

South Australian Association of School Parent Communities

Annual report 2016-2017



The South Australian Association of School Parent Communities (SAASPC) is the peak organisation which represents the interests of all parents and parent groups in South Australian public preschools and schools. SAASPC has always been, and continues to be, a strong supporter of, and advocate for, public education. The association works to promote parent interest, involvement and participation in preschools and schools and to encourage the growth of positive partnerships with parents and communities. This is becoming increasingly important as research shows that if parents are involved positively in their children's learning then the school outcomes for their children are likely to be enhanced.

2016 was a significant year for SAASPC. After much consultation, a motion was passed at the AGM to not only change our name to South Australian Association of School Parent Communities but to restructure the association. While our focus has not changed, the name change does reflect our membership which consists of parent groups, governing councils, management committees and individuals interested in public education. The restructured association now has an Executive Committee consisting of a maximum of 14 people which manages the association. The details can be seen in our constitution at <http://www.saaspc.org.au/assets/saaspc-constitution-2016.pdf>.

Executive Committee meetings

The Executive committee must meet at least four times throughout the year and this year it met on six occasions. In June, our guest speaker was Professor Alan Reid (chairperson of the Public Education Advisory Committee) who described the recently released Statement on Public Education

Conference

The annual conference was held on 13 September and focused on how parents can support their child/ren with special needs. While the attendance numbers were a little disappointing the speakers provided much valuable information which was appreciated by all delegates.

Communications

Website and social networking

Our website continues to be updated and the statistics show that in 2016/17 it received over 60,000 hits. We continue to post information on our Facebook page and on our Twitter account.

Publications

Parents Say magazine

This year we also had changes in the magazine when we took the decision to have fewer pages, less advertising but more information, plus a new publisher and distributor. We hope those who receive it are liking the new format. The magazine is distributed free to all South Australian public preschools (one copy) and schools (two copies) as part of our commitment as a recipient of a ministerial grant. Private subscriptions are also available. Included in it is up to date information from regular contributors such as the Minister for Education, the Chief Executive Department for Education and Child Development (DECD), and The SACE Board. Items from preschools and schools are invited, especially news about their special programs or events. Information about recent developments in education is of course, also included. The magazine is available on our website shortly after its publication.

Net Working

A quarterly newsletter, *Net Working*, is compiled and distributed to affiliated preschools and schools by post and email, in between editions of *Parents Say*.

Handbook (for parent groups – affiliated committees)

The SAASPC handbook on good practice in operating a parent group is provided free to new affiliates and is also available for downloading from our website at no charge. Hard copies can also be purchased.

Acronym list

A list of education acronyms has been compiled and is available on our website.

SAASPC brochures

SAASPC Is is our general brochure on the association and is available in print and on the website. In addition a series of 'SAASPC's Tips' parent brochures has been developed. These are: *Starting school, Starting secondary school, Parent teacher interviews, SAASPC information sessions, Affiliated committees and parent groups and Parental engagement*. These are also available on the website.

Media

SAASPC president, Jenice Zerna, as our media spokesperson, continues to be asked to provide comment by print and TV media outlets. This year the topics were again very varied and covered school uniform policy/dress code, school swimming education, literacy month, handwriting and how it is taught, school hats and dangers of cords, vaccinations, the AEU's state of schools report, students with disabilities in mainstream schools and the Right bite program.

Consultations and Invitations

SAASPC receives many invitations to attend launches, significant events and conferences, to meet with consultants and to submit responses to papers and inquires. Some of the work undertaken this year included

- attending the ARACY parent engagement conference in Melbourne
- attending SA Excellence in Public Education awards
- attending Children's Week launch and Minister's awards for Children's Week
- attending SACE Art show
- attending parent forum on strengthening languages in public schools
- attending SA government budget lockup
- attending Teachers Registration Board meeting for stakeholders on arrangements for teachers with provisional registration
- attending launch of Australian Council for Children and the Media Little Big Shots children's film festival
- submission on DECD merit policy and procedures
- submission on DECD volunteer policy
- submission to Education Standards Board on standards for schools
- submission to Flinders University on revision of education degree courses
- as well as visiting schools and speaking to many parents and principals.

