

## **B1 Community engagement**

The Directorate undertakes a range of community engagement activities through community consultation processes, stakeholder relations and community partnership programs. The Directorate's community engagement activities are aligned with the ACT Government's Community Engagement initiative.

The Director-General and other senior Directorate staff meet on a regular basis with the executive of the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations (P&C Associations), the Australian Education Union, the Catholic Education Office, the Association of Independent Schools and the ACT Principals' Association to discuss key issues and progress on major initiatives.

### **Major consultation/advisory groups**

#### **Government and non-government schools education councils**

The operation of the Government Schools Education Council and the Non-government Schools Education Council provides ongoing community consultation about public and non-government school education. These councils provide an opportunity for the community to have an important role in formulating advice to government on school education policy. Membership on both councils consists of community and education members representing significant stakeholder groups. The Directorate provides secretariat support for these councils including compilation of their annual reports which are annexed to this report.

As required under the *Education Act 2004* (the Act), the Non-Government Education Section of the Directorate publishes a notice in a daily newspaper of all applications pertaining to the in-principle approval for a new non-government school or non-government school expansion, or registration of a new non-government school, campus or additional year level.

**Table B1.1: Consultation on non-government schools**

Project	Consultation process	Groups/individuals	Approximate number consulted	Outcome
Non-government school registration processes: in-principle approval of Catholic Education Office proposal to develop a secondary campus in Gungahlin	Call for community comment; published notice in Canberra Times; comment from key stakeholders	Community members; Non-government Schools Education Council; Association of Independent Schools; Independent Education Union; Australian Education Union; Planning and Performance Branch	20 community comments received; five stakeholders commented	Consultation provided to assist Minister's decision to approve or not approve proposed secondary campus

Source: Information, Communications and Governance Branch

## School boards

The Act requires each public school to have a school board as a way of sharing authority and responsibility with the local school community. The Act caters for general school boards, boards at school-related institutions (such as the early childhood schools) and boards of schools to which special circumstances apply (such as Telopea Park School). Most public schools have general school boards consisting of the principal, an appointed member representing the general public, two staff members, three parents and citizens members, two student members (high schools and colleges) and up to two board appointed members. All appointments, apart from board appointed members, are made by the Directorate's Returning Officer on behalf of the Director-General.

The Act details the functions of public school boards including establishing the strategic direction and priorities for the school; monitoring and reviewing school performance; oversight of curriculum, educational, financial and resource-related policies; developing relationships between the school and the community; encouraging parent participation in student learning; and developing recommendations to the Director-General.

During the reporting period, the Directorate provided training and support to schools in the establishment and operation of their school boards in accordance with the requirements of the Act. This involved:

- revision of the *School Board Manual* to assist school board members to clarify roles and responsibilities and to provide information about school board operations
- training to assist Assistant Returning Officers to prepare for school board elections and reduce administrative burden for principals

- training tailored to meet the needs of school board members and school board chairs, including online resources
- coordination of the School Board Chairs Network designed to provide an information and networking opportunity for school board chairs or a representative and principals
- providing information and support to new principals about managing school board processes
- coordination of the declaration of conflict of interest statements from each public school for the Director-General
- introduction of a selection process for appointed members to school boards in line with the recommendations of the Review of School Based Management. Nominees for the position of appointed member are asked to outline skills and experience and are selected to align with the requirements of the school board
- supporting principals and school board chairs to deal with operational issues and attending school board meetings as required
- consulting with principals to ensure that the composition of the school board meets the needs of the school community
- supporting schools to use the board appointed member to enhance the skill set and expertise of school boards.

During the reporting period, the Directorate completed legislative changes to the school boards of the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre and Birrigai School to ensure that the composition of the school boards meets the governance needs of the local communities. Consultation also commenced in relation to the composition of the school boards of the early childhood schools and the University of Canberra schools.

