

Parents & Friends Federation of WA Inc.  
Newsletter Term 2 2017

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Parents and Friends Federation of Western Australia Inc

## Welcome to our Term 2 Newsletter

❖ Service    ❖ Advocacy    ❖ Representation  
❖ Liaison    ❖ Networking    ❖ Collaboration    ❖ Celebration

*Parents working together for Positive Catholic School Communities*



## Message from the President

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to our Term 2 Newsletter!

At PFFWA's recent Annual General Meeting, held on 27 April 2017, at St Peter's Catholic Primary School, we gathered as a group to hear about LEADing Lights from Aidan McCarthy - CEWA, discuss PFFWA future directions, to elect new councillors and to appoint executive positions on council. At the AGM I was delighted and honoured to be elected President of Parents and Friends Federation of WA.

One of my challenges as President will be my location. I have lived in Broome for over 17 years and I can never see my husband and I ever leaving our beautiful town. We are business owners in Broome, have two beautiful biological daughters and we are also foster parents. We have loved another 10 children, as our own, over the past four years. Helping families in need in our community by taking children into our home is a humbling and enriching experience in our lives.

I am also the President of St Mary's College P&F in Broome and I coach both my girl's netball teams. Writing this little introduction I feel that all I do is volunteer my time however I couldn't do it without the support of my husband and girls. I also find time to work with my husband and bake cakes for special occasions.

I was recently lucky enough to attend the inaugural Parent Engagement Conference, hosted by Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People (ARACY) together with the Smith

Family in Melbourne earlier this month with PFFWA councillors and staff. The exposure to world renowned experts in the field of parent engagement has truly changed my way of thinking about my own children's teachers. I am meeting with my school principal to help introduce some simple strategies into the school and I will share this journey with you all so that you too can enrich your child's learning. Parent engagement is for all parents and doesn't need to be complicated or hard to achieve.

While in Melbourne I also attended, as an observer, both an Australian Parents Council (APC) and Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) meeting. Amongst many other agenda items, both meetings addressed the Australian Education Amendment Bill 2017 and are ensuring that the parent perspective is being heard at the national level.

As the independent voice of parents in our affiliated Catholic schools, PFFWA also provides resources to assist parents in developing positive relationships with both their school communities and Catholic Education of WA. I'm looking forward to working with the committed volunteers and staff of PFFWA to further develop our organisation. Please do not hesitate to contact our office and I am always willing to help where I can.

Peace and blessings,

Nat Giancono

With God, all things are possible. MARK 10:27



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## In this newsletter...

- *What We've Been Up To*
- *Dr Debbie Pushor-Leading the Way in parent Engagement*
- *Road Trip to Geraldton*
- *CSPA Update*
- *APC Update*
- *PFFWA AGM Report*
- *Keeping Your Kids safe online.*
- *Parent Engagement Conference*
- *Introducing the Parent Engagement Coordinator at Sacred Heart College.*
- *Upcoming Events*

# What we've been up to...

We've had a very busy Term 2 in the office commencing with our AGM in the first week back after school holidays. We are delighted to welcome four new members to PFFWA council and we also congratulate those who have been elected as executive members of council. Our guest speaker on the night was Aidan McCarthy- who introduced us to LEADing Lights the new digital system being implemented at Catholic Education.



PFFWA trip to the Geraldton Diocese was very successful with visits and meetings with parents and principals from four different schools. We would like to thank all those parents who took to time to meet with us and welcome us into their school communities. It's always very inspirational to see the work that parents do particularly in the rural and remote areas..

Additional activities include:

- Annual General Meeting on Thursday 27th April
- Siobhan and Theresa had a very productive meeting with Minister Sue Ellery ensuring the parent perspective continues to be heard at a State level
- Siobhan, Shelley and Theresa visited schools in the Geraldton region
- Staff and council members attended the ARACY conference on Parent Engagement in Melbourne from 6th June - 10th June
- Siobhan , Nat , Joe and Theresa attended the Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) meeting in Melbourne while Shelley and Agnes attend the APC meeting also in Melbourne.
- Siobhan and Theresa continue school outreach visiting school parent groups to offer advice and support.
- Delivery of Successful Learning in 3 schools
- Council and staff continue to represent the Federation on numerous committees within Catholic Education and also at a State and National level.
- Providing the parent perspective into the development of the parent portal in the innovative LEADing lights ecosystem.



