

Telopea Park School Parents & Citizens Association Web Site

The Telopea Park School Web site was first designed and published back in 2002 at: <http://telopeapnc.netspeed.com.au>. It became a great tool for enabling parents to share information and memories of past events.

Some of the early material that visitors could find on the site was the P&C Association Constitution, useful information about bilingual schooling, and photos of the new school uniform design.

That first web site, since replaced with the current design in early 2007, can still be found on the Internet Archive at:

<http://web.archive.org/web/20020925184805/http://telopeapnc.netspeed.com.au/>.

The new design addressed accessibility issues, in particular, the fact that all site pages appeared under the same URL, which meant that there was no way of linking a specific content on the page into an email or the school newsletter. During all this time, the P&C has maintained a very good partnership with the school administration that has supported the P&C by regularly promoting its activities via the school newsletter.

Once the new site was designed it was easy to link to a page and/or document such as minutes, or draft agenda items, committee pages, and so on.



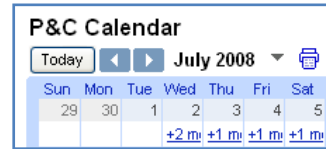
The new web site featured the following enhancements:

1. [“Watch that page”](#) functionality – this is a free web based service that enables site visitors to subscribe to emails that notify them of a change that has occurred on the site. This can be very handy if a parent wants to



find out when a new event has been published or new information has been uploaded.

2. [P&C Calendar](#) – yet another free web based service that enables parents to keep up to date with P&C meetings and other events.



Both Watch That Page and the Google P&C Calendar can be found on the Telopea Park School P&C home page: <http://telopeapnc.netspeed.com.au/>.

3. An Opt-In (*Join Our Email List*) Request form – by utilising one of the free web based form services, I have created a web form that enables parents to join one or both opt-in lists. We have opt-in lists for each year group, which are shared for social purposes only, and another opt-in list is for generic P&C communication. We currently have around 350 subscribers to the generic P&C communication list.



The form can be viewed at: http://telopeapnc.netspeed.com.au/forms/join_our_email_lists.html.

4. Telopea Search – this is a custom search created with a free Google service. The aim of this service is to enable parents to search site content. The search results are grouped to show either documents or general information, or other related material retrieved from sites that are of some importance to the P&C. Those sites are: the ACT P&C Council web site, the school site, and related web pages.

You can view and test the Telopea Search at:

<http://telopeapnc.netspeed.com.au/ourdocuments.html>.

5. “Useful links” page - lists a range of useful and credible resources for parents and students - in particular, French language learning websites. I received lots of positive feedback from parents about having these resources available on this page.

Another enhancement, invisible to site visitors, is the implementation of a web analytics tool that enables the webmaster to obtain statistical information about site usage. This is a very useful tool for monitoring which promotional methods are working and which don't.

For illustration, the TPS P&C site statistics for the period 1 Jan – 24 July 2008 shows that the site has been visited 1005 times, out of which we had 717 unique visitors from 37 countries, and there were 2673 pages viewed which equals 2.66 pages per visit. The site traffic was mostly driven by search engines such as Google, but direct linking via the School's site and email referral was also significant; in fact, Google and Telopea School instigated over half of all visits to the site.

In my opinion, the *Join Our Email Lists* form (previously available in paper copy only) has been the most useful new feature. I have received lots of positive feedback from parents who have submitted the Opt-

in web form. They say it's easy to use and since I also manage the year groups' distribution lists they get almost instant subscription confirmation and the requested address book for the relevant year group.

Sharing names and publishing personal information on the web is done carefully and in accordance with the *Privacy Act* as well as the school policies. One of the school policies I was made aware of a year ago was the ACT Education Department School Legal Information Manual (SLIM), *FAQ 23: What are the school's responsibilities in relation to Parents & Citizens Association websites?* This policy relates to ACT school websites and P&C content published on school sites, specifically, information that is owned by the P&C and should not be placed on the school websites without proper disclaimer notification as well as being clearly marked as the P&C's and not the school's content. This policy can be a bit challenging for those P&Cs who are trying to get their information published on the school site because they don't have access to any other online space.

In general, it is not difficult to set up a web site. I have used freely available software called NVU to design and update the site. Once you set your web site up it does not require lots of work to keep it up to date and it is worth the initial trouble especially if you have some or even little knowledge about the website design. Alternatively, you may want to look at the free website/blog web services such as Google Sites, Blogger, Wordpress and other similar easy-to-use applications. You only need to create your account, register the name and start publishing your content! Just don't forget about privacy issues that relate to publishing photos and personal contact details on the web. If you make the site public, it will eventually be indexed by Google and the names and images will show up in Google searches. This means you have to be careful about what gets published.

I have to acknowledge the FaHCSIA Department who granted us the VSEG in 2007, which funded the P&C purchase of a laptop. Amongst other benefits, having the laptop enables us to centrally store all documents and relevant software including web site files, which will ensure a smooth transition when the site is handed over to a new webmaster.

My final comment relates to the use of new technologies to improve the parent-school partnership. The size of the school, demographic structure of the parent body, school support and other related factors influence the way the P&C can contribute to the school community and vice versa. So, while it is very useful to have tools such as those on the Telopea P&C website for parents who are online users, there will always be some parents who are not computer users. Therefore, P&Cs should also consider utilising additional, more traditional ways to reach out to parents. That is why, with the help of the school administration, Telopea P&C still distributes Opt-in forms in hard copy as well as utilise the web form on the web site.

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