

Executive Officer Report Catholic School Parents Australia Annual General Meeting 24 Feb 2018

Introduction

2017 was a year of further consolidation of CSPA and key undertakings outlined in this report include: the continued evolving status of CSPA as a national, peak parent body; CSPA's journey towards independence; further development and refinement of the CSPA Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020; some rationalisation around CSPA Council meetings; 2020 Plenary Council and CSPA formation; CSPA's substantial contribution to national forums, events and submissions to government; almost there with incorporation; Changes to the Executive Committee, succession planning and maintaining corporate knowledge; Thanks and farewell to CSPA's inaugural Chair; The maturing roles of members of CSPA Council; Retake on whereto with the CSPA Newsletter and website; Continued roll-out of the CSPA Parent Engagement Project; ARACY Conference in Melbourne (June) and ACEL Conference Sydney (September); Matters financial and more accurate and appropriate payments to the Qld P & F Federation; and the role of the Executive Officer. These topics will now be discussed more fully.

The continued evolving status of CSPA as a national, peak parent body

Much work continued across 2017 to consolidate our position as a national, peak parent body. We are now invited to have a presence at forums alongside representatives from other national, peak parent bodies. Strategic meetings with various government representatives have been most beneficial and promising, and we enter 2018 with renewed hope that our national recognition in time will be made more formal. Importantly, we continue to advocate around the redress of the reality that over 80% of parents with children and young people in Catholic schools across the country arguably do not have a voice with the federal government. A significant number of government and opposition representatives continue to be encouragingly supportive of our endeavours. It is significant that a representative for the Minister, The Hon David Coleman MP (Assistant Minister for Finance) and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Opposition Shadow Minister for Education and Training and Shadow Minister for Women The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP will attend our first Council Meeting in 2018.

CSPA continues to contribute a representative and advocating national, Catholic perspective for parents with children and young people in Catholic schools across the nation. Examples of formal contributions include:

- CSPA's significant contribution to the National Career Education Strategy Working Group which generated a report to Assistant Minister Andrews during 2017;
- Many contributions to the school funding debate by way of media releases, submissions to federal government, letters to the Prime Minister and Minister

Birmingham and copies to other politicians, co-joint statements with NCEC and national Catholic Primary and Secondary Principals, appearance before Senate Select Committees, and various DET forums such as the post-budget stakeholder forum on Monday 19 June 2017;

- Renewed and revitalised correspondence with key, national Principal and Parent bodies in relation to the CSPA Parent Engagement Survey, school funding and other common issues;
- Submission to Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (Nov, 2017);
- Various inputs to ACARA through membership of the Parents and Principals Peak National Bodies Forum;
- Membership of the Admissions Transparency Implementation Working Group (IWG);
- Established relationship leading to contribution to the Catholic Schools Guide;
- Major work around the Parent Engagement Project (see later);
- Papers discussing project preliminary findings presented at the ARACY Conference (June, 2017) and the ACEL Conference (September 2017) by Carmel Nash, Professor Sue Saltmarsh and John O'Brien;
- Participation in meetings as a representative on the ACU Faculty of Education and Arts, School of Education, National Advisory Board;
- On-going correspondence with politicians; and
- On-going correspondence with media on as needs basis.

CSPA's journey towards independence

CSPA continues to move towards more independent status. While CSPA's identity will always be closely intertwined with the various Catholic P&F authorities from each State and the ACT (and eventually the NT), there is a journey towards being able to stand alone as a Catholic authority. The significant funding contribution from the Australian Catholic Bishops Commission – NCEC is understood to be at capacity and CSPA member contributions are at a significant level and a policy around contributions currently under discussion. CSPA continues to work towards obtaining more financial sponsorship and it is pleasing to welcome Catholic Church Insurance (CCI) on board. CCI will contribute funds and in-kind over the next three years. Currently, CSPA is most appreciative of the generous five-year sponsorship from the Australian Catholic Superannuation and Retirement Fund. Each member of CSPA is reminded to promote our sponsors in Newsletters and conferences as such opportunities emerge.

A key aspect of independency is demonstrated through CSPA's capacity to pay their way. During 2017, CSPA has continued to benefit greatly from the generous support of the Qld Catholic P&F Federation (under the leadership of their Executive Director Carmel Nash) where the Executive Officer is located in Brisbane. From 2017, CSPA commenced payment for administrative and accountancy support. The Executive Officer continued at 25 hours per week across 2017 and will continue at this quantum of hours for 2018. Over time, it is assumed that the Executive Officer role will evolve towards a full time role.