Some photos from our recent AGM



# Dr Debbie Pushor-Leading The Way in Parent Engagement



The Parents and Friends Federation of WA (PFFWA) recently welcomed Canadian educator Dr Debbie Pushor from the University of Saskatchewan to Perth to speak about Parent Engagement in children's learning and well being. Whilst in Perth, Dr Pushor presented two workshops over two days to a diverse audience of parents, principals, board chairs, parent engagement advocates and Department of Education personnel among st others.

One of Dr Pushor's key messages for those involved in the education of children and young people, both parents and school staff, is to develop an understanding of the continuum between **parent involvement**, where parents help out on school trips, join the P&F or organise fundraising activities and **parent engagement** where the activities are focused on teaching and learning outcomes and where parent knowledge is incorporated into these activities. Although both are necessary, in the school environment and also in the home, they actually lead to significantly different outcomes, as research demonstrates that while parent engagement contributes to academic outcomes, parent involvement does not necessarily have this impact but rather benefits the "vibe". The attendees at the workshops appreciated the explicit examples Dr Pushor provided that they can use in their schools and homes.

Dr Pushor reminded attendees that in order to progress parent engagement we need to understand the necessity of building respectful partnerships between the home and school. In doing this we need to be respectful of each others expertise and understand the many ways of communicating in order to make this happen.

*"There is over 50 years of research to tell us that parent engagement has a positive influence on our student's learning....so how are we addressing it in our schools?"*

*We need to be visionary in our thinking and planning to take the time and make more of an effort to learn the stories of the family's that are attending our schools. What are the hopes and dreams of the parents for their children? As teachers, we have our own ideas but how do we address the dreams of the parents for their children? Do we make time to ask parents and acknowledge their vision? Do we create activities that emphasize relationships rather than governance with our families? Do our staff have a clear understanding of parent engagement? How our universities addressing our graduate teachers in parental engagement so that they come to schools with a clear understanding of how vital it is to build positive relationships with parents? "*

***-Catholic Primary School teacher attendee at workshop.***

Dr Pushor was also a keynote speaker at the recent Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People (ARACY) conference in Melbourne. PFFWA sent five delegates to the conference with Siobhan Allen and Shelley

Hill both participating as presenters.



## Road Trip To Geraldton

At the beginning of Term 2 Siobhan, Shelley and Theresa were delighted to take up an invitation to visit some of the Catholic schools in the Geraldton Diocese. We visited four of the schools in the region and enjoyed the wonderful conversation and hospitality all the parents and principals had to offer including those from St Francis Xavier PS, St Johns School Rangeway, St Lawrence's Primary School Bluff Point, and St Mary's Northampton. We look forward to hearing from St Marys over the course of the next year regarding the wonderful plans they have for celebrating 150 years of Catholic education in Northampton in 2018.

Whilst in Geraldton we also facilitated a Successful Learning workshop at the Catholic Centre and again it was great to have representation from all four schools present including a very committed grandmother!. Thank you in particular to Haley Morris from St Francis Xavier who organised the venue, AV requirements and was so helpful while we were there.

Shelley along with Caz Bosch was also busy delivering the Indigenous Parent Factor (IPF) program at the offices of Centacare Family Services in Geraldton

Only for the fact Theresa got us slightly lost on the way home (!) it was a great experience.





# Catholic School Parents Australia Update



Catholic School Parents Australia gather for their quarterly meeting in Melbourne.

Joe Monterosso and Siobhan Allen, the Parents and Friends Federation of WA (PFFWA) representatives on CSPA attended the recent meeting of the group which took place on Friday & Saturday 9th & 10th June. As Theresa McDonnell and Nat Giancono were also in Melbourne for the ARACY Parent Engagement Conference, both were invited along as observers to the meeting. PFFWA always welcomes the opportunity to bring observers to these national meetings as it allows more of our council members to become familiar with the work that goes on at a national level on behalf of parents in Catholic schools.

Funding for students in Catholic schools and the recently proposed Australian Education Amendment Act 2017 was one of the key items on the agenda for the meeting. Danielle Cronin (Acting Director of the National Catholic Education Commission) addressed the meeting and provided information about the various aspects of the proposed new funding model. As members of CSPA, PFFWA are working extremely hard with the national body to ensure that the parent perspective is heard clearly in the discussions around funding.