**Table B1.2: Consultation on School Board Manual**

Project	Consultation process	Groups/ individuals	Approximate number consulted	Outcome
School Board Manual	Request for comment in relation to draft School Board Manual	School-based and central office staff, Directorate Executive, Principals, School Boards, ACT Council of P&C Associations, ACT Electoral Commission	Approximately 6,100	All feedback considered and a decision made to accept or not accept changes. Manual updated in line with accepted feedback. Manual approved and circulated in December 2010

Source: Information, Communications and Governance Branch

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group (ATSIECG) continued to meet regularly throughout 2010-11, providing community advice on matters relating to education and training services and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT, including Jervis Bay and the Wreck Bay Aboriginal community.

ATSIECG was active in participating in a diverse range of consultations to ensure the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were represented. Examples of these include five of the nine members attending workshops organised by Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority to provide comment on the content of curriculum documents and two members participating in a working group to develop the *Reconciliation Matters: Reconciliation Action Plan 2010-2011*.

In 2010, ATSIECG developed an operational plan that articulated three priorities for 2010-12. These priorities aim to increase involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and carers in curriculum and policy advice; attendance at ATSIECG meetings; and develop a communication strategy. Information on opportunities for parents and carers is available at <http://www.actatsiecg.org>

## **ACT Safe Schools Taskforce**

The Safe Schools Taskforce continued to meet regularly during 2010-11 to discuss and develop innovative solutions to address ongoing and emerging school safety concerns and to provide a forum to discuss concerns raised by stakeholders, the Minister and the community relating to school safety.

The taskforce is made up of representatives from the Directorate, Catholic Education Office, ACT Association of Independent Schools, ACT Policing, Youth Advisory Council, ACT Principals' Association, unions, school parent associations, Canberra Preschool Society and the Human Rights Commission. In 2010 the taskforce reviewed its focus and developed terms of reference which were adopted in February 2011.

During 2010 the taskforce investigated the impact of cyber bullying on students. This led to a student summit 'Who R U in the Digital World' held on the National Day of Action Against Bullying and Violence on 18 March 2011.

## **Disability Education Reference Group**

The Disability Education Reference Group (DERG) is a community consultative forum convened by the Director-General. The reference group provides an opportunity for the community to fulfill an important role in formulating advice to the Directorate on the education of students with disabilities in ACT public schools.

The group met regularly throughout the reporting period and had significant involvement in providing feedback during the development of the Directorate's *Excellence in Disability Education in ACT Public Schools: Strategic Plan 2010-2013*.

One of the key actions in this plan was the refinement of the role and terms of reference of the group and this was completed at the beginning of 2011.

The formation of the Parent/Carer Sub-Committee is helping to achieve the goal of supporting students through developing stronger and positive partnerships between schools and families. The sub-committee provides direct feedback to and consults with parents on initiatives in disability education.

## Major community consultations

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consultation

Major community consultations were undertaken to develop two key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategic plans, the *Reconciliation Matters: Reconciliation Action Plan 2010-2011* and the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters: Strategic Plan 2010-2013*.

**Table B1.3: Consultation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander matters**

Project	Consultation process	Groups/ individuals	Approximate number consulted	Outcome
Reconciliation Matters: Reconciliation Action Plan 2010-2011	Representatives of ATSIECG were members of the Working Group. Three community meetings held	ATSIECG members, parents and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	25	Participants supported Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). ATSIECG supported RAP for launch by the Minister in July 2010
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters: Strategic Plan 2010-2013	Two meetings with ATSIECG One meeting with Chairperson, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. Focus groups with Central Office and Principal Groups	ATSIECG members, parents and carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Directors and Managers, School Principals, School Network Leaders, Executive Director School Improvement	40	Participants supported Strategic Plan. Plan launched by Minister in September 2010

Source: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education and Student Support Branch

### Engaging young people in education and training options

In September 2010 the Australian and ACT Governments worked together to arrange an ACT Youth Attainment and Transitions Regional Forum to bring the ACT Partnerships Broker and ACT Youth Connections providers together with key stakeholders in the ACT region.

