



# AUSTRALIAN PARENTS COUNCIL Incorporated (white)

*The National Federation of Organisations Representing Parents of Non-government School Students*

National Secretariat  
PO Box 5011  
Launceston TAS 7250

Tel: (03) 6334 8886  
Fax (03) 6334 8862  
email:admin@austparents.edu.au

## FSCPb LAUNCH ADDRESS FROM CAZ BOSCH AUGUST 11, 2008

*The Australian Parents Council has a long history of innovation in the design and delivery of programmes that put parents at the centre, and hook them into their children's learning and school communities. Two examples are Successful Learning in the Early Years – The Parent Factor and, more recently, the Indigenous Parent Factor which APC is currently running with DEEWR's support. We also have a long history of working collaboratively with ACSSO which includes the design of programmes such as Families Matter.*

*Following persistent and persuasive dialogue and negotiations with the federal government some years ago, ACSSO and APC were really pleased to contribute to the development of an Issues Paper that focused on Family/School Partnership research - the concept and particular models - most particularly overseas research but also previous research conducted by ACSSO and APC. This led to a roundtable process, facilitated by what was then DEST, which brought together many stakeholders at many levels. A draft national Family/School Partnership Framework was produced and this went on to be trialled in 62 schools across Australia, with each school receiving \$10,000 to help them develop the concept of partnership.*

*There are a number of key principles that sit at the centre of the Framework, the first one being that parents and families are the first and foremost, and continuing, educators of their children. Also that Family-School partnerships improve student motivation and learning, and that they are based on mutual responsibility, respect and trust.*

*What did we learn about partnerships in the trialling of the Framework? We learnt that they can take many forms and it is really important that we don't box them in or prescribe what they look like. Also that it doesn't matter who initiates them – school leaders, teachers or parents – and that what is more important is what sits at the core of them including:*

- *the sharing of power, responsibility and ownership*
- *mutuality - responsive listening and dialogue on both sides, and co-operative negotiations – give and take*
- *shared aims and goals based on common understanding of what children need to succeed*
- *a commitment to joint action*

*Another thing we learned in the trial is that the school leader is the single most important factor in the development of successful partnerships – and that leadership per se is critical in building, maintaining and renewing partnerships. So, we very much look forward to developing progressive, open relationships with Principals and Principal Associations because they will underpin the success of a partnership approach. Equally, we recognise the importance of developing productive relationships with school systems in this context.*

*We learned that Family-School Partnership models were particularly successful in schools that had limited resources, with some of the best partnerships across those 62 schools operating in those with high Indigenous enrolments and substantial numbers of children from low socio-economic backgrounds.*

*We learned through the review of the trial that without the \$10,000 seed funding, many partnerships would have struggled to come into being. This suggests to me that whilst the Bureau can do many things, and has internally committed to do far more than the core deliverables it has agreed to with DEEWR, it will need additional resources to promote, support and embed the uptake of the Family-Schools Partnership Framework by schools and school communities.*

*Finally, through the review of the trials also, we became aware that many parents did not know of the existence of the draft Family-School Partnership Framework - that, somehow the document got picked up and*

*kept or lost in the school such that parents by and large had very limited access it. Obviously for parents to come into partnerships they need to have access to the same sort of 'bottom line' information as others so that mutuality and joint commitment can be built.*

*Moving forward, the Australian Parents Council committed some time ago to develop some "talk tools" - conversation starters that pick up on aspects of the Framework and interpret them into more accessible actions. APC has now rolled this project into the Bureau and it will now take on the task of developing the "talk tools", refining them, road-testing them and then disseminating them more broadly. I understand that a number of Victorian schools are potentially keen to provide assistance in this context, and this will be most welcome.*

*DEEWR is in the process of establishing a Steering Committee to support and advise the Bureau, specifically in relation to the implementation and uptake of the Family-Schools Partnership Framework. That Steering Committee, as I understand it and as I fervently hope, will contain high powered, highly committed representatives from State, Catholic and Independent school authorities, schools and the like, and we look forward to working with it.*

*APC and ACSSO are obviously highly appreciative of the new Federal Government's ongoing commitment to Family-School partnerships. It is a concept that our organisations have held close for many years and one that has real substance. There is ample and growing evidence of the power of real partnerships to positively influence children's learning, school culture and climate, and social capacity building.*

*We wish also to publicly acknowledge Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard's support of the Bureau and, as well, her support of the Framework through MCEETYA. Further to this, we acknowledge there are two clear policy directions - one in the Early Childhood Development reform agenda and one in the Schooling reform agenda - that indicate the Rudd Labor Government is committed to increasing parental involvement, engagement and partnership.*

*Whilst the Bureau has much on its plate, I have no doubt that our two organisations, APC and ACSSO, and the Bureau as a separate entity, will come up with many more creative, well constructed ideas and opportunities to assist the Government to achieve its stated policy directions.*