

# ACT Gifted Families Support Group Inc

## Submission to 2019-20 Budget Consultation

The ACT promotes itself to be the education capital. Families, teachers and professionals all highly value the ACT's high-quality public education system. But is it equally meeting the needs of all its children?

The ACT Gifted Families Support Group (ACT GFSG) is a small, not-for-profit association run entirely by volunteers. Our focus is on supporting and advancing the needs of gifted and talented children by bringing together parents, teachers and other professionals to share and learn practical ideas and listen to the research. The ACT GFSG is an affiliate of the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented which publishes the academic journal *Australasian Journal of Gifted Education*.

During the past year we have hosted learning forums in the form of dinner events and coffee and chats, provided telephone and one on one support to families new to the concept of gifted and talented or who are looking for additional information and support and had 2 outstanding Australian researchers lecture to teachers and parents.

Of course, all children are gifts, all children have gifts, but not all children are "gifted" in the sense in which that term is employed in the research literature: having natural ability in the top 10% of their age cohort. *Source: AAEGT GAW Founding Statement, <http://www.aegt.net.au/wp-content/uploads/AAEGT-GAW-Founding-Statement.pdf>*

There are many well-known definitions and models of gifted in the academic literature. One example is the Actiotope Model of Giftedness. **The Actiotope Model of Giftedness** seeks to determine whether a person will one day be in the position to perform excellent actions in a talent domain, i.e. actions, which persons normally would not be in the position to perform even following intense occupation in the domain with the benefit of rigorous support. *Source: Zeigler and Stoger 2004 Identification based on ENTER within the Conceptual Frame of the Actiotope Model of Giftedness, Psychology Science Vol 46.*

During our events throughout this year and in previous years, one of the most commonly stated issues with the ACT school system is that gifted children in some public schools are getting their learning and social/emotional needs met, and in other schools in the system gifted children are not getting either identified or have their needs met.

One of the key issues is the need for additional knowledge and training of all levels of school staff in meeting the needs of gifted learners. Principals, senior teachers and school leaders, classroom teachers, the learning support assistants and school counsellors need to receive compulsory training throughout their career. Some Principals and teachers may have had as little as two hours in total in their preservice teacher training. There is currently no minimum level of study in gifted education school staff need to complete. So only Principals, staff and teachers who have invested time in studying gifted education meet the needs of gifted children in their school. Currently, none of the

ACT universities provide opportunities for training in gifted education subjects, unlike universities in other states in Australia.

A second key issue is the heavy reliance for identification on expensive intelligence testing. An external psychologist may conduct an intelligence test for a gifted child, but the cost is often over \$1000 pricing it out of the reach of many of our families. A school psychologist may also conduct an intelligence test, but the testing and completion of the reporting takes many hours, and it is not a priority in schools where the psychologists' time is a limited resource. However, the result is fewer gifted children from low socio-economic backgrounds in the ACT are identified by this measure.

A third key need for improving gifted education in the ACT is the lack of dedicated funding. Dedicated funding would create a pool of funds that schools must use to identify and provide for the learning needs of gifted and talented children.

To continue to improve our efforts to support gifted children and their families and teachers the ACT GFSG is asking for funds from the ACT Education Directorate to allow us to provide additional speakers into the ACT to present research on meeting the needs of gifted and talented children. The small sum of \$20,000 would go partway to improving our ability to do this.

In summary gifted and talented children in the ACT need the ACT budget for 2019-20 to provide funds for:

1. Training of all school staff: Principals, senior teachers, school leaders, classroom teachers, support workers and psychologists to better meet the needs of these children,
2. Investigate and implement a system of identification that is available to all children regardless of a family's socio-economic status,
3. Provide schools with a dedicated fund of money to meet the needs of gifted children, and
4. Provide \$20,000 in funding to the ACT GFSG to allow it to increase the number of researchers it can bring to the ACT to share their knowledge on meeting the needs of gifted and talented children.

Please contact me for further information.

Yours sincerely,

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