



**ALLIANCE OF NSW PARENTS & CITIZEN ASSOCIATION
DISTRICT COUNCILS**

Media Release

Critical Shortage of Out of School Hours Care Facilities

9 August, 2013

Following a heart wrenching survey of parents highlighting their struggles to access out of school hours ('OOSH') care, and the welcome announcement this week of an additional \$450 million for out of school hours care, and Alliance of Parents and Citizens Associations District Councils covering the 767 public school P&Cs in Northern Sydney, South East and South Western Sydney and the Central Coast is calling on the State and Federal Governments to act immediately to remove the other major barriers causing critical shortages of Before and After School Care places in inner metropolitan and central coast areas.

"The funding of 68,000 additional OOSH places is fabulous for working parents around Australia and the National economy, but it won't solve the critical OOSH shortage problems in some areas of Sydney, including the lower North Shore and Inner West, and on the Central Coast, where critical OOSH shortages are the direct result of inconsistent approaches to the hosting of on-site OOSH in already overcrowded schools, and the National Quality Framework ('NQF') guidelines which are restricting OOSH places in schools that do have it onsite to unnecessary and ridiculously low levels. For example, one school which has 850 students during the day is only able to accommodate 170 OOSH students due to mandatory National Quality Framework space per child ratios." said Martin Fogarty, Chairman of the Northern Sydney Council of P&Cs OOSH Working Party.

A survey conducted by Willoughby Public School P&C has had overwhelming results, and found that 380 students in their school need after hours care with only 30 places available next to the school. "There is a huge unmet need and we have received some incredible and often heartbreaking comments about families' struggles to find care. This can affect parents' employment opportunities, financial position, relationships and sanity." said Willoughby Public P&C President Penny Hackett. Willoughby Public does not have onsite OOSH and has no room for a dedicated facility. At neighbouring Artarmon Public School, the P&C and parents are facing similar issues and have for some time been trying to gain additional OOSH places due to significant unmet demand and a multi-year wait list.

Sharryn Brownlee, President of Central Coast Council of P&CS says "the issue is equally severe for families on the Coast. Many of them commute and work in Sydney and Northern Sydney and some look to childcare locally and some near their workplace in Sydney. Some have children travelling down daily and being schooled in the North Sydney area. Better local services will support all and make sure children's needs, as well as those of families, are being met. "

"It is outrageous that parents cannot access OOSH care and families are placed under huge stress, because all community venues are full, and meanwhile our publicly owned school buildings sit empty." said Steph Croft, Acting President of Northern Sydney Council of P&C's, and co-author of the Women's Forum Australia Report 'Reality Check Work Life Balance'. "Australia has one of the lowest rates women's workforce participation rates in the OECD, and COAG has recognised that childcare is important for increasing work force participation rates of parents with dependent children, which is necessary for Australia's future economic prosperity. "



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The Alliance stresses that recent media reports suggesting that the Department of Education has no responsibility for this issue are simply not true. The Department of Education is responsible for implementing the National Quality Framework, for licensing OOSH providers, for the publicly owned school infrastructure, and is the recipient of income from OOSH services conducted on site using school facilities.

The Alliance of P&Cs is calling for the Premier Barry O'Farrell, Education Minister Adrian Piccoli and the State Government to take immediate action to alleviate the critical OOSH capacity issues, and insist that the Department of Education requires School Principals to facilitate school buildings being used for out of School of Hours care as a priority, and also provides necessary support for them to do so. The Department needs to develop appropriate policies to facilitate provision of onsite OOSH services by private operators in our schools, and shared use of classrooms and facilities, in ways that don't add additional onerous burdens to our wonderful school Principals.

There also needs to be the introduction of OOSH specific requirements in the National Quality Framework immediately after the Federal election. It is important to have appropriate regulation in place for OOSH, but at the moment the regulations are designed for long day care and are unnecessarily restricting provision of OOSH places. The Federal Coalition has already indicated that if it is elected, it will ensure a Productivity Commission Review of Childcare, and revise National Quality Framework guidelines to include appropriate and specific guidelines for out of hours care.

A summary of the Findings of the Willoughby P&C Report on Before and After School Care needs:

- One third of families responded to the survey (247 responses)
- Over 950 Children are enrolled in 2013
- 84% have a need for Before and After School Care- casually or permanently
- 68% have changed the way they work due to lack of Before and After School Care
- 64% have been on waiting lists for Before and After School Care
- 380 WPS children require some kind of Before and After School Care (majority in K-3)
- Overwhelming preference is for Before and After School Care at the School
- 85% found the search for Before and After School Care stressful or very stressful

Media Enquiries

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