We were pleased to again be invited to sit on the panel which assesses the applications for the Parent Initiatives in Education (PIE) grants for preschools and schools.

In addition, we have met on a number of occasions with Hon Susan Close, Minister for Education and Child Development, Mr Rick Persse, the new Chief Executive of the Department for Education and Child Development and Mr John Gardner, Shadow Education Minister.

Information sessions

Throughout the year requests are received for SAASPC to provide information sessions to parents in preschools and schools. These are

Responding to abuse and neglect: education and care information sessions for volunteers (previously known as Mandatory reporting of child abuse)

Since 1991 SAASPC has been providing two hour information sessions about mandatory notification of child abuse for volunteers in preschools and schools. While SAASPC presenters of the DECD program for

volunteers have found demand has lessened with the availability of the online program this year we delivered 93 sessions with 983 people from 186 sites; and travelled to many parts of the state – from the south east to the Riverland and in many city venues in order to do so.

Principal / preschool director panel selection information sessions

SAASPC continued its agreement with the Minister for Education and Child Development to provide these free sessions for Governing Council parent nominees on selection panels for preschool directors and principals and for others from schools and preschools who may be interested to learn about the process. We consider this training to be an important factor in assisting the parent nominee to be a confident and equal member of the panel, as the other members of the panel are required to be trained. We continue to revise our presentation in consultation with the Ethical Conduct Unit of DECD.

Over the last twelve months, 12 sessions have been conducted, attended by 94 people from 72 sites including preschools, primary, high and area, special and multicampus schools.

Committees and boards

SAASPC Officers continue to represent parents on committees, boards and organisations. SAASPC welcomes feedback from parents regarding their concerns and issues, in order that we can truly represent a wide range of views. Below are some of the committees and organisations on which we have represented parents over the past year

- DECD Parents in Education (PIE) Week Reference Group
- SA Dental Service Consumer Advisory Panel
- SA National Quality Agenda Stakeholder Advisory Group
- SACE Board Parent Associations Group
- Australian Council for Children and the Media Executive Committee

We were pleased to be asked by the Minister to nominate, and to have that nomination accepted, for a parent of a student with a disability to be on the Ministerial Advisory Committee: Children and Students with Disability.

Acknowledgments

On 30 January, Marion McCarthy, a long standing and much loved and valued member of our organisation passed away. Marion was first elected to be a metropolitan vice president in 1973 and from then on she continued as a member of the Executive Committee in a number of other capacities; in 1984 she was appointed editor of Parents Say. In recognition of her continuous and valuable work in education Marion was awarded the Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 1997 and in September 2016 she was awarded the Premiers Certificate of recognition for over 43 years of outstanding volunteer service to public education. Her work for SAASPC and her unassuming and thoughtful input into discussions was highly valued by those who were privileged to meet her and work with her. She will be greatly missed.

We acknowledge the continuing support of the Minister for Education and Child Development through the provision of our operational grant which includes funding for Responding to Abuse and Neglect information sessions and Principal/Preschool Director Panel Selection information sessions.

We also appreciate the support of the many people within DECD who are always most approachable and willing to speak with us and provide us with invaluable advice.

SAASPC is an organisation of volunteers and we are fortunate that so many people willingly give their time and expertise to ensure that the voice of the parents of children and young people in South Australian public preschools and schools is heard. We look forward to the challenges of the next twelve months and thank all those who have supported us as we work to ensure that all South Australian children have access to a public education system which aims for equity and excellence and which supports parents as partners in the education of their children.

In turn we acknowledge the incredible and vital work being done by thousands of volunteers in SA public preschools and schools.

SAASPC Officers 2016-17

President / Treasurer

Jenice Zerna

Metropolitan Vice President

Ruth Lenton

Leanne Sheard

Country Vice Presidents

Jenny Polley

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