking and riding to school.

Cycling and walking are convenient, cheap, low impact, environmentally friendly forms of transport which as a daily physical activity, also have significant health benefits for students. Physical activity has a number of health and social benefits. Students who regularly participate in physical activity can experience increased mental and physical wellbeing and improvements educational attainment.

Walking and cycling are not a viable option for all students. Alternatively, students trying to reduce their carbon footprint can increase their use of public transport (including buses and light rail) or carpooling.

Increasing sustainable transport options may involve not only provision of suitable infrastructure and services but also education of the school community. Health and lifestyle benefits are as important as environmental and cost benefits.

### **Policy**

Council supports, and seeks to promote, initiatives and programs that help students travel to school in the most sustainable, low-carbon modes available to them.

Council acknowledges that sustainable transport options need to become an integral part of city design and students' transport choices. Government and schools are responsible in education school communities and making access to these sustainable options easier for all students.

As a first priority, transport resources should be allocated to in-area students living in suburbs where the neighbourhood primary school and/or local secondary school has been closed and to other in-area students where travel distance, safety, previous government commitments or other special circumstances warrant. As a second priority, requirements for out-of-area bus transport should be provided for government and non-government schools alike on the merits of each individual case.

Fares for the use by students of all school transport services should be the same as for school children using normal public services.

Primary school children should not be removed from the bus until their required destination. In the event of misbehaviour, all children should be warned and the school informed.

Council strongly supports the continued operation of the Schools Transport Liaison Committee and emphasises the importance of active involvement of a representative from the planning area of the Directorate with responsibility for government schools, as well as representation from Council.

Council encourages and supports sustainable school transport. In particular, Council supports such services and programs as:

- (a) active travel programs, such as walk-to-school programs;
- (b) transport audits at schools to provide baseline data for schools to develop action plans to increase active travel at their school by staff and students;
- (c) lockable and supervised enclosure for bikes on all school premises;
- (d) off-road bicycle pathways and on-road bicycle lanes, both to be maintained to the same safety standards as roads used by cars;
- (e) increasing the use of buses by making them more accessible through appropriate timetabling and online access to information about bus routes and timetables; and
- (f) establishing a fee structure that encourages use of public transport.

(Amended 1993, 2009, 2012, 2016)

## D5. Commercial sponsorship

### Reasoning

Council reaffirms that the Government has the responsibility for the full funding of our public school system.

Council also recognises that schools have benefited in many ways from:

- a) resources and services provided by industry and service clubs;
- b) teacher/industry exchange programs;
- c) assistance with work experience programs for students; and
- d) the provision of awards for students and schools.

### Policy

Council opposes any form of sponsorship which would undermine the principles of public education. This includes sponsorship which:

- a) accentuates inequities between schools;
- b) involves the use of school buildings and grounds for advertising purposes;
- c) involves the use of the school or its students to promote a particular product;
- d) requires the school or its students to be actively involved in marketing commercial products;
- e) requires acceptance by schools of resources which may have the effect of compromising the school's policies, programs or strategies;
- f) links schools with commercial enterprises in a way which would undermine the principles of public education;
- g) would cause tensions in a community because of the school's identification with a particular commercial interest; and
- h) promotes inappropriate forms of competition between students or schools.

(Adopted 1992. Amended 2016)

## SECTION E: SCHOOL RESOURCING AND STAFFING

### E1. Quality of staff and the status of teachers

#### Reasoning

The quality of schooling is closely related to the quality of teachers. The selection of potential teachers, the training, further development and professional attitudes and standing of teachers, are vital factors in the quality of school education. Among the qualities to be looked for in teachers are enthusiasm, imagination, tolerance, sensitivity and perceptiveness.

A further fundamental quality required is that the teachers recognise that they are employed in a participatory system and that the school is an integral part of the community and to be prepared to promote the active involvement of parents and the community in appropriate ways in schooling.

The status of the teaching profession should reflect the high priority the community places on education.

#### Policy

Council supports the accreditation of initial teacher education qualifications as a strategy for establishing consistent minimum professional standards of graduating teachers. For a qualification to receive accreditation, it should include training on parent/community participation as a compulsory element.

Council recommends that trainee teachers be prepared for community involvement through:

- a) understanding the advantages for children gained through community involvement in schools;
- b) developing interview and conflict management skills suited to the individual parent-teacher situation; and
- c) acquiring skills to facilitate the integration of community resources into classroom situations.

Council encourages school-based and other methods which allow teacher performance to be assessed so that procedures can be developed to recognise and reward good performance whilst also recognising and addressing poor performance.

Council recognises the need for teachers to upgrade and update their qualifications through in-service courses, involvement in professional associations and through the more formal courses offered at tertiary institutions. Council recommends that in-service education should provide experienced ACT teachers with skills necessary to permit:

- a) the development of participatory decision-making programs for school and community;
- b) the effective use of negotiation, conflict settlement and mediation skills to formulate clear decisions;
- c) the framing of goals and objectives which will allow the development of detailed curricula;
- d) best-practice pedagogical approaches.

Council endorses the view that advanced qualifications (for example, postgraduate qualifications) should be prescribed and required before teachers can obtain senior positions.

Council recognises both the importance of continuity and the benefits of rotation among school staff. Council believes that balancing the two is a complex matter but that specific term and renewable tenure is desirable.

Council recognises the need to improve the public image of the teaching profession and recognises the benefits this would have on both teachers and students.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 1989, 1998, 2007, 2016)

## **E2. Selection of school principals**

### **Reasoning**

Council affirms the principle of community participation and therefore supports School Board representation on panels established for the selection and appointment of School Principals.

The Principal must be able to develop a sense of purpose and co-operation amongst the members of the school community and must be able to respond effectively to the diversity of needs and situations that arise in any school.

School Board participation in the selection process provides the school community with a voice in choosing the person most suited to the particular school. This involvement, furthermore, encourages greater commitment and support from teachers, parents and students to the person appointed and to the school as a whole. Involvement, however, should not be mandatory.

Participation in the selection of Principals would not include involvement in the dismissal of Principals at the school level.

### **Policy**

- a) Council supports the full participation of the School Board in the process of selection and appointing School Principals, through representation on all panels set up for this purpose;
- b) The representative of the School Board in this process should be an elected member of the Board;
- c) The duty statement and selection criteria should be developed by the School Board; and
- d) Any related appeals committee should include a nominee of the ACT P&C Council as a full member.

(Adopted 1987, amended 2016)

## **E3. Industrial action**

### **Policy**

Council will from time to time support the ACT Education Union, Public Service Sector Union and/or other unions representing workers in the education system in matters relating to conditions and other issues. Council would prefer to discuss with the relevant union(s), the establishment of procedures which avoid the need for direct industrial action. Council believes that any form of industrial action which affects the education of children should be used only as a last resort.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1993, 2016)

## **E4. Principal autonomy on teacher staffing**

### **Reasoning**

There needs to be a sensible balance between school autonomy and system-wide approaches in the management of the ACT government school system. On some issues, it is more sensible and beneficial to have a system-wide approach, and on others, to provide schools and principals with more autonomy. The balance between autonomy and system-wide approaches is not best served by giving principals autonomy in staffing and whole of school budgeting matters.

## **Policy**

System-wide staffing allows the Directorate to match teachers' skills and experience with school needs, within a context that allows some teacher and school choice. System-wide staffing is also likely to identify and better respond to teacher shortages in particular areas or disciplines.

This provides a mechanism for ensuring the equitable distribution of staff so that every child, irrespective of school, background or location, can be taught by appropriately qualified and skilled teachers.

Council does not support the concept of giving school principals total autonomy to "hire and fire" teachers.

There should be a governance and accountability structure established to oversee school autonomy matters at the Directorate level. This structure should include representatives from Council. If school autonomy is to be introduced there must be training for school board members especially parent & community representatives.

Council is concerned that school autonomy in finance and staffing is being promoted without firm evidence to show that it would increase the educational outcomes of students, and without an analysis of how it will impact on social equity. The Directorate need to undertake analysis of school autonomy overseas and throughout Australia in locations where autonomy has been in a place for a number of years to ensure there is a tangible increase in student outcomes.

The Directorate needs to make it clear how the education funding formula is determined for schools with autonomy. There should be methods in place to allow schools to apply for additional funds if they believe they are underfunded due to special local circumstances. Safeguards need to be built into the funding system to ensure sufficient support for high needs students is given.

(Adopted 2007, amended 2012, 2016)

## **E5. Performance pay for teachers**

### **Reasoning**

A performance pay scheme is where teachers receive additional pay based on some measurement of their performance. The research evidence is inconclusive about the benefits, disadvantages and wider impact of performance-based pay for teachers. Performance pay schemes are different from merit reward schemes, which provide rewards for teachers for activities such as improving their skills, mentoring or providing professional development to others.

### **Policy**

Council opposes performance pay schemes for teachers based on student test results, the subjective assessments of peers, principals, parents and students and/or community opinion.

Such schemes do not take into account many important factors including student ability, socio-economic factors and longer-term, non-academic outcomes for students. They do not take into account the fact that teaching is a team activity.

As an alternative to performance pay for teachers, Council supports the development of a broad-ranging strategy to encourage people to enter and stay in the teaching profession, including a better pay structure for teachers that addresses the pay plateau for those who have stayed in the profession for 8 years or more.

Any system of rewards needs to be research-based and negotiated with, and accepted by, the teaching profession.

(Adopted 2007, amended 2016)

## SECTION F: SCHOOL AND SYSTEM-WIDE MANAGEMENT

### F1. The school board

#### Reasoning

School boards perform an important governance function within the ACT school system. An effective school board, composed of members from various stakeholder groups, performs crucial strategic work that is to the benefit of the school and its community.