The ACT Youth Attainment and Transitions Regional Forum gave participants the opportunity to share information and best practice, network with other key stakeholders in the region and also look to future challenges and opportunities for engaging young people in education and training options.

The ACT Youth Commitment Signing Ceremony and launch of the Pathways Plan took place on 18 May 2011. Over 140 ACT agencies signed a Statement of Commitment, to ensure that the transfer of a young person from one agency to another happens effectively. It is the responsibility of an agency to know where a young person is and what is happening to support them so that no young person is lost from education, training or employment.

The ACT Youth Commitment establishes a new set of expectations for ACT schools and the community regarding young people's experience in schooling and their transitions onto further education, training and work.

**Table B1.4: Consultation on engaging young people in education and training**

Project	Consultation process	Groups/ individuals	Approximate number consulted	Outcome
ACT Youth Attainment and Transitions Regional Forum	Regional forum	ACT Community Services Directorate, Youth Coalition of the ACT, ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry, University of Canberra, Canberra Institute of Technology, Association of Private Training Services, Australian Council for Private Education and Training, ACT Health, Association of Independent Schools, Catholic Education Office, Australian Federal Police, Anglicare Canberra, Canberra Business Council, ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations	165	Connecting the agencies and stakeholders who provide services and programs for young people in the ACT to share information and best practice, and look to future challenges and opportunities. To inform strategic direction in regards to meeting ACT targets and objectives under the ACT Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership and ACT Youth Commitment

Project	Consultation process	Groups/ individuals	Approximate number consulted	Outcome
ACT Youth Commitment Signing Ceremony and Pathways Plan launch	Signing Ceremony and Pathways Planning launch	Representatives from public and non-government schools, Canberra Institute of Technology, Registered Training Organisations and other educational institutions, community and youth agencies, business and government agencies	140 agencies	140 agencies signed a Statement of Commitment, pledging to ensure that the goals of the ACT Youth Commitment are met, including working towards no young person in the ACT being lost from education, training or employment

Source: Information, Communications and Governance Branch

### **vocational education and training community consultation**

The Directorate is committed to maintaining regular and effective communication and engagement with the vocational education and training (VET) community. In December 2010, the Directorate initiated the VET Forums, quarterly meetings between the Directorate and VET stakeholders. This approach is part of an overall communication strategy which is designed to deliver consistent, clear and transparent outcomes, and includes a streamlined process with the web as the focal point, and quarterly stakeholder forums. These forums are designed to provide a face-to-face opportunity for stakeholders to engage with staff, to learn of emerging issues and to provide feedback on matters arising in implementing requirements of them as ACT VET stakeholders. To date, two forums have been held, each with over 100 stakeholders in attendance. Participants are from Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) both public and private, Group Training Organisations (GTOs), Australian Apprenticeship Centres (AACs) and members of industry and industry associations. Topics covered to date include updates on the emerging VET environment, proposed changes to contracts between the Directorate and contractors, web communication, new initiatives and updates on changes to requirements and Directorate systems.

**Table B1.5: Consultation on vocational education and training**

Project	Consultation process	Groups/ individuals	Approximate number consulted	Outcome
VET forums	Two stakeholder forums	RTOs, GTOs, AACs, Industry organisations and associations	Approximately 100 at each forum	Implementation of a Strategic Communication Plan including a hands-on workshop on web consultation processes; advisory sessions on requirements for funding initiatives; commitment to a two-way communication process

Source: Training and Tertiary Education Branch

### Schools capital works

In the reporting period, stakeholder consultation continued on the designs for a number of new schools, new capital works school enhancement projects, and on the projects funded under the Australian Government's Building the Education Revolution (BER) program.

