

# President's Report – 2014

## Overview of 2014

2014 proved another blockbuster year for the Yeo Park Infants School P&C which ran in partnership with the school more than 25 separate social activities and fundraising events.

Events such as the Broccoli Tree Cinema, our 'Yippies' City2Surf Team (each in their 4<sup>th</sup> year), revamped Trivia Night and Fruity Fiesta (3<sup>rd</sup> year) have proved so popular they are now Yeo Park 'signature' events, and regular fixtures on our burgeoning events calendar.

Our FUNdraising Committee turned the 'fun-o-meter' up to 11 this year keeping all events delightful and fresh. The appearance of David Bowie at the trivia night (this year themed 'Yeo Vision') was just one unforgettable highlight.

Meanwhile our end of year Fruity Fiesta proved a salient lesson –water pistol shoot outs ('soak outs') never grow old!

Much loved old faves - monthly cake days, special lunch days, BBQs in the park (including a new 'winter solstice' BBQ), pizza and pyjama night, Easter Hunt, and 'Walk to School' Day walking buses - were again 'smash hits'.

To avoid becoming predictable, we also tried our hand at some new events –a 'style swap' and a family fun night (disco and wine tasting!) - which raised valuable funds and showed great promise.

In all we raised more than \$31,000 for facilities, new resources and activities for our little school.

This achievement is one of our best ever results, and a **P&C record** for a year without a major election and therefore no big Gala Day. Our fundraising success was only made possible by the energy, dedication and amazing creativity of our large team of P & C members and volunteers.

And a large team it is. The P & C had 55+ members in 2014, and many more actively volunteered – a great participation level for our little school with fewer than 100 families.

Our principal supporter **Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL Club** must also be acknowledged and thanked for their significant contribution, donating more than \$10,000 again this year.

The success of the P&C is also thanks to the strong relationship with, support and involvement of the Principal and school staff, who helped the children create artworks for auction, Christmas cards and calendars, and gave up their personal time to volunteer with events such as Pizza and Pyjama night.

This dedicated community spirit in no small way helps make Yeo Park Infants School such a positive, caring environment for our children to begin their school experience.

Funds raised help to enrich the educational experience, welfare and recreation of our children.

In 2014 the P&C helped fund the Music Program, Digi-Ed, Drama, Gymnastics, interactive equipment for the classroom, excursion transport, graduation books, special lunch days, and various school resources.

We adopted some new charitable causes this year, holding a colourful Quali-TEA for Camp Quality, and engaging Santa to collect a sackful of zacks from the children for the Salvo's Wishing Tree.

Meanwhile P&C meetings focused some energies and time on improving transparency, governance and inclusiveness – not without a few teething problems.

We started a P&C email bulletin to improve our communication with the school community and experimented with a web forum ('uniform talk') to facilitate parent participation. We ended the year agreeing to a formal trial of 'participatory decision making' processes in 2015.

The P&C continued to manage school uniform sales, a tireless but much appreciated service.

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## **Feedback – Some bouquets and brickbats**

- **The Role of the P&C and Meeting Inclusiveness:**

Much discussion occurred in 2014 around the question of the role of the P&C.

A number of members have expressed frustration or confusion this year (and in previous years) around the process of raising suggestions or placing items on the agenda and having them dealt with or responded to in a timely manner and feeling like they have received a 'fair hearing'.

A memo by the Director of Education to Principals provides some guidance:

*"The organised voice of parents – the school's Parents and Citizens' Association, universally known as 'the P&C' – can provide a supportive platform for developing partnerships in the school community.*

*We encourage parents of public school students to join the P&C at the school their children attend. The effectiveness of the school's P&C relates directly to the extent to which its membership reflects the composition of the school community, and the extent to which parents participate in the life of the school."*

*The key focus of the P&C is to provide a forum in which parents can articulate their needs and aspirations for their children and contribute to a developing partnership with the school."*

[The full memo about P&Cs is available on the website here.](#)

If one thinks of the P&C as a democracy then my view has been that one important measure of its success as a democratic organisation is how it treats minority voices or views.

My approach as President has been to try and ensure minority views have a right to be heard in the P&C forum, and that it should be a safe place for all parents to express unpopular as well as popular ideas, and it should be an easy place for those unfamiliar with meeting procedures or those from another culture to speak and to be heard.

Therefore I have attempted to ensure there are as few barriers as possible in the way of people who wished to bring new ideas to the P&C, no matter what people's initial reactions to those ideas may be.

