

ACT Council of P&C Associations Inc.

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P&C COUNCIL: INPUT INTO 2010-11 ACT BUDGET

Dear Minister,

On behalf of P&C Council, I am writing to provide a submission as part of the ACT Budget process for 2010-11.

Education should remain a priority of the ACT government, given its contribution to social and economic outcomes for the ACT community. There are strong economic arguments for a well-resourced and high quality education system that assists all students to reach their full potential.

Council would like to emphasise the following general points:

- Council argues that the public education sector has made a significant contribution to savings through the *Towards 2020* process. Savings from school closures and amalgamations has saved the ACT government \$34 million (*Budget 2006-2007 Fact Sheet F14: Education*).
- A major reason given by the ACT government for closing and amalgamating schools was the significant loss of students to the private sector (*Budget 2006-2007 Fact Sheet F14: Education*). However, Council argues that a further reduction in the education budget makes it even harder for public schools to compete with non-government schools, thus running the risk of causing more student migration from public to private schools.
- Council is concerned that a reduction in the education budget will further burden school principals and teachers. This could see the public system lose more qualified staff to the private sector. It is crucial that the ACT public education sector provide the same remuneration as the non-government sector.
- Council is concerned that ACT government schools are currently operating in a restrictive fiscal environment. Without increased funding, improvements in overall education outcomes for the ACT will not continue.

- Council is concerned that if the education budget is reduced even further, programs and services such as text book availability, curriculum options in high schools and colleges, access to external specialists, IT programs and grounds maintenance and upkeep may all be reduced.
- Research shows that investment in education brings long-term benefits to the economy and to individuals. Some of these benefits are outlined in the recently released Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report *Education at a Glance 2009* (OECD, 2009). To maximise these benefits and to promote social equity, it is important that all students are assisted to reach their maximum potential.
- Council believes that it is timely for the ACT Government to increase the education budget when the Federal government is providing significant funding to states and territories to improve overall education outcomes.
- As Council noted in its submission on 'The educational achievement gap in the ACT' (the inquiry currently being conducted by the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Youth Affairs),

If the ACT is to continue to compete nationally and internationally then our public education system must be well funded. Council would like to acknowledge that while the ACT scores, as outlined in the 2009 OECD Report, are still higher than the overall Australian scores, the differences have noticeably decreased at the top (90th and 95th) and the bottom (5th and 10th), while staying similar in the middle. This suggests that support for the students at both extremes is better in other states than in the ACT.

Concentrating on the ACT results it can be seen that from 2003 to 2006 there was a substantial decline in performance at all percentiles except the two lowest. Even at the two lowest percentiles the improvement was not significant, leaving the 2006 levels well below the 200 levels.

Results from these national and international comparisons can be highly variable... However, there are enough instances to raise concerns about the quality of education provided to the vast majority of students in the ACT.

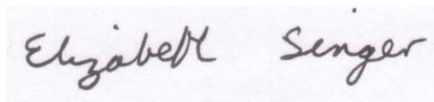
Specific issues Council would like raise:

- Council is concerned that education at the Year 11 & 12 level is currently unavailable for students with moderate needs enrolled in special schools such as the Woden School. Council argues that parents who have chosen to send their children to special schools that cater for their moderate needs should be offered a Year 11 & 12 program in a special school setting. Council believes that the ideal option would be to extend the Woden School to cater for Years 11 & 12.

- Council would like to see funding for further development of programs to engage and encourage parents to assist and participate in their child's education. Research indicates that family involvement in schools increases student achievement. The benefits of parent and family involvement include higher test scores and grades, better attendance, high rates of homework completion, more positive attitudes and behaviour, high graduation rates and greater enrolment in higher education (California P-16 Council, 2008).
- Council would like to see demountables well maintained, air conditioned and aesthetically pleasing so that they look like they are part of the school setting.
- Council sees the need for the ACT Government to continue to fund programs that help reduce the carbon and ecological footprints of ACT schools. Council supports continued funding of programs that teach environmental awareness as well as allow schools to practice sustainable principles within their communities. Council acknowledges the commitment outlined in the 2007-2008 Budget for sustainability initiatives at 10 secondary schools.

I would be more than happy to meet with you to discuss our submission in more detail. I can be contacted on 6230 1660 or 0420 302 017.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Singer". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Elizabeth Singer
President

28 September 2009