

APC President's Report
31st August 2017

Communication, communication, communication!

It's the word that describes both the successes and challenges of the year. When communication has been consistent and clear, crafted and concise, it's amazing what has been achieved, and the bits that haven't been done so well are the learnings that will be taken forward and remedied.

APC has been active in advocating for parents at the national level on a number of fronts, from the very successful #parentech campaign begun last year and continuing recently, through to our active and visible participation in the recent school funding debate. In putting forward the parent perspective, it's important to know what parents think and although not perfect, APC has provided many opportunities for that unique and crucial perspective to be garnered and shared. There are of course improvements to be made and it all comes down to... *communication* and to this end, clarity of process for members seeking to provide input and feedback, including through social media platforms.

APC has also had representation on various committees aimed at the involvement of parents in extra-curricular activities through to careers education strategy development and much in-between. Whilst our inclusion is undoubtedly valued, there is work still to be done in making sure the parent perspective continues to be strongly heard, for we are the primary educators of our children and the ones most invested in their success. This requires working with and alongside other like-minded organisations, principally ACSSO, CSPA and ICPA and although not as focussed or as successful as hoped, the joint meeting in February could at least be considered a start to this collaboration. Again, there is much work to be done and it all comes down to... *communication!*

Two other notable successes this year have been the revision of the Family-School Partnerships Framework through the Family-School Partnerships Bureau and APC's involvement in the ARACY Parent Engagement conference. Although the Bureau is no longer funded by the Australian Government, it lives on in the great resources it produced for all Australian schools and their communities, from research papers to the revised framework. This work was led by the governance committee and I would like to acknowledge Charuni Weerasooriya's unwavering commitment to the Bureau and its governance over the last year and to Caz Bosch who was contracted to do the revision of the original framework. DET staff, ACSSO members and APC saw a successful conclusion to the Bureau on the 30th June this year.

The ARACY conference was a great success and for APC, an opportunity to showcase its parent-to-parent programs and the learnings of the #parentech campaign V1, both being received very favourably. The conference also confirmed to APC and to many others that there needs to be a focus on pre-service teacher understanding and practice of parent engagement in learning, for the benefit of teachers themselves but most importantly for the achievements of and potential within our children. This is just one advocacy position APC will be working with others to influence national policy reform in the future. Yet again, in relation to advocacy for parent/family engagement and political advocacy in general, both equally require good and clear *communication*.

Turning to the internal machinations of the organisation – there have been major changes this year. Firstly, a newbie President finding her feet and on a very steep learning trajectory after taking on the ship that Caz expertly steered for 11 years! Secondly, the adoption of a new Constitution which broadened APC's remit whilst remaining centred on parents and their needs, expanded

opportunities for new membership both generally and on the Board, and recognised the set-up of a DGR fund within the organisation's governance and operations, essentially to facilitate the merge of Parents Australia Inc. into APC. Both these changes have brought new challenges for the staff, the Board and the members alike, but more positively, they have expanded APC's horizon and there is much to be achieved in the next year making the most of the foresight that has gone before to provide these opportunities. And it all comes down to...*communication!*

With these internal changes also come the ability to re-focus APC's contribution to the national landscape, and be different. It was identified early last year that campaigns with a current topic that connects with parents and families was an area not yet undertaken by similar national organisations and hence Parentech was conceived with V1 being launched last September. It took the pulse of three aspects of technology in the digital age – living, learning and safety and it was obvious that there was more to be deeply explored in all three areas but also a need for more conversation and collaborative solution-building around some of the issues and concerns faced by parents each day. Version 2 was created in partnership with Charuni through her business, Edii, and this continues to be very successfully rolled-out across Australia. APC extends its appreciation to Charuni for her time and thought-leadership with this project.

Many years ago, APC put considerable investment into the development of the Indigenous Parent Factor, which has been delivered through Parents Australia for the last 6 years, and in 2012, the writing of the Successful Learning in the Early Years program. Both have undergone several revisions and evaluations and this year the online facilitator training for Successful Learning was delivered to three affiliated parent organisations, who are now able to offer and deliver the program into schools and other communities, a valuable member benefit. Additionally, the IPF training was delivered in New South Wales by Caz and her colleague Danni, which is the first time outside of Western Australia for many years. Although driven by the Board, the implementation and online training of the Successful Learning program has been the work of Jacqui van de Velde as well as the co-ordination of the IPF training in NSW. This is a significant achievement and sincere and heartfelt thanks to Jacqui for making this a reality. Our attention turns to the Certificate IV and its launch later this year, with both Jacqui and Caz making good progress on the many elements that require attention for it to be a success.

Behind the scenes, Jo Lonergan and Caz continue to put together APC's long-standing and very well-received APC Review and although changes are afoot in its delivery, we are immensely grateful for their commitment to writing its content that is significant and always topical. To Philippa Ryan, who has provided admin support quietly and efficiently during the year and to Charuni, who besides the parentech campaign, through her communications role, has made an extraordinary contribution to, and impact for, APC.

APC's governance is sound, with a united and focussed Board, well documented policies and processes, and all regulatory compliance aspects in order, including its finances. The merge of APC and PA will reduce the overheads and duplication which will further streamline the organisation's operations. Much of this work as well as the administrative components are very ably conducted by David Williams, who not only provides exemplary management but also a very willing sounding board and sage advice – something all of us have availed ourselves of this past year. David's calm and measured approach is extraordinary and very much appreciated, thank you.

Two last notes of thanks – firstly to the staff at the Department of Education who have supported APC over many years and in particular this year with the closure of the Bureau. Their interest in what we do and their financial support are very welcomed and greatly appreciated. And lastly but by no means least, to my fellow APC Board members – Hugh, Eveline, Michael, Agnes, Shafia and

Stephen. The cliché – “a rollercoaster of a ride”, is perhaps an appropriate description of what we’ve been on this year – but we’ve all got to the end together and are still smiling and *communicating*, even better than when we started. My sincere thanks to all you for your invaluable contribution to the organisation’s direction and operations and for supporting me personally, I am very grateful and it makes me proud to lead such a wonderful, loyal group of people.

It must be remembered that APC is a collection of committed and passionate people, some voluntary, some paid, all with personal and professional lives yet all united in doing the best for the parents they serve. It is also a collection of organisations, all with their own agenda’s, struggles and achievements yet all committed to doing the best by the parents and communities they represent. It is no mean feat to bring everyone along on the same ride and there will always be bumps along the way. And you guessed it, it all comes down to... *communication*! There is nothing quite like a friendly phone call or a face-to-face meeting to reignite the passion we all share and so I make the commitment on behalf of myself but also APC, that we will continue to work on talking and walking this journey together to find a way forward and to best serve the communities we all so love.

Shelley Hill
President