#### Policy

Council considers that the School Board should provide a central focus for decision-making by the school community. The governance functions undertaken by the school board should include:

- a) to develop long-term strategic plans for the school;
- b) to develop and maintain education policies for the school;
- c) to develop and maintain curriculum for the school;
- d) to assess, from time to time, the needs of the school in relation to the provision of buildings and facilities, equipment, funds and teachers and other staff and make recommendations to the Directorate with respect to the meeting of those needs;
- e) to determine the purposes for which funds and other resources made available for the school are to be used;
- f) to develop and maintain budgetary policies for the school and approve the school budget;
- g) to develop and encourage positive relationships between the school and community organisations;
- h) to solicit parent views on any matters to come before the Board;
- i) to report back regularly to the school and community;
- j) to make recommendations to the Directorate on matters relating to the school; and
- k) to ensure that the school is meeting the educational needs of the local community.

Council believes that every effort should be made to encourage closer bonds between the School Board and the Parents and Citizens Association and the local community in each school.

Council believes that the composition of the school board should include:

- a) a representative of the Director-General;
- b) representatives elected by the staff of the school;
- c) representatives elected by the parents and citizens association; and
- d) representatives elected by the students at the school (at High Schools and Colleges).

Council believes that parent members should:

- a) be elected as representatives by the parents and citizens of the school community;
- b) report to the Board matters of concern to the Parents and Citizens Association;
- c) report back to the Parents and Citizens Association the results of all Board meetings at all P&C and Executive meetings; and
- d) be replaced on the school board by another duly elected representative of the parents and citizens if they do not attend more than two consecutive board meetings without apology or do not report back to the P&C Associations as required in points (2) and (3).

Council believes that the Principal (Executive Officer of the School Board) should not be involved in the selection of parent and teacher members of the School Board.

Council recommends that School Boards:

- a) acknowledge their meetings are open;
- b) encourage members of the school community to attend as observers;
- c) report effectively to their electorates after every meeting in the ways determined within each school community but particularly through P&C Association meetings and school newsletters; and
- d) comply with their legislative obligation to provide parents with copies of the Annual Report and the annual budget.

(Adopted 1987, amended 2016)

## **F2. School autonomy**

### **Reasoning**

Decisions relating to the appropriate location of powers and tasks within public schooling must strengthen and not undermine the essential characteristics of public education systems.

The location of powers and responsibility for administrative tasks within a public education system should be determined on the basis of whether the capacity of the system to fulfil its obligations to all students, both individually and collectively, is maintained and enhanced by the exercise of such powers and responsibilities.

### **Policy**

Council supports the collaborative development of system-wide education principles and curriculum policies and broad general guidelines and to ensure that quality provision is maintained throughout the system.

Council supports the system recruitment and payment of staff, system provision and maintenance of physical infrastructure including buildings, grounds and equipment and system provision of discretionary funds.

Council supports school autonomy to the extent that:

- a) it enhances participation of parents and teachers in the setting, implementation and on-going evaluation of the educational goals and policies of the school within system policies and guidelines and in enhancing the quality of education which is provided. In particular, Council supports effective parent participation in the development of school-based curricula and all other education policies and in the selection and assessment of principals and teachers; and
- b) it reinforces, rather than undermines, the role of the principal in providing educational leadership within the open, democratic and participatory processes of schools.

The extension of school autonomy to other functions not covered by the preceding principles is contingent on the following conditions:

- a) that system policies, broad general guidelines, the provision of facilities and guaranteed quality schooling experiences for all students exist;
- b) neither parent participation in the development, implementation and evaluation of the educational goals and programs of the school nor the role of principals as education leaders in schools is undermined;
- c) the provision of school autonomy does not lead to certain services and educational offerings being phased out (including music, teacher-librarians, art etc.);
- d) substantial savings being achieved by school autonomy are sufficient both at the school and system levels;
- e) savings achieved by school autonomy are redirected towards enhancing educational programs at the school and system level;

- f) funds provided to schools to meet any additional responsibilities and are indexed against real increases in the costs of providing these services; and
- g) the allocation of funds for school autonomy recognises that schools have different funding requirements which relate to their physical infrastructure and the special needs of their students and the communities they serve and that funding should not be determined solely on an average per capita basis.

(Adopted 1991, amended 2016)

## **F3. Student records**

### **Reasoning**

All students have the right to an education; all students also have the right to an education within a setting which is free from tension, aggravations or violence or the threat of these. At times, the provision of both these rights to all students may be challenging.

Common law recognises the health and safety of students and staff does not come second to the right to an education, but must be protected at the same time as providing a high quality education system.

Schools have a high duty of care to ensure the continued provision of safety to all its students and staff and therefore they must ensure that reasonable care is taken to protect students and teachers from avoidable harm.

Consequently, schools are required to ensure that reasonable actions are taken to promote the safety and protection of its staff and students from dangers of which the school is or ought to be aware.

When schools enrol new students, the availability of the student's previous school records allows the school to develop appropriate support plans that assist the commencing student in their new school environment. It also assists schools in establishing the most appropriate safe guards for cases where a new student has a history of violent or other serious disruptive behaviours.

Schools can use the information from previous school records to ensure that there is the required support for the staff and students at the school and to assist in developing targeted behaviour management plans.

### **Policy**

Council sees schools and the Directorate as ultimately responsible for ensuring that there are safe-guards in place to protect the staff and students at a school from an avoidably dangerous or difficult situation.

Council urges the Directorate to develop policies, procedures and auditing requirements that reflect the legislative and regulatory laws that ensure schools obtain and manage student data correctly.

Whenever student history data is sought, the Directorate and schools should state clearly, in the information available with the enrolment form, the reason the data is being collected and how it will be stored and used.

Council supports the Directorate's policy that the primary carer/s of the student has a right to access and challenge all records held by a school, including student history data. The carer/s of the student must be made aware of their right to challenge all or part of the student's record.

Schools should only use student history data as needed:

- a) for general student administration;
- b) for State, Territory and National reporting purposes;

- c) to facilitate communication between the primary carer/s of the student and the student;
- d) to develop appropriate safe-guards that promote the safety of students and staff at a school;
- e) to facilitate the provision of welfare to students; and
- f) for purposes required by law.

Schools must handle access to such information sensitively and adhere to the Privacy Act and relevant legislation.

All decisions and actions in collecting, maintaining and accessing student records should be made according to the best interests of the students, staff, the school community and the school as a whole in keeping with the Privacy Act and relevant legislation.

(Adopted 2011, amended 2016)

## **F4. Class sizes**

### **Reasoning**

For most children, the years spent at primary school establish their learning habits and provide them with the tools to benefit from subsequent educational opportunities. It is essential therefore, that primary schools be accorded a high status in the community and be given the resources and personnel adequate for the task.

### **Policy**

Council calls upon the Directorate to resource schools so that class sizes do not exceed 18 in Kindergarten, and 21 in Years 1-3, and 25 in other classes.

Resources should be allocated to schools that do not comply with this goal so that a more appropriate ratio can be achieved.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1998, 2004, 2016)

## **F5. Data mining in schools**

### **Reasoning**

The collection and storage of online users' data and browsing patterns (data mining) is becoming commonplace across the internet. The collected data can be used to target specific advertising to the user who is often unaware of what is going on.

As the learning environment increasingly becomes digital based the possibility of data mining of students increases. The use of Third Party Web Services (TPWS) poses a challenge between accessing new and innovative learning environments and protecting school students from the negative effects of data mining and targeted advertising.

## **Policy**

The Directorate and schools should not use, in the classroom, or encourage the use of TPWS that include non-education based advertisements or undertake data mining activities.

Where student data is to be collected parents should be fully informed of what data is collected and the likely uses of that data. The consent of parents to the use of such programs should be required prior to student's use of these programs. Where a significant number of parents do not provide this consent the program should not be used in the classroom. Students who do not use these programs should not be disadvantaged in their learning experience.

The Directorate should develop appropriate web based programs to reduce the reliance on TPWS. Such programs should protect the students' data. The Directorate should ensure parents are adequately informed as to the risks and consequences of data mining.

(Adopted 2013, amended 2016)

## **F6. Single sex classes**

### **Reasoning**

Council believes that government school education should aim to provide for the maximum development of every student, and this might involve targeted strategies to address the learning needs of different groups of students. However, these strategies need to be evidence-based, student-centred and adapted to needs and circumstances of the ACT.

In some cases single sex classes can lead to improvements in learning and achievement, social and emotional outcomes and/or behaviour. These outcomes need to be assessed against the social benefits of co-educational learning.

However, quality of teaching is the more critical influence on students' learning achievements than the gender composition of schools or classrooms. Skilled teachers adapt their teaching strategies to the needs of their students, whether they be a mixed class or a single sex class.

Single sex classes in co-educational schools are not always a success and that many preconditions and factors are required for single sex classes to succeed - it is not just a matter of splitting classes along gender lines.

Successful single sex classes are often those that are set up as a response to the needs of a particular group of students, rather than because of a policy approach that has been implemented from the top down or on an across-the-board basis. Students and parents need to have a choice about whether to move to a single sex class.

### **Policy**

Council is cautious about any introduction of single sex classes in ACT government schools.

Any decision to introduce single sex classes should be based on successful outcomes from a properly designed trial within the ACT government system.

