



Chief Minister and Treasury Directorates
GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2601

CC: Andrew Barr MLA, Treasurer, ACT Government
Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Education

Via email: budgetconsultation@act.gov.au

Dear Treasurer and Minister for Education,

RE: ACT Budget Consultation – 2020/2021

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the development of the ACT Government's 2020/2021 Budget.

APFACTS is the autonomous and independent voice for parents and carers of students attending non-government schools (Catholic and Independent) in the ACT - representing over 33 per cent of the ACT schooling population.

We are committed to a cooperative and collaborative working relationship with the ACT Government in maintaining high quality educational outcomes for all ACT students and the right for parents to choose the best fit for their child's learning.

Yours Sincerely,

Mrs Jennifer Rickard
APFACTS Executive Officer

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NON-GOVERNMENT PARENT VOICE

ACT BUDGET CONSULTATION SUBMISSION 2020-2021

APFACTS advocates that the following be included in the 2020/2021 budget.

**Dedicated School Bus Service
Infrastructure to support Active Travel
Wellbeing panel and programs inclusive of Parents and Families
BSSS Funding**

ABOUT APFACTS

APFACTS is the peak body and advocate for parents and carers whose children attend non-government schools (Catholic and independent) in the ACT. APFACTS is an independent autonomous body of diverse parents.

APFACTS advances the interests of the broader non-government parent community through engagement with government, key stakeholder groups, as well as keeping its membership informed on latest and emerging education issues.

As a non-denominational and a-political organisation, APFACTS aims to:

- support parents and parent associations
- promote and facilitate parent school partnerships and parent engagement
- promote the interests of parents from non-government schools in all aspects of education
- promote the views of parents to education stakeholders, government and key stakeholders in the education arena
- advocate fairness, equity and improvement in education for all children in the ACT

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- respect and represent the right of parents to choose the best schooling fit for their child without unreasonable financial disadvantage

APFACTS believes in the fundamental human right of parents to choose the best schooling fit for their children, this belief is endorsed by the Declaration of Human Rights (article 26).

ACT parents value choice and diversity in education providers to partner in the education journey of their children. The ACT education landscape shows enrolments of over 33% of children in the non-government sector, the highest in the country.

DEDICATED BUS SERVICE

Parents of children at non-government school were disproportionately affected by the changes to the new public transport network. The remaining services lack equal access for students. For example, Marist is co-located (650m away) and shares services with Melrose High. Combined they have enrolments of 2327 and 10 services that feed into Weston, Woden, Tuggeranong and the Inner south. Of these services only 3 feed into an interchange. In comparison, Brindabella Christian College and Lyneham have 1981 enrolments and a distance of 1km. And no shared services and only 4 dedicated bus services in total.

APFACTS recently conducted a survey about bus travel. 171 parents across all sectors participated. Overwhelmingly they supported dedicated bus travel to be the priority for travel to school. The second preferred method of travel was school "S" strips followed by active travel. 77% of respondents were either disappointed or very disappointed in their current service.

APFACTS understanding is that students wish to independently travel to school via a safe, efficient transport service. Currently they are unable to do so due to the reduction in safe services. The public transport system is proving to be too time consuming and unsafe due to the lack of direct services.

APFACTS advocates that a thorough needs analysis be conducted before reinstating dedicated bus services for all schools.

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INFRASTRUCTURE TO SUPPORT STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN ACTIVE TRAVEL

APFACTS understands that the biggest barrier to children participating in active travel to get to and from school is parental perception of safety. Additional barriers are the load students are required to carry and what is perceived as a suitable distance to travel.

We draw your attention to the document produced by the University of Canberra titled “Rapid review of evidence: Policy and provision of physical activity for Australian school children, with special consideration of safe active travel to school”. This document recommends that children and parents are engaged in authentic community consultation to create change. Additionally, it recommends that infrastructure to support active travel is imperative to its uptake.

Infrastructure upgrades should include bike maintenance stations at schools and shopping centres as is the case in Manly NSW to enable students to fix their bike if they get a flat tyre or a bike chain mishap. Additionally, bike paths need to have a physical barrier from the road to ensure their travellers safety and the parents perception of safety.

Additionally, schools need to provide accessible and secure charging stations so that laptops can be charged securely at school and not have to be transported to and from home via bikes. As well as other procedure for safe storage of sports gear and uniform.

APFACTS advocates that infrastructure upgrades around schools and along popular active travel routes to increase parents' perception of safety around active travel. These upgrades need to be planned in conjunction with students and parents to ensure they are meeting the expectations.

STUDENT WELLBEING PANEL & PROGRAMS THAT INCLUDE PARENT AND FAMILY PARTICIPATION

A 2018 Australian Parents Council survey found that the second biggest concern in Education was their children's wellbeing at school. Our schools are the hub of our community and as such they should be central to support services. APFACTS is well aware of the great work being done in schools to ensure our students

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wellbeing and applauds it being a central focus. However, as much as schools are central to community, family is central to children and students and as such wellbeing programs need to be accessible. Often when a family is in crisis it is difficult to find access or even identify the services and help that is required. APFACTS advocates that a cross sectoral panel be stood up inclusive of parents, teachers, school counsellors, service providers and professionals to map out the services and come up with a way for families to access series and programs that would be beneficial to their circumstances. As well as advise government of any gaps of deficiencies.

BSSS FUNDING

APFACTS is aware that the ACT is the only remaining jurisdiction to not teach to a final year 12 test. APFACTS is very passionate that the way the currently Senior Secondary Studies are delivered remains as it is. Currently, the ACT BSSS leads the way in Australia in regard to its curriculum development and integrations of senior secondary pathways. To maintain its innovative and progressive advantage the BSSS needs to be adequately funded to continue to achieve this.

APFACTS advocates that the BSSS has an increase in funding to maintain its status as the leading Senior Secondary Studies Institution in Australia to maintain its innovative and progressive approach.

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