Further development and refinement of the CSPA Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020

Across 2017, the CSPA Council worked around refining the 2017 - 2020 CSPA Strategic Plan. Key components of the Strategic Plan Vision, Mission, Core Values, Focus Areas, Goals and

Strategies were finalised with input from CSPA Council. Focus Area Teams have been identified with each led by a Champion. Teams are identifying *Achievements* for 2017 and discerning key undertakings for 2018. Each member of the team has a role to play by way of assisting their Focus Area Champion who will hold responsibility for their team's implementation of the strategies identified in the plan. Each Focus Area Champion will report on progress at each CSPA Council Meeting throughout 2018.

Some rationalisation around CSPA Council meetings

It is under discussion that once across a cycle of years to have one Council Meeting each year in either Perth or Canberra or Adelaide or Hobart. This is because of challenges around flight access/costs to these places compared with easier access/usually lower costs to Sydney and Melbourne and maybe Brisbane. Flight costs are clearly the most expensive component of our council meetings and the early booking of flights reduces these costs substantially. The place of each council meeting for the following year will continue to be determined at the final council meeting of the year. Where and when feasible, council meetings will continue to be arranged to coincide with significant events such as the NCEC Conference.

2020 Plenary Council and CSPA formation

CSPA Executive has met with Lana Turvey (Plenary Council Facilitator) and she has shared a more final draft of the 2020 Plenary Council timeline and we will discern across the first two council meetings of 2018 how CSPA and respective member parent bodies might have input to the Plenary Council over 2018 - 2020. A key focus will be around how activities associated with the council might contribute to the formation of CSPA councillors.

Almost there with incorporation

Except for several 11th hour checks it is hoped that CSPA Incorporation is well-nigh complete.

Changes to the Executive Committee, succession planning and maintaining corporate knowledge

The CSPA Executive has undergone significant change over the past two years and at a time of consolidation it is suggested there needs to be vigilance around maintaining the corporate knowledge of CSPA - to go forward we need to understand our past, and to facilitate this we need people available who bring this experiential knowledge to our CSPA Executive and Council meetings. Consequently, some discernment is required around the place of location of the Executive Officer and, to date, the existence of a *defacto* CSPA Secretariat consisting of the Executive Officer, CSPA Deputy Chair, Accountant and Graphic Designer/Office Administrator. It is proposed that CSPA will need to discern ways in which this arrangement might continue at least in the medium term (next 2-3 years) such that the Executive Officer does not exist to a certain degree in isolation.

Thanks and farewell to CSPA's inaugural Chair

It is with gratitude and a tinge of sadness that this AGM sees the end of Tony O'Byrne's tenure as inaugural Chair of CSPA. Since 2013, Tony's wise counsel, unflappable demeanour, depth of experiential knowledge, engaging manner and educational acumen have served CSPA extraordinarily well. He has always been socially engaging and hits upon the right tone at any gatherings/forums he attends. The Executive Officer has keen insight into Tony's presence and his ever readiness to be available and to share an opinion. On behalf of council I wish Tony well around his professional work and his use of the new free time he will no doubt have

to spend with family. As ably demonstrated by Tony, the model of Independent Chair has worked very well for CSPA and it's a positive that it has been agreed for this to continue.

The maturing roles of members of CSPA Council

Over time it has been observed that CSPA members are usually busy people who have taken on extra roles such as being council members of CSPA – you want something done give it to a busy person! As the work of CSPA continues to expand (it never decreases!), it is suggested that there needs to be some discerned rationalization around how each member might contribute to the enterprise. CSPA is richer by the presence of all and this richness is only realised through each member's ability and inclination to contribute. We will grow ever more strongly as a peak parent body when buoyed by each member's unambiguous and focussed sharing through their unique lens of being a parent with a child in a Catholic school.

Retake on whereto with the CSPA Newsletter and website

It is suggested that some reflection is required around our CSPA newsletter in terms of who is our audience, who should contribute to its generation, what should be the timing of how many newsletters, and what purpose(s) should a newsletter serve? It is hard to argue against the promotional benefit of a newsletter to both CSPA and our sponsors. Moving forward, it is proposed that this should continue as a focus across 2018 utilising recommendations from council and the Communications Committee.

Continued roll-out of the CSPA Parent Engagement Project*

* The project has been made possible through funding provided by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training through the Grants and Awards Programme 2015 – 16 to 2018 -19.