**Table B1.6: Consultation on schools capital works**

Project	Consultation process	Groups/ Individuals	Approximate number consulted	Outcome
Namadgi School (formally the Kambah P-10 School)	Meetings and community presentations	Urambi School community; prospective students and their families; Cabinet in the Community	Varied between meetings and presentation sessions	Finalisation of secondary school design and completion of project
Harrison Secondary School	Regular meetings	Harrison School representatives	Numbers varied between meetings and presentations generally two representatives from the school; principal and business manager	Construction commenced 18 June 2010 with proposed completion in December 2011

Project	Consultation process	Groups/ Individuals	Approximate number consulted	Outcome
Gungahlin College	Community presentations	Cabinet in the Community meetings	Numbers varied between meetings and presentation sessions	Presentation of college design and building form
Bonner Primary School	Meetings and community consultations	Design Working Group (DWG - representatives from education community, union, special interest groups); Gungahlin Community Council; Harrison School community	36 members invited to DWG. Number of attendances varied for each meeting	Finalisation of design for Bonner Primary School
Franklin Early Childhood School	Meetings and community presentations	DWG; Gungahlin Community Council	Varied between meetings and presentation sessions	Consultation concluded with presentation of the school designs
Building the Education Revolution program	Meetings	School communities; school principals and staff; school boards; P&C Associations; Cabinet in the Community	All ACT public schools	Design for 84 National School Pride projects and 68 Primary Schools for the 21st Century projects
Building the Education Revolution program	Meetings	School principals and project managers	All ACT public schools	Completion and handover of 84 National School Pride projects and 68 Primary Schools for the 21 Century projects. Defect liability period sign off and finalisation expenditure of funds
Canberra College - Performing Arts Centre	DWG	Theatre consultants, school executive, specialist teachers, acoustic engineers	Varied depending on issue or speciality	Project is at construction stage and accommodates essential aspects of original brief

Project	Consultation process	Groups/ Individuals	Approximate number consulted	Outcome
Red Hill School expansion	Meetings and school consultations	School principal and design consultants on the Red Hill School works; French Australian Preschool (FAPS) representatives on the separation of facilities; Local community consultation on traffic and parking study	Four Red Hill School executive members on Red Hill extension; school informed the school community FAPS principal on separation works tasks. Consultant advisor on land separation; various groups on parking and traffic, including local services	Completion of designs for extension and refurbishment works; completion of separation of FAPS facilities; final report on precinct traffic and parking issues
Ngunnawal Primary School - new classroom pod	Meetings	School principal and executive staff. School provided information to school community and affected residents	Three school staff	Design for new teaching unit, construction has commenced and is due to be completed in August 2011

Source: Schools Capital Works Branch

## Community partnership programs

### National partnerships

The three education sectors (public, Catholic and independent) in the ACT continue to collaboratively progress and implement National Partnership reforms.

A cross-sector symposium was held in June 2010 to discuss potential models for innovative School Centres of Teacher Education Excellence in the ACT. Attendees included principals, school leaders and teachers from the three education sectors, senior lecturers from the University of Canberra and the Australian Catholic University and representatives from the Australian and Independent education unions. Outcomes from the symposium informed the next stage of planning by the Teacher Education Committee on potential models to be considered for implementation.

All National Partnership schools have put considerable work into external partnerships. Some schools have strengthened or extended the scope of existing partnerships, and a number of new relationships have been developed. These external partnerships are aimed at creating opportunities for students and/or supporting student engagement, parent/community involvement and providing support to students and their parents/carers.

During 2011, schools participating in the Low Socio Economic Status National Partnership have invested heavily in parent/school community involvement. Schools have developed a range of programs and initiatives in cooperation with community groups such as local Community Health Centres, and higher education authorities such as the Canberra Institute of Technology and University of Canberra. Through these partnerships, schools have supplemented student support to enable participation in a range of activities to enhance educational experiences.

### **School-community partnerships**

Community-based partnerships are important to the social and economic sustainability of the ACT. Businesses and organisations supporting children and young people involved in community activities contribute to the smooth functioning of the ACT community. Partnerships between schools and community groups and businesses help schools to respond effectively to the educational needs of, and opportunities presented by, school communities.