Any trial or full implementation of single sex classes must meet certain conditions, as follows:

- a) there must be prior consultation with the parents, students and teachers at the schools involved;

- b) parents and students must have a choice of moving to a single sex class or remaining in a co-ed class. For this reason, the schools involved would need to have larger year levels to ensure that parents and students have a genuine choice;
- c) the factors identified in the research as being critical for success must be met
  - i. time for extensive research, informed decision-making and planning;
  - ii. genuine support within the school community, including the school leadership;
  - iii. students, teachers and parents having a choice as to whether they would like to participate;
  - iv. time and support for the professional development of teachers;
  - v. skilled and enthusiastic teachers who are able to reflect on, plan and modify their teaching strategies to take account of the different ways that boys and girls learn in the different subjects;
  - vi. proper resourcing – a decision to establish single sex classes is not without resource consequences, and these depend on factors such as the balance of boys and girls in a particular year, and the availability and skills of the teachers.

Single sex classes should be seen as just one of a range of strategies for closing gender differences in subjects such as maths, science and English.

Any support by Council for a trial of single sex classes within co-educational schools does not imply support for single sex government schools. Establishing single sex schools is a different option to single sex classes, and must be considered separately.

(Adopted 2009, amended 2016)

## **F7. Sharing resources between government and non-government schools**

### **Reasoning**

In principle, Council is not opposed to the sharing of resources between government and non-government schools.

Sharing resources should contribute to the cost effective delivery of schooling and must not result in the diversion of funds from the government to the non-government sector.

### **Policy**

Council supports the establishment of a process for the planning, examination and assessment of proposals for the sharing of physical, teaching, curriculum and financial resources between government and non-government schools and systems as a means of increasing diversity, choice and quality in education programs in government schools and making more efficient use of physical facilities and financial resources.

Plans for the sharing of resources between government and non-government schools should be developed according to the following criteria:

- a) the need to ensure fair and reasonable access for all to neighbouring government schools;
- b) the proper and fair allocation of capital and recurrent costs of shared facilities and resources between all participating systems and schools;
- c) land ownership to be vested in the ACT Government with guaranteed long-term tenancy for non-government schools;
- d) each participating school to be a separate, autonomous entity with all teachers supporting the ethos and values of their respective schools;
- e) the development and implementation of a management system, including a memorandum of understanding incorporating annual review, to ensure and facilitate full co-operation and sharing in

order to increase educational diversity and choice and to supplement and enrich courses within each participating school, gaining economies through efficient and fair distribution, allocation and use of resources, whilst protecting the differences between schools;

- f) no decision made concerning sharing and co-operation to detract from each school's right to determine its own management, staffing, structure, facilities, philosophy and curriculum except by consultation and unanimous agreement by all participating parties; differences of philosophy, teaching practice and curriculum as applied in shared facilities to be subject to negotiation and management of co-operative arrangements without detracting from fundamental principles and goals of government schooling;
- g) the planning process to include representatives of principals, teachers and parents from each system and, in the case of secondary schools, representatives of students also;
- h) proposals for the sharing of resources between government and non-government schools to be made public and subject to community discussion prior to any implementation; and
- i) each proposal for the sharing of resources on a specific site to include a plan for evaluation of the sharing arrangements against the above criteria.

(Adopted 1994, amended 2016)

## **F8. School evaluation**

### **Reasoning**

Each school should undertake regular self-evaluation and planning to ensure that policies and programs are appropriate in meeting the needs of students and the responsibilities given to schools.

Whole school self-evaluation is a particularly valuable method for improving:

- a) the understanding of what happens in schools;
- b) the communication within the school community;
- c) decision-making and curriculum planning;
- d) teaching and learning in schools;
- e) the achievement of the school's and the system's educational goals; and
- f) the school's strategic plans for the future.

### **Policy**

Council believes that self-evaluation should be a systematic process which involves parents, students and teachers in identifying priorities, defining important questions; collecting and interpreting information; communicating with others who have an interest in schools and planning action for improvement. School communities should be assisted in their evaluation activities by a wide range of external people selected for their particular knowledge of, or expertise in areas being evaluated or in techniques for self-evaluation.

(Adopted 1989, amended 1990, 1993, 2016)

## **SECTION G: SCHOOL PLANNING, FACILITIES AND SUSTAINABILITY**

### **G1. New school planning and design**

#### **Reasoning**

The built environment of a school has a direct effect on the well-being of students and staff, regulating mood, behaviour and movements. As important civic structures, schools should be thought of as both educational and community facilities, designed to avoid obsolescence.

#### **Policy**

The design of school facilities should be based on best-practice architectural and sociological methods, being both aesthetically pleasing and functional.

Council believes that future design of buildings should provide for flexible use of space for educational purposes as well as for community use. A parent/community room to cater for the needs of such groups should be included. Any design, however, should not be to the detriment of the building's primary purpose i.e. the education of children.

Council also considers that schools should be planned according to optimum numbers which are determined on the basis of educational criteria rather than peak enrolments. Peak enrolments should be accommodated by:

- a) the use of high quality, re-locatable buildings; and
- b) buildings especially designed for multiple community uses in due course.

Planning of a new school and the subsequent construction of that school should be achieved prior to a significant number of people being located in the suburb.

Council endorses the practice of establishing temporary working groups, which include Council representation, to advise on the planning and design of individual new schools. Council considers that the establishment of such working groups should be a formal and permanent component of the process of building all new public schools in the ACT.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 1989, 1993, 2016)

### **G2. New non-government schools**

#### **Reasoning**

No child attending a government school should be educationally disadvantaged as a result of registration of new non-government schools or as a result of government funding for new places in non-government schools.

#### **Policy**

Council believes that no new non-government school be established before an impact study is carried out. This should include a consideration of:

- a) the impact of the proposed school on the enrolment, staffing and curriculum of neighbouring government and non-government schools;
- b) the proposed school's enrolment;
- c) the resources to be contributed by parents through fees, donations and other sources in relation to those contributed by government;
- d) future growth and cost implications ie. new pupil places in existing schools;

- e) any costs associated with the proposed school likely to be incurred against government eg. buses;
- f) whether the school philosophies, policies and educational aims are compatible with broad Australian objectives and that of the local community, and
- g) the dislocation of schooling through loss of status, amalgamation or threatened closure.

Council should oppose any expansion in the non-government sector without an impact study.

Council should oppose any expansion in the non-government sector which destabilises the government sector.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 2016)

## **G3. School capacity, specialist facilities and outdoor spaces**

### **Reasoning**

Increasing and high student numbers at some public schools has resulted in specialist purpose-built facilities being converted into classrooms and not replaced. Council has been assured that increases in school capacity would not result in the loss of specialist facilities.

Council considers specialist facilities are an important aspect of excellent school environments and quality education. Specialist facilities are expensive to build and are often supported by P&C donations. Removal or conversion of these specialist facilities to classrooms is a misappropriation of the intended use of the space.

Similarly, schools experiencing significant increases in student enrolments may utilise demountable classrooms to manage temporary increases in demand. However, demountable classrooms are not suitable for longer-term high enrolments due to the possible:

- reduction in playgrounds and outdoor spaces
- decrease in access to wet areas (including water for drinking) and student toilets
- decrease in access and use of other school facilities, such as halls, sporting facilities, playgrounds and outdoor spaces.

Significant increases in student enrolments and or decreases in playgrounds or outdoor spaces may result in students unable to utilise these spaces for the intended purposes.

### **Policy**

Each ACT public school should include and facilitate the development of purpose built, specialist facilities (including but not limited to libraries, kitchens, science labs, language, music and art rooms). These purpose-built specialist facilities must be excluded from the Education Directorate's capacity calculations. Specialist-purpose built facilities must not be converted to classroom space, unless adequate alternatives are put in place.

Irrespective of the number of students attending a school, all students must have adequate access to school facilities. Schools with increases in student capacity must ensure that all students have regular access to school facilities (including specialist school facilities). These schools must also ensure that students have safe access to utilise playground / outdoor spaces for their intended purpose(s). Risk assessments of high student enrolment and outdoor spaces should require the development and implementation of risk mitigation strategies to ensure student accessibility and safety.

Schools with permanent increases in student capacity require the development of permanent buildings and infrastructure to meet demand. Schools operating at or near capacity should also be given priority for the development and implementation of traffic management plans.

*Policy Document*

Demountable classrooms should only be used to accommodate short-term increases in student enrolments, such as while new buildings or schools are constructed. Applications to install demountable classrooms must include an assessment of capacity duration, location of demountable, and access to school facilities, student toilets, water, playgrounds and outdoor spaces.

(Adopted 2018)

## **G4. Closure/amalgamation of schools**

### **Reasoning**

Decisions on the future operation of a school, whether continuing as a small school, amalgamating or closing, should be made at the system level by means of consultations between the Directorate, Council, the education union and relevant regional meetings of School Boards as well as the relevant School Board and P&C Association.

### **Policy**

Council believes that school communities, through their School Boards and P&Cs, must play a major role in decisions concerning closure and amalgamation or shared occupancy of their school. This consultative process should commence as early as possible.

Council considers the closure/amalgamation of small schools is a system issue which should be based on educational, economic and community preference grounds.

Council also believes that the relevant authorities must take great care with the wording and timing of any public statements which in relation to any possible school closure/amalgamation can lead to unintended consequences e.g. parents sending children to other schools for fear of closure.

When schools are closed, the school community should be involved in decisions regarding the distribution of all assets.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 1989, 2016)

## **G5. The school library**

### **Reasoning**

The school library/resource centre is an important resource in the learning experience of students; it is where students in all years of schooling develop their inquiry, thinking and imagination skills. School library/resource centre positively assist in the growth of a student's learning capacity.

Libraries/resource centres contribute to developing an informed society and school libraries/ resource centres provide students with the skills to acquire, organise, use and analyse knowledge. The school library/resource centre is therefore vital within the teaching and learning environment of the school community.

The teacher librarian is an integral partner in a school's teaching and learning team and actively contributes to a school's learning objectives. A teacher librarian can develop partnerships in learning between the teaching staff, students and the school community by educating and through managing information.

Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between schools with a well-utilised library/resource centre and student's literacy achievement.