Across 2017, CSPA continued work around our project *Re-Energising Parent Engagement in Australian Primary and Secondary Schools*. The fundamental question addressed by the project is how might schools take on more focussed responsibility for enhancing the effectiveness and outcomes of Parent Engagement, and more specifically, what actions of school principals and professional school staff might more proactively promote Parent Engagement to enhance student learning and well-being?

The cross-sectoral national surveys of primary and secondary school principals were completed during 2017. A second phase of the project across 2017 has involved separate interviews with principals and focus groups of parents. A key outcome of the project during 2018 will be school kits articulating effective Parent Engagement practices for student learning. While these kits will be developed for principals and teachers, they will also contain complementary actions for parents.

The project outcomes are being enriched through the involvement of:

- Our project partners the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) and Professor Sue Saltmarsh (University of Southern Queensland);
- The sample of Catholic, Government and Independent school Principals who undertook a survey;
- The on-going interviews of cross-sectoral samples of Principals and focus groups of parents;
- The various national principal bodies including: Australian Primary Principals' Association (APPA), Australian Secondary Principals' Association (ASPA), Australian Catholic Primary Principals' Association (ACPPA), and the Catholic Secondary

Principals' Association (CaSPA); and the other national, peak parent bodies including: Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACCSO), Australian Parents Council (APC) and the Isolated Children Parents' Australia (ICPA).

A major delay that has continued to ripple through the project has been the application and subsequent granting of ethics approval to conduct the research. Revised Implementation Plans were submitted to DET across Jan/Feb 2017 and in December 2017. There has been much on-going formal reporting, discussion and negotiation with DET representatives – all of these aspects have been effective and positive. The project will be completed in 2018.

During 2017, a separate application for Ethics Approval was submitted by Prof Sue Saltmarsh through USQ Ethics Committee and subsequently attained to conduct interviews with groups of Parents. And across 2017, in preparation for the parent group interviews, Professor Sue Saltmarsh conducted three rounds of interviewer training.

Initial samples of parent and principal interviews have been transcribed, anonymised and analysed and a preliminary report has been written from the principal qualitative data by Dr Neil Stafford (through ARACY). An analysis of parent interview data available to date is about to commence. During 2017, Dr Tim Sealey (ex ARACY) conducted analyses of Primary and Secondary Principal survey data and reports have been completed. Some further analyses will be conducted of the survey data generated from the open ended questions.

Thanks to those who have conducted and continue to conduct interviews and a key note of thanks goes to Carmel Nash and the Qld P & F Federation for assisting around Bernadette Kreutzer being made available to conduct parent and principal interviews. Thanks to Bernadette for conducting over 80% of interviews to date – an incredible contribution to our project. A number of interviewers became unavailable after training as they did not continue with CSPA.

The Executive Officer continues to oversee the administration of the DET Project finances with key support of the Accountant who also undertakes work for CSPA. Some work around positioning for final reporting processes including generation of Tool Kits has been undertaken and we have procured some funding support for generation of print copy of the Tool Kits. Data collected to date are listed below.

	Total Responses	Incomplete	Complete
New* Primary Survey	142	34	108
Primary Version A	31	3	28
Primary Version B	29	2	27
	202	39	163
COMPLETED SURVEYS			
	Catholic	Independent	Government
New Primary Survey	76	14	18
Primary Version A	28	0	0
Primary Version B	27	0	0
Total Surveys = 163	131	14	18
<i>Projected Target (112)</i>	72	15	25

*Please note: Several questions were removed from Versions A and B of the Primary Survey to generate the New Primary Survey.

	Total Responses	Incomplete	Complete
New Secondary Survey	135	27	108
Secondary Version A	24	0	24
Secondary Version B	22	0	22
	181	27	154
COMPLETED RESPONSES			
	Catholic	Independent	Government
New Secondary Survey	46	23	38
Secondary Version A	24	0	0
Secondary Version B	22	0	0
Total Surveys = 154	92	23	38
<i>Projected Target (112)</i>	69	19	24

*Please note: Several questions were removed from Versions A and B of the Secondary Survey to generate the New Secondary Survey.

Forty-nine (49) Principal Interviews in total (Primary and Secondary) to date have been completed and all of these interviews have been transcribed and anonymised and the first 39 interviews was the first sample of Principal interviews analyzed.