It is easy to chair a meeting such that the majority view and the loudest voices are heard, and harder but more important to chair a meeting and ensure the softest voice and the smallest minority is also heard.

In such an approach I only achieved mixed success at best. At the end of the year, some members along with myself worked together to put forward a proposal on ensuring 'effective and fair meetings'

It is available on the website here: [Plan for Effective and Inclusive Meetings](#)

It was agreed to trial the process laid out in this plan in 2015.

- **Meeting times and attendance**

While some have been frustrated by the lack of time to discuss items on the agenda, other members have expressed a clear preference for shorter meetings.

I have benchmarked meeting times and attendance against previous years in order to help maintain the focus on having shorter but effective meetings.

Average meeting time remained under 2 hrs falling only slightly last year from 111 min in 2013 to 109 min in 2014, but is down significantly from previous years when average meeting times were over 2 hours, and meetings sometimes continued till almost 10pm!

Average attendance rate at meetings rose from **14** in 2013 to **17** in 2014.

- **Email bulletin and Kindy Flyer:**

Around 97%+ of parents opted in to the new P&C email bulletin in 2014

Feedback on the email bulletin continues to be positive. Parents have indicated they appreciate being emailed the meeting papers and agenda etc as a way of keeping in touch with what the P&C has been up to.

Although not tried yet on 'new' kindy parents, feedback on the new kindy flyer is also positive.

One parent wrote: *"Really loving this newsletter! I have not been able to commit to the P&C or many fundraising events this current year but hope to be involved next year, great to know what is going on all the same. Also loving the Kindy flyer as I did feel a bit lost when starting Ruby at the school this year, it explains things really well. Good Job."*

Another: *"I wasn't sure initially about the idea of sending more stuff to people but I think (the e-bulletin) will def be a way to include busy parents in the P&C business by actually giving context to the minutes in a discussion style."*

- **Web forum**

While issues and thoughts around the uniform and gender issues were as diverse as you would expect them to be in a small school with a independent strong-minded parent community, feedback received on the 'uniform talk' web forum as a means of allowing those diverse views to be expressed, were positive.

One parent wrote: *"I'd just like to say thanks to the P&C for providing this email forum as an alternate venue for comment on the uniform issue.... there's a small percentage of people who find their own verbal ineptitude also limiting of their community visibility and social inclusion – and say 'yeah' to the written word."*

### **Business Carried Over from 2014**

We will report briefly on the business carried over from last year:

- [Language Club proposal](#) - a proposal for the P&C to run or support a language club in conjunction with the Before/ After Care program
  - [Proposal for the P&C to support disadvantaged children / schools](#) -
  - [New kindy Flyer](#) – a P&C flyer to assist new kindy parents to learn more about P&C activities and events in an easily accessible way
  - Letter to Minister re small schools
  - Traffic management / safety issues - Pedestrian Crossing Queen Street
  - Gender diversity education / information session
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## **A Final Thanks**

Thank you to all parents and friends, to our major supporter Canterbury Hurlstone Park RSL, and to the many businesses and individuals who have helped achieve this fantastic result!

A few special mentions to our fundraising titans leaving us this year: Fiona Day - after an unbroken 4 year stint on the fundraising committee (one as VP/ Coordinator) – in her first year, Fiona helped initiate Broccoli Tree Cinema and Yippies City2Surf Team (as captain, Fiona completed the race while 5mths pregnant); also Kim Davies, Gail Johnston (both on the F.C. for three years straight, and creative forces behind trivia night and fruity fiesta), Alison Galloway, Effy Savidis, Jen Acklin, Maggie Barry (former President and P&C legend), Taryn Dean and Carolyn Jury – many of you have been helping out on and off for ‘countless’ years - you will all be missed!

Big thanks also to other departing parents who have also played vital P&C roles over some years, Karen Roberts and Kerri Lovi.

Finally I’d like to thank our outgoing Principal Stacey Furner for her 13 years dedicated service, relieving Principal Di Thompson, school staff, my fellow executive members, Secretary Sarah Lam, VP – Fundraising Louise Gunter & (acting VP) Maggie Barry, VP – Social Kate Wake, Treasurer Jen Fang, and all our P&C members and volunteers for their great work through the year.

It has been a huge pleasure working with such a fun, hard working group of dedicated parents, teachers and friends in 2014.

Best wishes to the P&C and school for another great year in 2015.

**Steve Clarke**

**President – Yeo Park P&C Association**

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