CSPA are currently engaged in a major research project identifying parent engagement practices in both primary and secondary school settings across all education sectors Australia wide. The project has already commenced with many school principals having participated in the initial survey process including here in WA. The next part of the project involves interviews with school principals who have agreed to participate in order to identify what practices and understanding already exists about parent engagement and how it impacts student learning and wellbeing. The project is being run with financial support from the Australian Government Department of Education and Training through the Grants and Awards Program 2015-16 to 2018-19.

The group was also fortunate to have Dr Debbie Pushor – University of Saskatchewan, Canada, join them for a conversation about some of the myths that surround the concept of parent engagement, particularly in the secondary school environment. It seems many parents think that it is too hard to engage with secondary schools and that indeed their children don't want them around at this stage. However both Dr Pushor and the members of CSPA felt that in fact it was more important than ever that parents remain engaged at this stage in their child's educational journey. Subject choice, engagement in learning, time management and high expectations were just some of the areas that parent knowledge and engagement can have a positive impact on their child's learning. Catholic School Parents Australia offered their sincere thanks to Dr Pushor who made herself available to travel to all states across Australia to work with the peak parent groups, including of course the Parents and Friends Federation of WA.

The next CSPA meeting is being hosted by Iona Collage, Brisbane. Iona Collage is a brother school to our own Mazenod College here in Perth and Principal, Fr Michael Twigg OMI is also a member of CSPA.

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# Australian Parents Council Update

The Australian Parents Council have been providing a parent voice at the federal level in relation to the recent school funding announcements. In early May, a webinar for APC affiliates was conducted with the Minister for Education, Senator Simon Birmingham to ask him some questions about the proposed model.

The APC submission to the Senate Committee on Education and Employment - Inquiry into the Australian Education Amendment Act 2017 points out some areas that we believe need to be reviewed to ensure parents can continue to have choice in where they send their children to school and that the financial impact on family budgets is contained to the normal fee increases we see every year.

In addition to the advocacy, APC have also been promoting the Successful Learning in the Early Years program for parents, with the PFFWA and the Tasmanian Catholic Schools Parents Council conducting the workshops in many schools, running the Indigenous Parent Factor training in Geraldton and Sydney, attending various meetings and working groups, and presenting [Parentech](#)-parenting in the digital age, at the recent Parent Engagement conference in Melbourne.

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## AGM Report



The Parents and Friends Federation WA Inc held their AGM on Thursday 27th April 2017. We had many parents attend what was a very successful evening. Aidan McCarthy, the Head of Digital Transformation gave an insightful presentation on LEADing Lights the new digital ecosystem at Catholic Education WA. Along with many other innovations, this new system will connect parents with their child's school and teachers. It will enable parents to monitor their child's academic progress and communicate with their teachers efficiently and effectively. The new system will also have the capability to monitor student wellbeing through various means and will enable teachers to be alerted to potential problems and get to at-risk students quickly and safely.

PFFWA staff and council would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our new executive members who were elected on the evening:

Natalie Giancono - President  
Helen Anderson - Vice President

Joe Monterosso - Treasurer  
Marina Hayward - Secretary  
Rev Fr Perreau - Spiritual Director

We also warmly welcome our new councillors and wish them well in their new roles:

- Anna Wood - St Kieran CPS , Servite College, Mercedes College
- Gina McEntee - Padbury Catholic Primary School
- Rebecca Furfaro - Salvado Catholic College
- Tamara Piscopo - St Maria Goretti's Catholic Primary School

Click [Here](#) to view the Annual Report 2017



KEEP YOUR **KIDS**  
**SAFE** Online



Welcome to [iparent](#)—where parents can learn about the digital environment and keep updated on their children's technology use.

## Parent Engagement Conference

Staff and council members had the opportunity to attend the recent conference on Parent Engagement in Melbourne. The Australian Parent Engagement Conference was jointly hosted by ARACY (Australian Research Alliance for Children and Young People) and The Smith Family, and was supported by funding from the Department of Education and Training.

The conference was opened by Stephen Bartos - CEO of ARACY and aimed to bring research, policy and practice together to advance discussion about the importance of parent engagement in maximising every child's learning potential. A key focus was on ways to increase the effectiveness of parent engagement strategies through relationships, capacity building.

