

## The Future of the P&C Federation

Email from **David Hope**  
President, Northern Sydney Council of P&C Associations

Hello everyone,

Editions of ENews have not been as frequent as usual of late for which I apologise. This has been due to the recent fast-moving pace and time-consuming nature of issues around “the troubles” within the P&C Federation, including legal action in the Supreme Court. Hopefully we can now resume full focus on our District Council.

The troubles have been brewing for quite a few years now with growing tensions within the governing body. The Minister, in deciding to withdraw the Federation’s Government grant of \$380,000 last year highlighted these tensions in the governing body along with “poor service levels” to school P&C Associations.

There is an urgent need to provide improved service levels to P&Cs including proactive measures such as manuals, model documents, tick lists, etc to help them navigate the increasingly complex legislation affecting their businesses such as Canteens, Uniform Shops, Before and After School Care, and sub-committee activities such as performing arts and sports. These pieces of legislation cover such things as employee awards and fair work issues, workplace safety, child safety, tax issues and financial reporting. The documentation will provide proactive support to schools which will help to avoid the messy relationship issues at their P&Cs, legal sanctions or fines.

The troubles have been well documented in communications to school P&Cs from various sources - so I don’t intend to go into any more detail at this time. There was and is an urgent need to put in place transparent, accountable and effective governance arrangements to protect the assets of the Federation (about \$2m) and make the best use of the annual income (about \$1.5m) – all of which are only possible through the volunteer fundraising activities of P&C members in their schools and therefore must be utilised in the most efficient and effective way possible. Suffice to say that I wish the legislative action was taken somewhat earlier.

Scroll down for further information on the Minister’s changes to the NSW P&C Federation.

### **What happens now?**

The Department of Education has written to schools providing information on interim arrangements under the Administrator and thereafter under the new governing body (see below). Principals will be receiving further material in due course, including information on running ballots related to elections of people to P&C Federation roles.

I would expect in the coming weeks and months a series of communications to P&Cs from the Administrator outlining his plans, decisions and progress. Given the governance issues over the past year, I would also expect the Administrator to provide a report which covers the operations of the Federation to confirm that all expenditures and activities in the name of the Federation had met constitutional and legal requirements.

Your P&C may decide to nominate one or more of your members for the new roles of Councillor or Delegate (2), and I'd encourage people to consider putting their hands up for these new roles. I expect that these roles will be fulfilling and enjoyable, and the successful candidates will play important roles in promoting public education from the parents perspective; in ensuring that the P&C Federation provides quality, value-for-money services; and in ensuring transparency and accountability in governance.

## **Update on the Minister's Changes to the P&C Federation and the appointment of an Administrator**

As reported in the media, Minister Adrian Piccoli introduced a Bill to Parliament called the Parents and Citizens Associations Incorporation Amendment Bill 2014, which passed into law on Friday 16 May 2014.

You can see the new Act along with other details at:

<http://tinyurl.com/P-CAct2014> or

[www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/nswbills.nsf/131a07fa4b8a041cca256e610012de17/51545031bfbd9a16ca257cd7001e1150](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/nswbills.nsf/131a07fa4b8a041cca256e610012de17/51545031bfbd9a16ca257cd7001e1150)

You can see details of the new arrangements at: [www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/a-z/involvement.php](http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/gotoschool/a-z/involvement.php)

The effect of this Act is to replace the existing governance arrangements, and to put in place an Administrator whilst this takes place.

**Garry Payne** (see his short biography at [www.pac.nsw.gov.au/Members/tabid/57/Default.aspx](http://www.pac.nsw.gov.au/Members/tabid/57/Default.aspx) ) was appointed as the **Administrator** of the NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations on 23 May 2014 by a notice in the Government Gazette.

**The new governance structure** has 16 Federation Electoral Areas across NSW of varying size.

Each electorate will elect one councillor, forming the Board of Management, as well as two delegates to attend the Annual General Meeting.

The Board of Management will elect an Executive Committee of seven which will then select from its own ranks the President and Office Bearers.

The NSW Electoral Commission will conduct the inaugural election of 16 councillors and 32 delegates from 16 electorates. Elections will occur every two years from that point on.

## **Important Educational Matters**

Since at least last August, the Federation has had difficulty making any contribution to the many changes taking place in school education. These include the Australian Curriculum; Teacher Quality; Local Schools, Local Decisions and the associated new school funding model; Every Student, Every School (an initiative aimed at providing better learning and support for the 90,000 students with a disability, learning difficulties or behaviour support needs); and Federal Funding of public schools supporting the Gonski principles.

Our District Council has been part of an **alliance of District Councils** which will be able to continue to contribute to advocating on these national issues and on local issues, particularly in the period prior to the new governing body taking up the reins in Term 4, 2014. My view is that District Councils will continue to provide a valuable link between local and State levels, and be effective in exchanging information, providing support and providing a voice for P&Cs.

**David Hope**

**President, Northern Sydney Council of P&C Associations**