The Directorate has a number of specific partnership programs with ACT community groups and leaders who support public education. These include ACT Children's Week, the School Volunteer Program, the Returned and Services League of Australia Woden Valley Sub-Branch Incorporated, the United Nations, School Volunteer Program ACT Incorporated and the Australian Business Community Network.

Partnership programs are primarily focused at the primary, secondary and college levels, with limited programs and/or services being directly targeted to preschools. Current partnership programs available to preschools are generally coordinated in conjunction with the Community Services Directorate, including programs such as National Child Protection Week.

In 2010 two ACT schools won \$25,000 each in the national Schools First competition for innovative approaches to community partnerships. Melba Copland Secondary School is setting up a partnership to channel the energies and enthusiasm of students towards trade training in painting and decorating. Fraser Primary School is setting up a literacy improvement scheme with community volunteers and pre-service teachers from the University of Canberra to work with students identified as below the reading benchmarks. The \$50,000 Schools First ACT Impact Award 2010 was jointly awarded to Lake Ginninderra College (now renamed as University of Canberra Senior Secondary College, Lake Ginninderra) and the Faculty of Education at the University of Canberra. The partnership enables pre-service undergraduate teachers to learn on the job and for classroom teachers to work collaboratively with beginning teachers to enhance student learning outcomes. The partnership not only strengthens teaching and learning initiatives at the college but also allows for educators from the college and the university to share resources, strategies, research and practice.

## **Social media**

The Directorate continues to provide the community with updates on public school activities, programs and services via the ACT Public Schools Facebook page. Since the inception of the page in mid-2009 the number of people who have nominated the Facebook page as part of their social network is approaching 500. A number of public schools are also using Facebook and Twitter social media sites to extend communication options with school communities.

## **Canberra Careers Market**

During August 2010 the annual Canberra Careers Market was convened with over 8,000 students from both the ACT and NSW in attendance. The Canberra Careers Market has been running for nearly 30 years and is led by a strong partnership between the Directorate and the Rotary Club of Canberra City.

## **Complaints resolution**

The Directorate values the feedback it receives from parents and the community and is committed to responding in a positive way to complaints made about its operations, services or service delivery.

The Community Liaison Section was established in April 2010 to address complaints and concerns received from the community and to ensure a consistent approach to complaints management across the Directorate. The section has two centralised complaints information officers and all schools and branches of the Directorate have a designated complaints officer.

The Directorate aims to resolve complaints at the school or local level wherever possible, and complainants are encouraged to initially raise their concerns informally with the school or relevant member of staff. Where appropriate, the Community Liaison Section can assist in facilitating a resolution; however, the Directorate acknowledges that not all concerns and complaints are able to be resolved informally.

Where a formal complaint is made, it is handled under the provisions of the Directorate's *Complaints Resolution* policy. The policy outlines the principles for management of complaints and provides information about timeframes, processes and a complainant's right to ask for a review of the response received if they are not satisfied. It does not cover complaints made by members of staff about matters associated with their employment, which are dealt with through procedures outlined in industrial agreements. The policy is available at all public schools and on the Directorate's website.

Complaints concerning child abuse and neglect are referred to the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support within the Community Services Directorate.

In addition to responding to complaints and concerns from the community, the Community Liaison Section records and analyses data on complaints received and recommends improvement to policies and service delivery.

## Other complaints avenues

The Directorate may, under a range of administrative law provisions, receive complaints through external complaints agencies.

The *Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994* (see **Section C3**) contains provisions for reporting wrongdoing in the ACT Public Service.

## Formal complaints

Data on formal complaints lodged with the Directorate from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011 is summarised in Table B1.7 below. Two formal complaints remained open as at 30 June 2011.

**Table B1.7: Complaints, 2010-11**

Complainant	Bullying/ violence	Communication	Personal conduct	Policy and procedures	Service provision	Total
Parent/carer	3	4	2	5	0	14
Community member	0	0	1	1	1	3
Student	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>

Source: Information, Communications and Governance Branch

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