PFGIs commenced in November 2017 and to date thirty-nine parents (twenty-three parents with children in Catholic schools, ten Independent school parents and nine Government school parents) have been interviewed. These thirty-nine parents have a total of seventy-six school age children between them. Interviews are continuing through to the end of March 2018. (Please note that three parents are registered twice as they have children in two sectors of schooling). (Extract from Interim Report to DET (Feb 2018))

ARACY Conference in Melbourne (June) and ACEL Conference Sydney (September)

The considerable presence of CSPA at the ARACY Conference in Melbourne, which included two presentations and a trade booth for the duration of the conference, have played a role in consolidating a national presence for CSPA and also as a developing contributor in the parent engagement space. CSPA branding by way of our promotional items together with an updated scrolling power-point assisted in marking our presence. Much positive comes from our work at such conferences, including in this instance a visit to our booth by Minister Birmingham. Due thanks to our presenters Carmel Nash and Prof Sue Saltmarsh (with John O'Brien). Following the ARACY Conference Debbie Pushor (Canada) subsequently worked with our CSPA Council and worked with many dioceses around Australia thanks to the overseeing and initial setting up and subsequent coordinating through Carmel Nash. Carmel and John presented at the ACEL Conference and this also furthered our relationships with various groups and personnel around parent engagement.

Matters financial and more accurate and appropriate payments to the Qld P & F Federation

CSPA continues to be vigilant around expenditure of finances and, in part, most CSPA members have helped to reduce costs through such undertakings as early flight bookings for council meetings. CSPA is in a solid financial position as is reported in our February 2018 Council and AGM. Our budgeting process is greatly enhanced through our developing history around costings and the day-to-day diligence and organisation of CSPA's finances overseen by the Executive Officer and ably assisted by the Qld P&F Federation Accountant who CSPA employs for three hours each week.

On-going sponsorship is vital to CSPA and all members are encouraged to continue the quest for more sponsors. Late in 2017 we had the good fortune to access some new sponsorship through Catholic Church Insurances. This sponsorship takes the form of \$10,000 each year for the next three years and various in-kind support. Thanks to Carmel Nash assisted by the Executive Officer in working these discussions through with CCI. We also continue to appreciate the sponsorship of ACSRF, we are now in the 4th year of a five year agreement. ACSRF sponsor us \$30,000 per year, a most significant contribution. And CSPA continues to be thankful to receive \$60,000 a year through NCEC and the BCCE – a most significant contribution to our existence as a peak, parent body.

Significant contributions from members continues and it is planned that during the early part of 2018, a policy around member contributions will be generated such that sufficient advanced notice will be given for increases. As a body, it is our collective responsibility to maintain an eye on our funding and wherever possible to inform our executive of new sponsorship opportunities for follow-up.

From 2017, CSPA commenced paying more accurately determined contributions to the Qld P&F Federation by way of payments for: rental of office space; payment for *photocopying* which is now very accurately recorded; use of *landline phone* and *teleconferencing*; Graphic Designer and Office Administrator (4 hours per week); Accountant (three hours per week); payment for furniture and *IT costs* (those items listed in *italics* were also paid in part/full prior to 2017).

Role of the Executive Officer

The role of the Executive Officer continues to evolve as the role of CSPA continues to expand. As the CSPA DET funded project nears completion across 2018 this will place CSPA in a more visible position in the parent engagement space – a position which will be vitally enhanced by the quality of the Parent Engagement Tool Kits. While there is obvious spin-off for CSPA, every attempt has been made to date to allocate funds from the project to cover project costs – a clear exception to this at this stage is no allocations have been made for the conducting of the interviews – and this underlines our indebtedness to the Qld P&F Federation (as discussed earlier).

The Executive Officer role is a key role that in many ways defines the maturity of CSPA's presence and assists CSPA Councillors to share their expertise in a timely and efficient manner. Across 2017, there has been further fine tuning of processes to maximise efficiency with the working of our finances and budgeting an example of this. Greater efficiencies need to be generated through more effective working parties and it is planned that councillors as members of Focus Area Teams will contribute more through the implementation of strategies as outlined in the CSPA Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020.

It continues to be a real privilege serving the CSPA Council and the CSPA Executive through my role as Executive Officer. At this stage, weekly work hours see me working at capacity and with the continued assistance through the Qld office and some step-up from councillors across 2018 I believe there is just about sufficient time in the main to *get the job done*. I thank the Qld office for their pleasant, informative and generous administrative, design and accountancy support and in closing I particularly once again thank Tony O'Byrne, and Carmel Nash for her wise counsel and on-going support around my ever evolving role.

John O'Brien
Executive Officer
February 2018