*Policy Document*

Funding for school libraries/resource centres is important regardless of the type of school or level of schooling.

In addition, school libraries are experiencing the added pressure of updating their technology and increasing their reliance on digital resources. The need for school libraries/resource centres to stay abreast of these trends while, at the same time, maintaining existing resources places a constant strain on the library budget or allocated funding.

## **Policy**

Council believes every school should have access to a qualified teacher librarian appropriate to the needs of the school and the students.

In addition, Council supports initiatives that encourage the use of the school library/resource centre by teachers, parents and students. In particular, Council supports such facilities and programs that:

- a) provide an online database of resources which is accessible and available for use by all schools;
- b) promote reading by students in all years of schooling;
- c) ensure school libraries/ resource centres stay afloat of innovations in technology and resourcing; and
- d) promote the good use of the school library/resource centre in schools that fully utilises their ability to offer access to valuable knowledge and resources;

Council believes that the Directorate should:

- a) ensure the school library/resource centre is appropriately funded to meet the needs of the students, school and school staff;
- b) liaise with schools and library/resource centre organisations to support the provision of services of the school library/resource centre and ensure school libraries/resource centres are well-equipped to meet the changing technological needs;
- c) acknowledge the benefit of having a well-resourced and utilised school library/resource centre at all levels of schooling;
- d) ensure the distribution of funds across schools to provide each school access to library/resource centre resources and staff that is appropriate to the type of school and the needs of the students and school community;
- e) ensure all schools have access to a qualified teacher librarian, *inter alia*, by:
  - i. reviewing and, where necessary, formulating policies and processes that encourage an adequate supply of qualified teacher librarians to meet the needs of all government schools within the ACT;
  - ii. engaging the support of tertiary teaching institutions to promote teacher librarian courses to ensure that qualified staff continue to replenish the education system as older qualified staff retire or move on.
- f) Council also supports incentives and awareness strategies that promote the importance of digital and information literacy for learning.

(Adopted 2011, amended 2016)

## **G6. Community use of facilities**

### **Reasoning**

School facilities are a significant community resource and should be planned as such. Current buildings should be evaluated in consultation with the School Board with a view to undertaking modifications to allow flexible use of space consistent with a variety of educational programs and community use.

*Policy Document*

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

## **Policy**

Council supports community use of school facilities with charges for such being kept to a minimum. All income from community use of buildings should be retained in the educational budget to offset building upkeep.

Council believes that the opportunity created by declining enrolments should be used to provide space to foster community liaison/interaction.

Council also believes that, within broad guidelines, School Boards should determine individual school policy towards community use of school facilities.

(Adopted 1987, amended 2016)

## **G7. Out of school hours care**

### **Reasoning**

Out of school hours care is a necessary adjunct to school attendance for many children and, as such, should be available to all children of primary school age who need it. Care of good quality and at a low cost is desirable for all school age children and the provision of such child care is an important community service.

### **Policy**

Council believes that it is appropriate that the Directorate allows out of school hours care programs to operate on its premises free of charge provided that the following conditions are met:

- a) that the programs are run on a non-profit basis;
- b) that the programs are open to all children of primary school age;
- c) that the organisations responsible for the program have a policy of fee relief for parents who are on pensions/benefits or very low incomes;
- d) that the programs have a policy of participatory management and that they be run as a sub-committee of the P&C, or by a local community-based organisation; further, that all P&Cs sponsoring such programs be incorporated;
- e) that the programs give priority to children with the school community with special need for such care;
- f) that there be appropriate public liability and property insurance and workers' compensation;
- g) that proper records are kept and that audited statements of accounts are produced annually; and
- h) that the programs comply with the appropriate ACT and federal regulations regarding child care provision.

(Adopted 1987, amended 2016)

## **G8. Canteens and the provision of food**

### **Reasoning**

Canteens have an important place in ACT government schools. When fully effective they serve several purposes by providing:

- a) healthy choices of food for students that has been prepared and stored at appropriate temperatures;
- b) an inconspicuous way of schools providing lunches to disadvantaged students; and

- c) areas which function as adjoining social meeting places for students (especially in High Schools and Colleges).

Appropriate daily intake of the right food allows for healthy growth of students, improved learning while at school and improved classroom behaviour in students. The operation of canteens must comply with Directorate policies on healthy eating and appropriate training of staff, and with occupational health and safety regulations.

## **Policy**

Council believes that for a P&C to operate a canteen successfully most, if not all, of the following must be in place:

- a) a P&C member who has small business knowledge and is in a position to volunteer considerable hours to oversee the canteen;
- b) a P&C member who has knowledge of awards (sometimes other legislation) and appropriate time to volunteer to undertake these tasks;
- c) a P&C member prepared to be canteen treasurer, which requires accounting qualifications and/or substantial experience with accounting software;
- d) a highly skilled, appropriately trained and innovative person is employed as the canteen manager; and
- e) for high schools and colleges, the school isn't too close to competing retail food outlets; and
- f) volunteers are available, if required, to assist in the canteen.

Council notes that many P&Cs are unable to satisfy these requirements in most years, leading to canteens failing, or running at a loss, with the P&C forced to conduct fundraisers to subsidize the canteen rather than to support the school and their children's education.

Accordingly, Council believes that:

- a) the ongoing viability of canteens in the ACT is of great importance;
- b) the Directorate has responsibility for ensuring that canteens are run effectively by:
  - i. using, when required, centralised, regional and school-based systems for financial management and employment;
  - ii. taking responsibility for implementing its healthy eating and canteen staff training policies through an accreditation program;
- c) operational management of a canteen may remain with a P&C when the school community, through the Board and P&C, decides that this will be the most effective arrangement for that school;
- d) the Directorate should not use profitable canteens to subsidise unprofitable canteens, as this would remove the incentive from schools with successful canteens to continue to run their canteens at a profit;
- e) profits from a canteen should be retained for the benefit of the school;
- f) the Directorate should remove the management of outsourced canteens, notably their contracts and their menu requirements, from the responsibility of School Principals, and do the work involved centrally or regionally;
- g) all canteens, whether run by the school or outsourced, should whenever possible embrace sustainability principles concerning fresh food, food produced on school grounds, low food miles and minimum packaging; and
- h) arrangements for 'emergency' provision of food and drink in schools where no canteen operates should be the responsibility of the School Principal.

(Adopted 2009, amended 2012, 2016)

## **G9. Vandalism in schools**

### **Reasoning**

The school environment is important to the well-being of the students and staff and is an essential part of the community. Schools can be an easy target for vandals as they are often easily accessible. Schools should be protected from vandalism and the unlawful breaking and entering into school buildings.

School vandalism can pose a serious problem for schools and communities and can have significant economic as well as social costs for students, teachers and the school community.

### **Policy**

Council believes that a tailored school approach be adopted that is based on the individual needs of different schools and considers the extent of damage occurring, the frequency of incidents and the wishes of the school and parents. Adequate consultation with the school community should be an essential part of any plan to counter vandalism in schools.

Council supports the provision of adequate fencing around schools to prevent vandalism and school break-ins.

Council believes that:

- a) fencing and security alarm systems could be used as the first step in deterring vandalism;
- b) all schools should be provided with adequate external lighting and security alarm systems and school management are to ensure these systems are used appropriately;
- c) CCTV cameras may be considered on an individual school by school basis once all other appropriate prevention methods have been considered;
- d) the cost of implementing CCTV cameras in schools means that it should be used only as a secondary measure to deter vandalism and the unlawful entry of persons onto school property.

(Adopted 2010, amended 2016)

## **G10. Environment, buildings and facilities in sustainable schools**

### **Reasoning**

Council acknowledges the work already undertaken by governments in smart building design in some schools to help reduce the amount of energy and resources they use. When new schools are built they must meet sustainable design principles. Existing schools may need more support to achieve sustainable outcomes. Older schools should be retro-fitted to help produce savings in energy and water, reducing school waste and increasing recycling. This will also reduce future costs to governments, particularly given that energy, water and waste removal costs will likely rise at an increasing rate compared to other costs associated with operating schools.

Governments should facilitate the use of local species to green and increase biodiversity around schools. This would assist in reducing water consumption and increase habitats for local fauna and flora species.

### **Policy**

In addressing issues associated with the physical infrastructure of schools and their surroundings, school activities, as well as the ongoing management of schools, Council encourages the consideration of alternative, more sustainable strategies and solutions.

Schools should establish baseline data for their individual energy and water consumption and their waste generation. This data would assist schools and students to monitor their energy, water and resources

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consumption. It would also lower demand and reduce the environmental footprint of schools and provides an excellent educational opportunity for students and the community.

#### *Biodiversity*

In the area of biodiversity and landscaping; Council urges the Directorate to:

- a) support maintaining and enhancing the integrity and biodiversity of the natural environment around schools by extensive use of local plant species;
- b) plant windbreaks to reduce the impact of hot and cold winds on the consumption of water and energy;
- c) assist in establishment of school gardens and vegetable plots; and
- d) assist schools in using the sustainable projects already within schools as resources for teaching across the curriculum.

#### *Waste management*

In the area of waste management, including recycling; Council urges the Directorate to:

- a) assist schools in using a three-bin system, consisting of waste, recyclables and compost, noting that compostable and recyclable material, within the collected waste, forms an unnecessary part of our landfill;
- b) help schools buy locally produced or 'green' products with reduced packaging and transport; and
- c) assist schools to reduce, reuse, repair and recycle resources to reduce consumption.

#### *Water usage*

In the area of water usage; Council urges the Directorate to:

- a) facilitate the installation of water tanks at all schools to enable schools to use rainwater for ovals, landscaping and vegetable gardens within and around the school; and
- b) increase the use of grey water in schools where viable and safe.