The three days included an outstanding line-up of international keynote speakers who are experts in parent engagement including Dr Karen Mapp - Harvard Graduate School Education, Dr Debbie Pushor - University of Saskatchewan, Canada, Prof Bill Lucas - International Advisor for Mitchell Institute and University of Winchester. Dr Heather Weiss - Harvard Graduate School, Dr Tim Moore - Murdoch Child Research Centre and Jenni Brasington - Scholastic Education were also amongst the presenters, all of whom provided some excellent presentations that demonstrated high impact, evidence-based engagement strategies. Other speakers shared examples of quality program practice and in-depth



examination from a variety of school and community contexts, linking research evidence with real-world applications.

The conference was an excellent insight into the positive impacts of parent engagement, how to create a complimentary and supportive relationship between home and school, that will enhance our children's learning and well being.

In summing up, Dr Lisa O'Brien, CEO of The Smith Family, asked how we were going to translate the evidence that had been provided throughout the conference into practice? Some of the key points that were outlined included:

- As parents, we all want what is best for our children.
- We need to approach problems in a different way- with a growth mindset. Parent and family engagement is the glue that connects the worlds of learning and well being. (Bill Lucas)
- For our children, every setting is a learning setting.
- The importance of conversations - with our children, with teachers and school leadership teams and which lead to building respectful relationships.
- Karen Mapp's comment that there is no such thing as the 'hard to reach parents' rather it is the 'hard to penetrate institutions'.
- Dr Tim Moore's comments that the neuro-biological basis for our communications are all revolved around relationships and how service is delivered.
- Debbie Pushor's wonderful insight that parent knowledge walks alongside teacher knowledge for better outcomes for children and young people.

PFFWA will continue the conversation and will be collating the knowledge gained at the conference to create opportunities where we can provide service and support to parents to encourage and enhance parent engagement in their children's learning. If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact the office.



## New Parent Engagement Coordinator at Sacred Heart College

Sacred Heart College, Sorrento has a rich history of parent and college partnership in students' education. The importance of this partnership is acknowledged even more so by the appointment of Liza Baskovich as the new Parent Engagement Coordinator

Throughout her time as a parent at Sacred Heart, Liza has immensely enjoyed being active within the College community. She has also felt pride in the generosity and spirit shared by the parents of the College actively contributing to the wider community, carrying out the charism of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions.

Being parents of four boys, two already having graduated from the College, Liza and her husband have found that being part of the SHC community has been not just fun, but an excellent opportunity to meet other parents socially. They have a sense of satisfaction that they have made a valuable contribution and investment in their sons' future and the future of the College.

The College knows that parents have many skills and great ideas to share. In her new role as Parent Engagement Coordinator, Liza would love to build an even stronger Sacred Heart community through broad parent engagement so a real difference can be made in our children's lives.

Liza recently attended a PFFWA Parent Engagement workshop presented by Dr Debbie Pushor and is really keen to touch base with other parents who work in similar roles to herself throughout the Catholic school communities of WA.

PFFWA are interested in setting up a reference group of parents with roles similar to Liza's and would be happy to coordinate meetings to facilitate this. The intent of the meetings would be to share what practices around Parent Engagement/Involvement are currently implemented in schools and what impact they are having. Please contact Theresa on 9271 5909 if you are interested in sharing your ideas on Parent Engagement in your school community.



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PFFWA would like to remind parents and members of Catholic school communities that should you need a sounding board to help with any issues, concerns or questions you may be having in your P&F or school community, do not hesitate to contact us and we will point you in the right direction.

The office is staffed Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday between 8.00am and 3.00pm. However should you wish to speak to anyone outside these hours, just leave a message and the call will be forwarded to a staff member who will respond as soon as they can.

Please visit our [website for the full list of events and meetings](#). For all other information, please contact our office on (08) 9271 5909 or [email](#) for more information.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Awards of Excellence
- *Screenagers* a documentary which dives deep into how technology impacts kid's development and the challenges of parenting in the digital world. Screening on August 23rd 6.30pm at Event Cinema, Morley.

- Continued delivery of Successful learning Workshops.
- SDERA How to talk to your kids about alcohol and drugs workshop- Wed 28th June 6.45pm-8.30pm Seconadry College, 180 Nollamara Ave, Dianella. For bookings phone Kelli on 9402 6267

Please visit our [website for the full list of events and meetings](#). For all other information, please contact our office on (08) 9271 5909 or [email](#) for more information.



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