

P&C FEDERATION PAST PRESIDENTS REFLECT

These articles, by **Sharryn Brownlee** and **Susie Boyd**, continue our Centenary celebration series in which we ask P&C Federation Past Presidents to reflect on their time in the role

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

By **Sharryn Brownlee, P&C Federation President 2002-2006 and 2013-2014**



I joined P&C Federation NSW as a Councillor in 1997, was elected Treasurer in 1998, President in 2002, then Senior-Vice President and President again in 2013. With a hardworking

team of office bearers, Councillors and staff, we covered a wide range of committees and were involved in many exciting initiatives, both State and Federal, many of which are still running today.

We met regularly with Education Ministers and Premiers, demonstrating the important home/school partnership and the value of parents' input.

Some of the achievements during my time as Federation President included partnering and working with the following:

- St James Ethics Centre, the NSW Ecumenical Council, church and scripture leaders, laying the groundwork to get mandatory scripture classes legislation amended in 2010 to enable Ethics classes to be introduced into NSW public

schools.

- The University of Technology, securing a \$100,000 grant to pilot the P&C Debating Challenge (now The Premier's Debating Challenge), enabling public-school students to compete academically state-wide, just as talented sports students can.
- The newly-formed Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP) Committee, negotiating Working with Children Checks for teachers and parents, following outcomes from the Wood Royal Commission Report on Paedophilia.
- The Public Education Alliance, achieving smaller class sizes for K-2 so that young children could have targeted support needs identified earlier.
- The Cancer Council NSW, implementing the sun-safe 'no hat no play' policy, ensuring all primary school children are protected from harmful UV rays.
- NSW Health's NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy, increasing the availability of healthy food and drink options for students.

- The Auditor-General on annual school reports as a means of reporting to parents and taxpayers.
- The Pedestrian Council, which started 'Walk Safely to School Day'. P&C Federation insisted 'safely' be added due to concerns about distance, modes of transport and lack of footpaths.
- P&C Federation was also involved in the introduction of the 40km school zones policy in 2003. This became a bipartisan commitment, but we needed to use every media and meeting opportunity to insist all schools had flashing lights to warn motorists, so it was about saving lives and not revenue raising.

These achievements offer an insight into the power of partnerships and what P&C Federation can achieve, with so many others supporting. As partners in our children's education, it was only fitting that we were given a special place at the table and heavily involved. I felt very privileged to represent NSW parents and their P&C Associations.

MAKING SCHOOLS A BETTER PLACE

By **Susie Boyd, President P&C Federation 2016-2019**



Attending my first P&C Conference in 2007 was like peeking behind the curtain in the Wizard of Oz – I was hooked, became a P&C councillor

for South-western Sydney, and was elected to the executive in 2012. Following a restructure of the organisation in 2013, I was elected to the role of Secretary in 2014, then President in 2016.

Stopping the privatisation of public-school camp facilities was one of my top three outcomes as President, as for some children, their fondest school memories are those they made at camp.

The second was the unlinking of NAPLAN from HSC eligibility in 2018 which removed enormous levels of stress from parents and

students. P&C Federation once again worked with our teacher and principal state bodies to achieve success.

However, the achievement I wish to really highlight is the introduction of the NSW Government-funded Active Kids program bonus vouchers in 2018, as it shows how parents can make a difference.

When the NSW Government launched the Inquiry into Childhood Overweight and Obesity in June 2016, P&C Federation added the inquiry to its discussions.

Based on P&C Federation research, financial support for children's sport and physical activity costs was listed as one of the suggested strategies in our submission to the inquiry. It was also the strategy I focused on when called to provide evidence to the inquiry.

The resulting Active Kids program bonus of \$100 per student per year, guaranteed for five years, with the ability to increase it, has been significant for families. P&C Federation's win on the request to increase the bonus in 2019 to \$200 per year resulted in millions of dollars in additional support for NSW parents.

P&C Associations will continue to add value to schools as this is where the small people their members love most in the world spend six hours a day and they want to make those schools better where they can.

My tip for new P&C Association members is to learn more about the education sector, as that's where your value can really be felt. An email to your school's principal asking how the Government funds your school compared to the local private school could be the beginning of an epic P&C journey.