#### *Energy Usage*

In the area of energy usage; Council urges the Directorate to:

- a) use school roof tops for power generation to improve the multiple and concurrent use of land; and
- b) encourage schools to collect baseline data from energy audits. Funds should be provided to schools to be used for installing electronic metering with real-time information about energy usage as an educative tool.

(Adopted 2009, amended 2011, 2012, 2016, 2024)

## SECTION H: CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

### H1. Curriculum formation

#### Reasoning

Council strongly supports the development and uptake of the Australian curriculum to provide consistent guidelines for curriculum development and delivery across all states and territories.

This supports greater mobility of students and transferability of secondary school qualifications for post-secondary educational opportunities.

However, a fundamental principle of Council is the one upon which the ACT government school system was built - participation of parents and the sharing of decision-making power. As such, Council recognises the educational benefits for the individual student of the development of school-based curriculum components, and the positive role that parents and the community can play in providing input or expertise into curriculum development. Council is committed to the principle that parental involvement in the school system necessarily includes participation in the formulation, structure, design and implementation of curriculum components as well as other activities

#### Policy

Council acknowledges the important role of teachers in assisting parents to understand the methods used in the teaching of various courses, including reasons for the choice of particular methods, and encourages open discussion between parents and schools regarding educational approaches.

Council also calls upon each school to provide all parents with copies of curriculum documents and to make the availability of such documents known to parents.

Council believes that State/Territory education authorities should assist students who change school by co-operating, in conjunction with bodies representing the students, parents and teachers in government schools, in the development of:

- a) comprehensive information for issue to parents when enrolling a child informing them of the school's policies and how the school functions; and
- b) student information portfolios negotiated by students, parents and teachers, for use by parents and students which would contain examples of work selected to show the scope and level of attainment of the students in curriculum content in every subject area; and other material that would aid the receiving school to understand the student's school experience and educational development.

(Adopted 2016)

### H2. Homework

#### Reasoning

Homework is any schoolwork or activity that students are expected to complete or partially complete outside of school hours.

Research on the impacts of homework has found that it can have both positive and negative effects.

Positive effects can include immediate improvements in learning, improved longer-term academic achievement and non-academic benefits (such as self-discipline and time management).

Negative effects can include student fatigue with learning and reduced student access to leisure, family and community activities. Homework provides an opportunity for parents to be involved in student learning, but the benefits can be lost if homework becomes a source of stress for students and families, and does not create a positive experience.

The potential positive and negative effects need to be considered when developing homework policies.

## **Policy**

Council believes there is value in having a system-wide policy on homework that sets out some general principles and guidelines to help schools to establish their individual policies on homework, for example, school homework policies should:

- a) be based on clear benefits to students;
- b) recognise and build upon the shared responsibility of parents and schools to educate their children;
- c) recognise that homework has different purposes and impacts depending on the year and developmental level of students;
- d) be based on the most up-to-date research and ideas; and
- e) recognise the characteristics of contemporary family life.

Homework should:

- a) be appropriately set and designed, depending on the year and developmental level of students;
- b) be flexible to make it achievable for students and parents;
- c) involve a consolidation or rehearsal of skills learnt at school, rather than the learning of new skills;
- d) not be used as a strategy to try and “catch-up” students who have not had a chance to learn, did not understand, or did not complete, work undertaken in class; and
- e) not rely upon resources that are not available to all children.

Individual schools should set their homework policy in close consultation with parents through the School Board. These policies should reflect the system-wide policy on homework or, when no system-wide policy is in place, the general principles outlined above. This includes provision for school communities to decide to have a “no homework” policy, or a policy of “no homework for certain year levels”. Schools should ensure that prospective parents are aware of the school’s homework policy, as it may be a factor in parent decision-making about school choice.

Council supports more Australian-based research on the effectiveness of homework, and best practice homework policies and models.

(Adopted 2007, amended 2016)

## **H3. Digital technologies education**

### **Reasoning**

The use of digital technologies has become an integral part of our society. Computer-controlled information technology has an increasing influence on all aspects of our lives. Emerging technologies such as generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), have the potential to change the way in which education and assessments are delivered and will result in new areas of study.

Digital literacy is a general capability in version 9 of the Australian Curriculum. Students are expected to develop skills in areas such as online safety, researching and investigating using digital resources, creating digital content and managing and protecting content from privacy and cyber security perspectives.

Furthermore, Digital Technologies is included as its own learning area in the Australian Curriculum which allows students to develop deeper understanding of digital systems and data representation.

Digital technology is advancing at an ever-increasing rate. Our schools need to be ready to embrace new technologies that enhance student learning, whilst protecting student safety and academic integrity.

New technologies provide opportunities for new approaches to learning. For example, generative AI has the potential to offer differentiated learning which could provide benefits for all students but especially neurodiverse, disadvantaged and gifted students. It could be used to repeat material at the pace of the student or extend learning if skills are already mastered. Generative AI also has great potential as a tool that students can use for research, editing or refining their own work.

## **Policy**

Council believes that digital literacy is the right of every student within the public school system and supports the integration of digital literacy across the Australian Curriculum. Council believes that all students should have equitable access to digital devices for learning.

Students should be provided with the skills to manage in the online environment including practising digital safety and wellbeing, understanding data limitations and biases, being able to identify disinformation and using digital tools to plan, create, communicate and collaborate. As digital technologies continue to develop at an increasing rate, Council believes that it is important for students to learn about emerging technologies, such as generative AI.

Council believes that teachers need access to continuing digital literacy education to stay up to date with advances in technology. Council believes that schools need to adapt to ensure that teaching and assessment methods are reflective of the digital environment.

Council believes that parents need to be supported to understand new and emerging technologies. Council would like to see schools engage with parents especially when there are significant implications of new technology use in education, such as generative AI, and work with them so they can understand how they can best support their students' use of this technology.

(Adopted 1987, amended 2016, 2023)

## **H4. Sustainability education**

### **Reasoning**

Students should develop a comprehensive knowledge of the effects of human impact upon the environment as well as the ability to live in a sustainable way in their daily lives by the time they leave school. Schools are ideal places to practice and teach environmental awareness and demonstrate practices in sustainability. Students face a world increasingly impacted by climate change and need skills and knowledge to adapt to a changed environment. Schools can be leaders within their community by demonstrating how society can have a more sustainable and low carbon future. Being a sustainable school involves action based learning, supported by the development and implementation of sustainable practices that are incorporated within the school curriculum and management plan.

## **Policy**

Council believes that a sustainable mindset should be embedded across the whole curriculum as well as the total school environment. Council believes that every student should have regular opportunities for structured environmental experiences outside the classroom.

Council calls on the ACT government to enhance and help the wider implementation of a sustainable curriculum and programs, by supporting the execution of the national curriculum in embedding sustainability across all subject areas (not just science and geography) and through all years of schooling.

Council supports:

- a) Students having support from the school to access vocational and green industry VET courses in addition to curriculum choices already offered to students;
- b) Providing vocational information to counsellors, teachers and students on green skilling opportunities and green jobs available today and into the future;
- c) Providing specific funding directed to professional development for teachers in the area of environmental sustainability and sustainability as it appears in the curriculum; and
- d) providing specific funding for a dedicated position in the Directorate to promote:
  - i) sustainability in schools through curriculum development;
  - ii) sustainable infrastructure; and
  - iii) the continued support of various sustainability programs.

(Adopted 1995, amended 2009, 2011, 2012, 2016, 2024)

## **H5. Multicultural education**

### **Reasoning**

All students have a right to an education free from racism and prejudice.

### **Policy**

Council believes that Multicultural Education is a philosophical perspective that should pervade the whole curriculum. All students should have the opportunity to consider the diversity of cultures that make up the Australian nation.

Council believes that schools should have the facilities to ensure that all students have equal access to all resources and equal chances to maximise their individual potential. For example, by increased use of EAL/D teachers, bilingual input where appropriate, multi-lingual information and bicultural teaching aides. This would allow migrant families to be more actively involved.

Parent bodies associated with ACT schools should actively support school multicultural awareness and anti-racism activities.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 1998, 2016)

## **H6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures Education Policy**

### **Reasoning**

Respect and understanding of Australia's First Nations Peoples' cultures develops an enriched appreciation of Australia's cultural and natural heritage and can lead to reconciliation. This is essential to the maturity of Australia as a nation and is fundamental to the development of an Australian identity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures is a cross-curriculum priority in the Australian Curriculum and must be included in all learning areas. This provides the opportunity for integration across learning areas and enriched learning experiences.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures education allows Australia's First Nations students to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum while also allowing all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of Australia's First Nations cultures.

### **Policy**

Council supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Histories and Cultures as a cross-curriculum education priority in all schools. Council believes it is important for all students to deepen their knowledge and understanding of Australia's First Nations Peoples' histories and cultures to assist in the path to reconciliation.

Council believes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures education must:

- a) recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the First Australians and the traditional custodians of the land;
- b) recognise Australia's First Nations cultures as the oldest, continuous cultures in the world;
- c) protect the integrity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural expressions;
- d) enable all students to engage respectfully;
- e) be incorporated in all learning areas;
- f) recognise and understand that Australia's First Nations People have a special connection to and responsibility to care for Country;
- g) recognise the contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have made to shaping our nation;
- h) explore the significant diversity within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies encompass a diversity of nations across Australia;
- i) include and make a priority the study of Australia's First Nations languages in ACT public schools;
- j) incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of learning into content delivery; and
- k) be positively role-modelled across the school community.

(Adopted 1986, amended 2016, 2022)

## **H7. Language education**

### **Reasoning**

The experience of learning another language from an early age should be available to all children, including the facility to build on early learning throughout schooling. Due consideration should be given to building fluency, cultural understanding of the language and its speakers outside Australia, as well as speakers in the Australian community, and literary, linguistic and professional research interest, depending on ability and motivation of students.

