

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

Linking Parents and Education

Media Release

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Slow down on suspension legislation and pace it up with the pilot program

The ACT P&C Council is urging both the Stanhope Government and the ACT Opposition re-think its pursuit of giving Principals extra powers to suspend students.

Council President Elizabeth Singer says it's a furphy if Labor and Liberal MLAs think that giving Principals up to 10 or 20 days to suspend students will make schools safe places overnight.

"This simplistic approach to a complex situation totally misses the point on student behaviour and school harmony," she said.

"Instead wait a year to see if the new pilot suspension program works. It is designed around providing additional student support, and has the potential to improve the situation for school communities," Mrs Singer said.

"The ACT government's failure to provide enough emergency resources for students exhibiting dangerous or inappropriate behaviour at school so they can successfully and safely be returned to the classroom within a five day period of time is shameful," she said.

"Council strongly believes that schools and parent communities that are supported with adequate funding and resources to help students conform to appropriate behaviours and social expectations, will reduce the rate of and need for suspensions," she said.

"Parents have expressed their desire in having a second person within Department of Education and Training continue to review a student's situation before suspensions of greater than five days are imposed.

"To extract a student for up to 20-days - that's four weeks out of their school time, will do little to teach them about conforming to social expectations," she said.

"Safety at all schools is paramount, but learning to live in and to be a part of a community is also paramount and this proposed legislation does not provide for that learning capacity," Mrs Singer said.

"Council urges the ACT Legislative Assembly to shelve its pursuit of increasing Principals' powers to suspend for longer periods, until its pilot program to help suspended students produces some results."

"The jury hasn't even been formed on this program and yet our legislative leaders are determined to make significant changes to our students' careers by making *uninformed* decisions," she said.

"Let's pursue the pilot program, get the information needed to determine if making these changes is appropriate," she said.

For comment contact: Elizabeth Singer 0420 302 017

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Higgins Primary School, Fullagar Crescent | PO Box 4741

HIGGINS ACT 2615

www.schoolparents.canberra.net.au

parents@canberra.net.au

Tel: (02) 6241 5759 | Fax: (02) 6241 8839

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