The resources to provide this experience need to be drawn both from within the system through properly trained staff and outside it through community native speakers, cultural maintenance programs, foreign government sponsored programs and through institutions and other associations promoting fluency in and understanding of other language cultures.

Resources from the school's own community such as the existence of native speakers, or particular associations, through exchanges, projects or staff who may have links with other language cultures, should be drawn on and used in school programs.

Language learning should be seen as a natural part of developing literacy on the one hand, and of multicultural education on the other. It should be a bridge between non-English background cultures represented in schools (staff, students and neighbourhood) and educational goals of wider competence in other cultures and accepted cognitive advantages associated with immersion in other languages for learning generally.

This acceptance of other language bases is best done from the earliest school age through sound spoken language learning for which all children have some natural ability. The choice of language for a particular school needs to take account of the need to maximise exposure to the language while at school and consider availability of materials as well as the ability for students who wish to pursue studies of a particular language beyond primary school.

The goals of language learning are multifarious, not all realisable within one school or by one method of teaching but the basic reasons that language is important to education include:

- l) exposure to a second language, its relevance and vitality;
- m) reflecting the close link between language and culture generally;
- n) increasing awareness of other people and cultures;
- o) providing a broad grounding in cultural studies;
- p) enhancing cognitive development;
- q) acceptance of other cultures in the community and appreciation of cultural practice as not foreign or inferior while allowing an opening ultimately to the expression of that culture abroad;
- r) in the case of Aboriginal languages, giving a feeling of pride and identity and curiosity in the nature of the original inhabitants and better understanding of the present Aboriginal population;
- s) allowing the cultural roots of NESB parents to be fully valued and IEC students to be better understood;
- t) stimulating the use of language generally; and
- u) access to an important skill for which young children have a natural capacity, which if properly nurtured, is a stimulus to further education and curiosity.

Council recognises that English continues to be the key to full participation in schooling and in society. Any language policy must be grounded on the need for a sound, fluent and inventive grasp of Australian English as the national language and its proper use both in spoken and written form.

## **Policy**

Council supports the exposure to non-English languages from an early age for all children in school. The form of teaching and the choice of languages should be decided by individual schools with due consideration of regional planning and taking into account the links with other programs.

Council endorses the provision of additional resources from the Directorate for the teaching of languages. This includes the provision of suitably qualified teachers and sufficient funding support. Teacher-pupil contact time should be adequate for a beneficial and positive attitude to the culture and the language.

Council supports rational planning between schools in a region and the maximum use of community resources including the existence of NESB families in the school catchment.

The learning of English for students of NESB or otherwise poor English skills and students with language disabilities, non-verbal and non-visual language users should be planned in conjunction with language programs generally and not marginalised within the system.

Council fully supports the endeavours of the ethnic schools to provide sound culturally based language learning outside hours and in the locality of schools which may complement and may come to directly assist system programs. Council supports the 'inservicing' of ethnic school teachers and the move to allowing accreditation of courses these schools offer eventually for tertiary entrance seeing them as a valuable supplementary resource for system students pursuing language studies through the schools.

Council opposes the marginalisation of non-English cultures in the education system while continuing to acknowledge the central role that English literacy must have in providing a base for full participation in Australian society.

Council supports greater co-operation between ethnic schools, mainstream schools, the public education system and ethnic communities through their representative councils.

(Adopted 1990, amended 2016)

## **H8. Personal development, health and physical education**

### **Reasoning**

A complete education includes an awareness and understanding of issues affecting one's physical and mental health and therefore these issues should be addressed as an integral part of the school curriculum.

### **Policy**

Council supports a health education policy that provides students with a knowledge of the issues affecting their physical and mental well-being with a view to providing the students with the information and, where appropriate, experience necessary to adopt a healthy lifestyle and ensure a high quality of life. Such education should include the following:

- a) human relationships and development including sex education;
- b) fitness and exercise;
- c) diet including dietary disorders and abuses;
- d) stress and mental health;
- e) drug use and abuse, including alcohol and tobacco;
- f) sexually transmitted disease awareness and prevention; and
- g) occupational health.

Council believes that health education should be developed and carried out with the active participation of the P&C Associations with a view to ensuring a common understanding of the health issues facing youth in the modern society.

(Adopted 1988, amended 2016)

## **H9. Relationships and sex education policy**

### **Reasoning**

Broad, continuous and consistent relationships and sex education in schools is required to reduce student vulnerability and promote self-management throughout a student's life.

Council considers that providing students with better information will support students to make better choices. Research demonstrates that evidenced-based comprehensive relationships and sex education decreases sexual violence, protects against negative sexual experiences and promotes healthy and respectful relationships.

## **Policy**

Council supports the adoption of an evidenced-based framework to provide broad, continuous and consistent relationships and sex education in schools.

Council strongly believes that broad, continuous and consistent relationships and sex education must:

- a) meet the needs of all students including students with special education needs and disabilities;
- b) engage and collaborate with parents and carers early;
- c) explicitly teach protective behaviours including body autonomy and consent from preschool;
- d) be delivered by teachers and educators with specialist training;
- e) be accurate and age appropriate;
- f) be positively role-modelled in everyday school life;
- g) be embedded in whole of school behaviour expectations for school communities;
- h) be supported by every teacher and educator in schools (this is expected to require broadscale training);
- i) be integrated into school life like other curriculum areas and not taught only in specific years;
- j) be evaluated against accountability mechanisms.

(Adopted 2020)

## **H10. Sport and outdoor education**

### **Reasoning**

The encouragement of physical activity and sport both in support of health education and as part of the schools' role in social development is an integral part of education.

### **Policy**

Council supports the idea that physical activities should be encouraged in both competitive and non-competitive environments to meet the needs of students and encourage enjoyment of physical activity irrespective of sex or ability. Where possible, students should be given the opportunity to acquire skills in a wide range of sporting, recreational and other physical activities.

Council supports the view that those students who wish to participate in competitive sport should be encouraged and given the opportunity where possible. Equally, care must be taken to encourage those who wish to learn and participate in non-competitive physical activity.

Council upholds the view that the employment of specialist PE staff is the appropriate means of co-ordinating a physical activity and sports program.

Council supports the better conduct of interschool sport amongst interested schools.

Schools should give parents regular reports on their child's level of co-ordination, progress and competence and physical fitness.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 2016)

## **H11. Religious education**

### **Reasoning**

A balanced education should contain at an appropriate level a critical examination of all aspects of human endeavour, recognising that religion is an important part of many cultures and so an appropriate area for study in schools.

Council accepts the study of religious thought and practice in a historical and critical manner within the scope of the school curriculum but it does not recognise denominational religious instruction as part of the curriculum.

### **Policy**

Council believes that:

- a) religious education should not be the subject of legislative provision in the Education Act;
- b) rather than the segregated "scripture period" approach, encouragement and support should be given to the introduction of courses in comparative religion at both primary and secondary level, reflecting the multicultural nature of Australian society;
- c) if parents and/or students formally and specifically request denominational religious instruction, this should take place as an extracurricular activity.

Council considers as appropriate the development of optional school-based religious education programs which adequately reflect the desires of some sections of the parent community for their children's moral and religious education.

(Adopted 1987 amended 1989, 1990, 2016)

## **H12. Assessment and evaluation of student progress**

### **Reasoning**

Evaluation of student progress is of fundamental importance to students, parents, teachers and the wider community.

### **Policy**

Assessment for the purpose of evaluating individual student progress should:

- a) be for the educational development of the individual student;
- b) give the student information about the effectiveness of their learning in relation to negotiated objectives;
- c) provide teachers with information about their students;
- d) lead to improvements in teaching and learning;
- e) provide clear, complete and useful information to parents about their children's learning;
- f) be restricted in circulation to teachers, principals, students and parents and available to school counsellors as appropriate; and
- g) take place primarily at the local school level.

Council believes that criteria and procedures used in assessing student achievement in individual topics should be adapted to and closely related to the nature and aims of that topic.

Council emphasises that the requirements of tertiary institutions and of employers should not control the processes of testing and reporting of student achievement.

(Adopted 1989, amended 1990, 1993, 2009, 2016)

## **H13. Reporting on student progress**

### **Reasoning**

Parents are entitled to a statement of the objectives of school curricula and programs and expected levels of student achievement for different years. These objectives and expectations will recognise that students in different stages of development will exhibit a range of abilities and levels of achievement.

Parents have a right to be informed accurately and in non-technical language about how students are performing in relation to those objectives and expectations and the extent to which student performances are consistent in general terms with the achievements of students of a similar age.

The reporting process on student achievement provides an opportunity for teachers, parents and students to plan for and encourage the educational and social development of students. Regular communication between school and home is a fundamental feature of an effective school and helps build a climate of mutual support for parent and teacher discussion and planning.

The input of the students themselves to the reporting process should increase with student age and is of particular importance at the secondary college level.

### **Policy**

All schools should have and should implement a policy of informing parents and students of curriculum objectives and expectations and reporting student progress and achievement in relation to these objectives and expectations.

School policy on reporting of student progress should be developed in collaboration with teachers and parents, and, where appropriate, students.

Reporting on student progress should incorporate a mix of formal and informal modes of communication and each school should arrive at a balance of methods that best suits the requirements of its school community. Methods of reporting to parents could include:

- a) student work being sent home on a regular basis with teacher comments;
- b) communication between home and school on a regular basis by such means as home/school diaries;
- c) curriculum information sessions and written curriculum information about objectives, topics to be covered and skills to be developed;
- d) written reports; and
- e) scheduled formal interviews and additional interviews as required.

Written reports and formal interview opportunities should be a feature of schools' reporting processes at least once per semester.

Reporting on student progress should:

- a) provide an accurate assessment of student achievement, nominating strengths and weaknesses;
- b) focus positively on progress achieved;
- c) nominate any areas that need attention and indicate what needs to be done by teachers, parents and/or students to overcome difficulties and to improve performance; and
- d) inform parents about completion of work requirements, acquisition of knowledge and skills, attitudes, values and social development.

Schools should have procedures designed to facilitate early identification of problems and to inform parents promptly so as to enable parents to work with teachers to improve students' learning.

Schools should maintain a cumulative record of achievement of students for each phase of schooling. It could include:

- a) written reports on student progress;
- b) samples of student work;
- c) copies of awards and certificates; and
- d) evidence of extra-curricula interests and achievements.

School reporting processes should:

- a) use plain language;
- b) use languages other than English where necessary;
- c) include explanation of symbols or grading codes;
- d) include explanation of assessment methods; and
- e) be supported by records of observations and assessments.

(Adopted 1993, amended 2016)

## **H14. Standardised testing**

### **Reasoning**

Council accepts standardised national/territory testing programs only when they are developed with the prime aim of providing useful information about the educational development of the individual child.

Council believes that national/territory testing programs constructed and administered by authorities outside the education system need to operate in a way that accommodates the principle of school-based curriculum development and evaluation.

Standardised national assessment of student progress in literacy and numeracy and other key areas (such as civics and citizenship, information technology and science) in selected years can planning by teachers to improve student outcomes and provides an additional source of reporting to parents on student progress.

Standardised national assessment data can also help governments to identify schools within their jurisdiction that are in need of additional assistance to improve their student outcomes. These positive uses of national assessment data do not require the public reporting of the student outcomes of individual schools.

The public reporting of the outcomes of individual schools and public comparisons of school outcomes should be managed in a way that does not:

- a) provide misleading and inaccurate information to parents about school performance;
- b) punish, humiliate and demoralize students, teachers and schools;
- c) lead to greater inequities in schooling and social segregation of schools;
- d) bias teaching priorities; and

- e) promote competition about school image and diverts efforts and resources from effective school improvement.

## Policy

Outcomes in literacy and numeracy and other key areas should be used in selected years of schooling to:

- a) to provide an additional source of reporting to parents on student strengths and weaknesses against the cohort averages;
- b) to assist schools in planning their curriculum and their teaching and learning practices;
- c) to provide information to the community and the Government on learning outcomes across the school system; and
- d) to establish a sound basis for the allocation of resources to meet identified learning needs of students.

Standardised assessments should be conducted by valid and reliable instruments which reflect the breadth and depth of the relevant curriculum frameworks and which do not create incentives to a narrowing of classroom learning experiences and knowledge. The tests should be designed to provide diagnostic information to teachers, parents and students.

The assessment should be undertaken for a maximum of four selective years of schooling (not including assessments in Years 11 and 12).

Where testing is taken in an online environment, Council seeks a commitment from the Government that schools will be adequately resourced to ensure no student are disadvantaged.

The right of parents not to have their children participate in the assessments should be respected.

The results for individual students should be reported to parents in confidence and in an easily understandable and constructive way. Parents should be provided with information about the statistical reliability of the results.

Schools should be provided with the results of their own students together with the system averages for the age cohorts. School results should not be published but should be compiled for system purposes. They should be protected from public disclosure by statute.

Summary information on the aggregate results of a school and the system average for the relevant year cohort should be made available to the School Board. The information should be protected from public disclosure by statute.

Council opposes the public reporting of the results of individual schools and public comparisons of these results. Where governments make information on the performance of individual schools publicly available, then they should then put in place legislative protections to ensure that this information cannot be used in a way that could do harm to individual students or school communities. Protections would cover, for example, use of the information by the media, companies or schools themselves to create league tables or 'rank and rate' websites for media sensationalism or for commercial gain.

System results should be aggregated and published to provide information on the following:

- a) average outcomes;
- b) outcomes for targeted groups of at-risk students;
- c) the proportion of students within different ranges of the system average; and
- d) the proportion of schools whose average results fall within different ranges of the system average.

Council supports the collection of quantitative and qualitative information (such as socio-economic characteristics, reading recovery survey results, school profiles, school resources, indicators of student wellbeing and non-schooling factors) which contribute to the analysis of trends in outcomes assessments.

Council seeks a commitment from the Government that adequate resources will be devoted to addressing problems revealed by the results from the assessments.

(Adopted 1996, amended 2000, 2009, 2016)

## **H15. Literacy and numeracy education**

### **Reasoning**

Literacy and numeracy are foundational skills and proficiency in these areas is an important aspect of a child's education. Without proficient skills in these areas, students' participation in the broader curriculum and life generally can be negatively impacted.

Parents rightly expect that when they send their children to school, they will obtain the literacy and numeracy skills needed to be successful learners and to participate in society. Parents have an important role to play in literacy and numeracy education, especially in the early years.

Schools should have high expectations for all students and provide the supports required for them to reach their potential. It is important that students in need of extra support are identified early so they can receive the help they need. Conversely students that need extension or enrichment should be provided with it.

### **Policy**

Council believes that there should be a consistent approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy, in ACT public schools, that allows for some flexibility to respond to the individual needs of the students. The approach should be based on the current evidence and efficacy of the approach, supported by independent research.

Schools should be resourced to provide the support required for all students to achieve in literacy and numeracy, including through multi-tiered systems of support, even if this means bringing in specialist teachers/implementing a specialist program. Schools should not refer students to after school private tutoring to get the support they need to learn to read. Schools should be resourced to deliver any programs needed to support students with learning difficulties. Children with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia should receive the extra targeted support they need at their local school.

Schools should have high expectations for all students and not teach to a minimum standard. This includes ensuring all students are supported to reach their potential and that extension is provided to gifted and talented students.

There should be a system-wide approach to data collection and assessment which includes processes to identify where students are at and whether they are meeting benchmarks and a systematic approach to addressing any identified needs.

Schools should actively engage with parents on the approach to literacy and numeracy education used in the classroom, how their child is progressing and what they can do to support their student at home. Policy is drawn up from our engagement and consultations with members.

(Adopted 2024)

## **SECTION I: HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

### **I1. Student welfare and mental health**

#### **Reasoning**

Mental wellbeing and resilience is important for students to have good educational outcomes. The various challenges associated with 'growing up' creates a demand for welfare support in every school. Schools should work alongside parents in providing a safe and supportive environment so that students are able to achieve their full potential.

Student welfare encompasses all that a school community does to meet the personal, social and learning needs of students to enhance their well-being and ensure their safety within the school environment

Good student welfare policies are effective in creating a safe schooling environment in which all students can develop into lifelong learners.

#### **Policy**

Council believes that schooling plays an important role in the social and mental development of students. Schools should provide adequate support and resources to all students, in the form of counsellors, psychologists mental health nurses and welfare workers. It is imperative that these staff members are professionals who are appropriately qualified for the unique demands of working in schools.

Mental wellbeing is dependent on a number of factors. Through working with parents and support services, schools are able to provide targeted and effective support to those students who need it.

Council supports the provision of mental health outreach initiatives in schools which provide information and support to both students and teachers. Council also supports programs that promote mental wellbeing and build resilience. Actions should be taken to remove the stigma around mental health issues.

In addition to traditional first aid programs, teachers and staff members should be given the opportunity to attend mental health first aid courses, dealing with crisis management and awareness.

Individual schools (with the involvement of parents and students) should be able to determine their own student welfare policies within the Directorate's guidelines.

Student welfare policies should reflect the culture, values, policy, procedures and educational programs that develop and promote the intellectual, physical, social, emotional wellbeing of each student.

Student welfare policies should promote:

- a) effective learning and teaching;
- b) a positive school learning environment and management principles; and
- c) school collaboration and participation with the community.

Features of each school's student welfare policy may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- a) code of behaviour;
- b) school rules;
- c) equity;
- d) peer mediation;
- e) student health;
- f) student management policy;
- g) extra-curricular programs;
- h) assessment and early intervention of potential problems;

- i) pastoral care;
- j) student leadership;
- k) peer support program;
- l) recognition of diversity within the school community;
- m) promotion of a collaborative learning environment between teachers, schools and parents; and
- n) educational tools to support students.

Student welfare policies will be unique to every school and will reflect the personal, social and learning needs of the students at that school.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1998, 2011, 2016)

## **12. Student management**

### **Reasoning**

All students have the right to an education within a setting which is free from tension, aggravations or violence or the threat of these.

School students and staff that are subjected to negative behaviour need to have the appropriate support from the school.

A student management policy encompasses expectation of student behaviour and behaviour management measures. The student management policy of each school should endeavour to reduce the incidence of negative student behaviour as well as promote positive student behaviour.

### **Policy**

P&C Associations, school boards, parents and students should be included in discussions in developing appropriate student management policies.

Council encourages the development of student management policies within each school which cover, but is not limited to, aspects such as bullying (cyber and/or physical), harassment, prohibition of dangerous goods (eg. Fireworks, weapons) and disruptive behaviour in class. These should be in addition to supporting students who have been exposed to negative behaviour and adopting measures that seek to reduce the occurrence of negative and/or disruptive student behaviour.

Student management policies should include the following:

- a) identification of what is appropriate and what is inappropriate behaviour from students while at school;
- b) preventative measures for controlling negative student behaviour;
- c) measures to reinforce good behaviour;
- d) clear outline of what is the appropriate action in the event of a behaviour misconduct;
- e) clear outline of what are the limits of principals and teachers in dealing with incidences of negative behaviour and when police support may be necessary.;
- f) identification of staff members that should be approached in the event of behaviour misconduct;
- g) appropriate behaviour and expectations of staff; and
- h) methods of ensuring positive encouragement, providing counselling and promotion of self-esteem of students.

Student management policies should be effective in promoting positive student behaviour and reducing the occurrence of negative incidences.

Council opposes any moves to reintroduce corporal punishment.

Council supports the Directorate's commitment in providing advice to ACT government schools on student management policy. Pre-service and professional development courses in behavioural management measures should be offered to staff.

Council requests that the Directorate ensures schools are able to develop and implement effective student management policies.

The School Board should regularly review the school's student management policy to ensure it remains adequate and is effective in preventing and managing negative and/or disruptive student behaviour. The school board should ensure parents are aware of the school's student management policies.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1988, 1990, 2010, 2016)

## **13. Cyber safety**

### **Reasoning**

The task of educating students in online safety needs to be approached collaboratively to assist parents and schools in protecting students from the potential dangers of online use.

The internet is an integral tool for students to have access to while at school. The internet serves several purposes by providing students:

- a) access to important resources and information that may otherwise be unavailable;
- b) different and enhanced learning opportunities; and
- c) knowledge of and use of new technology.

Schools are also increasingly integrating the use of the internet into the school curriculum. While there are many benefits for students accessing the internet, being online can also potentially expose students to harmful risks. These risks can include:

- a) cyber-bullying and cyber-stalking;
- b) talking to strangers whose true identity is unknown;
- c) exposure to illegal and inappropriate content;
- d) identity theft; and
- e) breaches of privacy;

Students are going online at a very young age and are using the internet intuitively. Teaching students about the appropriate use of the internet can help safeguard students from these potential threats.

### **Policy**

Council believes that often the best filter to reduce incidence of harm online is education and believes that increasing online safety for students is best approached by:

- a) creating strong collaborative partnerships between parents, schools and the government that educate students and parents about safe online behaviour and use;
- b) educating students from an early age on how to be a safe and informed internet user so that they can carry these skills later in life;
- c) the internet, together with age appropriate cyber safety, should be taught in schools and collaborated with the curriculum from the first years of schooling;
- d) the promotion of a suitably trained person at school, for example a teacher, counsellor or older student, who students are aware of and are encouraged to turn to if in need; and
- e) effective promotion by the government and schools of the resources available to parents to educate their child about safe online behaviour.

The directorate should ensure schools and parents can effectively educate students about online risks by providing the following:

- a) effective advertising directed towards parents and students to help curb the incidence of cyber-bullying and harm to students online,
- b) easy to understand user guides on sites that are popular among students, as well as other important tips and advice about safe sites and use of a variety of internet sites that are popular among students to assist parents with making informed decisions about sites and content that they are not familiar with,
- c) resources once a year for briefings to parents on Cyber-Safety, and
- d) an annual information/update session, funded by the government, provided for parents and conducted in schools by trained experts. These sessions will provide parents with key points and helpful hints on new technology advancements and how to use new technology appropriately and safely.

In addition:

- a) better working relationships should be developed between schools and parents by encouraging and assisting schools to offer events such as P&C information evenings on cyber-safety;
- b) schools should appoint a teacher who is made known to parents and can best assist if there are questions or concerns from parents about cyber-safety and that these measures should be seen as part of the Directorate's student safety programs;
- c) schools should increase awareness for both parents and students of alternative social networking sites that protect students. Promotion at schools can increase the number of students using these sites and provide a safer online social networking environment for students; and
- d) Importantly, schools need to treat acts of cyber-bullying as seriously as other forms of bullying.

(Adopted 2010, amended 2016)

## **14. Managing repetitive strain injury in schools**

### **Reasoning**

The use and transport of computers and devices has been associated with repetitive strain injury (RSI) overuse injuries in students.

It is critical that risks from the use and transport of computers and devices are mitigated to prevent RSI and overuse injuries in students.

### **Policy**

Council believes that EDU and schools must implement policy and best practice procedures to prevent and management of RSI and overuse injuries, including:

- a) training for teachers to prevent RSI and overuse injuries in the classroom.
- b) direct teaching of preventative strategies for students for use and transport of computers and devices (touch typing, eye exercises, etc).
- c) designing facilities to prevent RSI and overuse injury (variable height desks and chairs).
- d) ordering equipment to reduce potential RSI and overuse injury.
- e) structuring lesson plans for the prevention of RSI and overuse injury.
- f) increase awareness of RSI and overuse injuries.

(Adopted 2017)

## **15. Road and transport safety**

### **Reasoning**

Children need special protection from the hazards of road traffic on their way to and from school. Hazards can be further minimised by thoughtful planning in the placement of schools and pedestrian, motor vehicle and bike access and that, in such planning, pedestrian traffic be physically separate from vehicular traffic. Additionally, students travelling on public transport should be able to travel safely.

### **Policy**

Council believes that, in the location and design and in the amalgamation of schools, road safety aspects must be given a high priority. Policing of school zones should be more stringently carried out to make motorists more aware of their obligation to observe speed restrictions. Schools should be encouraged to teach children to adopt safe behaviour in regard to road safety.

Council urges all primary schools to provide regular bicycle education courses for students aged 9 and over. Council supports the compulsory wearing of bicycle helmets.

Buses and other forms of public transport should be fitted with the latest safety equipment. Signs and flashing lights should be on every bus that transports school students.

(Adopted 1987, amended 1989, 1990, 1993, 2016)

## **16. Sun safety**

### **Reasoning**

The best protection against skin cancer for children is provided by trees, physical shelters, hats, sunscreen and clothing.

### **Policy**

Council believes in a system-wide policy on sun safety which includes the following:

- a) curriculum-based programs on sun safety and protection;
- b) strategies that encourage the use of sun protection when outdoors;
- c) the provision of shade in the school grounds by building shelters and planting trees;
- d) providing information to parents about skin protection through school newsletters, P&C meetings etc; and
- e) encouraging parents to provide and apply their own sunscreen to their children before the start of the school day.

Council supports the implementation of a Directorate system-wide policy on sun safety and a regular review of this policy in-line with expert advice. Council calls upon the Directorate and individual schools to actively enforce the policy in all schools.

Additional funding should be directed to plant trees and build outdoor shelters to provide shade in playgrounds. Council requests the Directorate allow for adequate shade facilities in the planning of new schools.

(Adopted 1990, amended 2014, 2016)

## **17. The sale and consumption of liquor in schools**

### **Reasoning**

Young people should be protected from experiencing inappropriate behaviour resulting from the use of alcohol and other drugs. Such experiences can be formative in a young person's own perception of these potentially harmful drugs. Parents are important role models to their children and the actions of parents must be in the best interest of those most vulnerable.

Council recognises that school P&Cs rely on fundraising activities to generate much needed funds for the school and that it is not uncommon for P&C fundraising activities to involve the purchase and or consumption of alcohol by parents.

Alcohol is a drug that is associated with negative health side effects. Studies show that there are significant social consequences associated with the abuse of alcohol and there is a serious issue of underage drinking in Australia.

The Australian National Council on Drugs does not support the use, sale or promotion of alcohol products in school fundraising activities.

### **Policy**

Council believes the best weapon parents and schools have in protecting young people from the negative effects of alcohol is by teaching students about safe practices. Council considers parents and schools as responsible in protecting young people from harm. The behaviour of P&C members and attendees at P&C events should set a good example to students through their own actions.

Decisions about the use and consumption of alcohol during P&C fundraising events should be made in consultation with the school community, have the approval of the school board and follow Directorate procedures and regulations.

For events where alcohol is to be sold or served, P&Cs must comply with relevant liquor licensing and permit laws and regulations.

Schools and P&Cs have the responsibility to manage the use of alcohol in fundraising events. Schools and P&Cs can help to better protect young people by:

- (a) not having students present at functions where there will be alcohol consumption;
- (b) ensuring alcohol is not brought onto the school campus when there are students present;
- (c) not using students to pass on messages to parents that promote alcohol products or event information that advertise their use; and by
- (d) ensuring students are not responsible in the processing of sales involving alcohol.

Council notes the Directorate's policy that prior to the selling and/or consumption of alcohol P&Cs must seek written approval from the school principal.

(Adopted 2011, amended 2016)

## **18. Mobile Phones (and other smart devices) in Schools**

### **Reasoning**

With increasing mobile phone and other smart device (such as smart watches) use among students it is important to be clear on what constitutes acceptable use during school hours. A clear approach to mobile phone use is beneficial for students, parents and school staff so that everyone is aware of expectations.

In the ACT each public school sets their own policy on mobile phone use. Council notes that there are arguments for and against mobile phone use in schools. Some parents feel that mobile phones are necessary from a safety perspective, such as when travelling to or from school on public transport and some parents like the prospect of immediate communication with their child. Other parents believe that mobile phones are a distraction from learning, an easy way to cyberbully in schools and have a negative effect on social interactions during break times.

### **Policy**

Council supports students in ACT public primary schools not having access to mobile phones or other smart devices (such as smart watches) during the school day, subject to appropriate exemptions.

Council supports a consistent ACT wide approach to mobile phone use in public high schools. Having a consistent approach would ensure that all students are subject to the same requirements around mobile phone use and that individual school mobile phone policies don't become a point of difference between schools. Schools also wouldn't have to consult and develop individual policies on this potentially divisive issue.

Council supports a consistent ACT wide approach to mobile phone use in public colleges. Council would like to see an approach adopted for colleges that reflects the greater level of independence and responsibility expected of college students.

Council supports access to mobile phones or smart devices for any student that requires it for medical reasons, the implementation of reasonable adjustments or educational purposes with the permission of the teacher.

This policy is drawn up from our engagement and consultations with members.

(Adopted 2023).