



Promoting parent participation in public preschools and schools

**South Australian Association of
School Parents Clubs Inc**

Annual report

2006-2007

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The South Australian Association of School Parents Clubs Inc (SAASPC) is the peak statewide organisation which represents the interests of all parents and parent groups in South Australian public preschools and schools. The association works to promote parent interest, involvement and participation in preschools and schools and to encourage the growth of positive partnerships between preschools and schools and their parents and communities.

We are pleased that the Minister, Jane Lomax-Smith and the Chief Executive of the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS), Christopher Robinson, have continued to meet with us on a number of occasions during the year. At our meetings we are able to raise issues and concerns with them that have been brought to our attention by the parents in preschools and schools. We also appreciate the support of other people within DECS who are always most approachable and willing to speak with us.

2006 was an exciting year for us as we celebrated 50 years of supporting parents in government preschools and schools.

Executive Committee meetings

Executive meetings were held on the 4th Tuesday in September, November, February, May, and June. Meetings are now structured so that business is conducted in the session before lunch and guest speakers are invited for the after lunch session. Guest speakers have been Ann Williams who spoke about the DECS responsibilities regarding Christian Pastoral Support Workers (formerly chaplains); David Bedson, Chief Executive of Life Education spoke about the work his organisation does; Maxine Panegyres and Robyn Sweatman from DECS presented information on the healthy eating guidelines; and Greg Cox, DECS Policy Advisor Student Behaviour Management, speaking on managing student behaviour within schools. Executive meetings are open to all parents.

Conference and Forum

The August 2006 annual conference *Literacy: making a difference* was opened by the Minister, Jane Lomax-Smith. We have advocated for a number of years for seat belts in country school buses so we were very pleased that after a question to the Minister from the floor of conference about seat belts on buses she announced, shortly after leaving the conference, the government's initiative to require new school buses to have seat buses and to retrofit them when appropriate. The conference program also included the much loved South Australian author, Christobel Mattingley, who gave the keynote address and a number of schools presented information about programs they were using which were making a real difference to the literacy outcomes of their students.

We also held a one day forum in March with the theme of Student wellbeing: at home, preschool and school. It covered some less 'high profile' areas such as sleep issues, dental health, mental health, drugs, and injury prevention.

Publications

SAASPC continues to publish *Parents Say* quarterly and it is sent free of charge to all public preschools and schools in South Australia. In addition we compile and distribute our quarterly news sheet *Net Working* to affiliated preschools and schools. Our handbook is provided free to new affiliates.

Information sessions

Throughout the year invitations have been received for SAASPC Officers to provide information to parents in preschool and school groups on

Parent groups

This covers issues such as the rights and responsibilities of parents and the relationship of a parent group to the governing/school council and/or the principal; setting up/invigorating parent groups and the role of SAASPC; parent group constitutions; bank accounts operated by parent groups.

Child safe environments - reporting child abuse and neglect (previously known as Mandatory reporting of child abuse)

Since 1991 SAASPC has been providing two hour information sessions about child safe environments for volunteers in preschools/schools. This year we have held 27 sessions across the state, with more than 300 people attending. No charge is made to those attending as special funding is provided to us by the Minister.

Again this year we support the LAP Association by running targeted sessions for LAP volunteers.

SAASPC is working with the Australian Red Cross to provide these information sessions to their Good Start Breakfast Club volunteers. SAASPC is represented on the Australian Red Cross Management group for the Breakfast Club program.

Principal panel selection information

Principal panel selection information sessions continue to be accessible either through sessions conducted and managed by a joint SAASPC and South Australian Association of State School Organisations (SAASSO) management committee or by SAASPC presenters. Ongoing funding from the Minister means that these sessions can be provided at no cost to those attending.

DECS provides up-to-date information to our presenters to ensure they are aware of any changes.

Invitations

SAASPC receives many invitations to attend launches, significant events and conferences. Some of this year's highlights have included

- Senior Secondary Assessment Board of SA merit ceremony
- SA Association of State School Organisations annual conference and AGM
- Isolated Children's Parents Association (SA) conference
- Child Protection Week launch
- World Teachers Day celebration
- Peer Support AGM
- Safer Communities afternoon tea at Government House
- launch of the Premiers Reading Challenge
- Eat Well Be Active Healthy Weight roundtable
- Federation of Catholic School Parent Communities AGM
- Schools Ministry Group dinner
- as well as visiting many schools and speaking to their parents and principals.

Archivist

Our archivist continues her work of collating, filing and discarding and is always on the look out for information about parent groups. Unfortunately we are unable to store material from school parent groups.

Owls Club

The Owls Club was formed to arrange social gatherings to enable parents to maintain friendships developed through involvement in education and parent groups. Former and current school parents come together for the Owls dinner each year which is usually held the Tuesday evening of SAASPC's annual conference.

Acknowledgments

SAASPC is an organisation of volunteers and we are fortunate that so many people willingly give their time and expertise to ensure that the voice of the parents of children and young people in South Australian public preschools is heard.

We look forward to the challenges of the next twelve months and thank all those who have supported us as we work together to ensure that all South Australian children have access to a public education which aims for equity and excellence.

REPRESENTATION

SAASPC Officers and other members of our association continue to represent parents on numerous committees, boards and organisations. SAASPC welcomes feedback from parents, regarding their concerns, issues or ideas, in order that our members can truly represent a wide range of views and not just their own. Provided below are brief overviews from our representatives on just some of the boards and committees on which we represent parents.

DECS Absenteeism Task Force

This group meets once a term or additional meetings as needed to monitor the strategies to increase attendance levels in DECS schools. While it worrying that so many children do not attend school on regular basis, it is interesting to hear of the reports about successful initiatives that schools have put in place. Also to hear about groups that are now linking to the department such as the Grandparents for Grandchildren Association and the Carer's Association.

Gwen Secomb

DECS Child Protection Steering Committee

SAASPC is the only parent organisation represented on this DECS committee which meets once per term to monitor the ongoing commitment to the Child Protection Act implementation strategies in this state. Gaye Brimacombe leads this group and also provides SAASPC with answers to the tricky questions asked at the Child safe environments: reporting of child abuse information sessions which we run. The child protection curriculum implementation across the state is led by Trish Newport and Heather Fels, who report to an inter-agency group with an interest in this curriculum which meets as needed. Two other important programs are the SMART program – Strategies for Managing Abuse Related Trauma and the provision of individual education plans for children and young people under the guardianship of the Minister.

Gwen Secomb

DECS Healthy Eating Advisory Implementation Group

This group has taken over from the Healthy Eating Reference Group, which finished late last year. It has only met twice so far and the objective is to advise on the implementation on the new Healthy Eating Guidelines that will come into force next year. This group is a large one consisting of representatives of canteen managers, teachers, pre-school and childcare sites, SAASSO, SAASPC and the Canteen Network.

Leanne Sheard

DECS Improvement & Accountability Framework (DIAF) Committee

This group continued its work from early in 2006. It was looking at the Improvement & Accountability Framework ie what are standards and how to provide advice and support for the implementation of the strategy. With the work completed the final document was produced and was distributed to all sites early this year. The group has now ceased.

Jenice Zerna

DECS Learner Wellbeing Project Birth to Year 12 Reference Committee

The purpose of the Reference Committee is to

- provide advice to the project from constituent groups, including identifying, risks, interdependencies, relevant trends and directions. This may necessitate member undertaking consultation with their constituents either by themselves or facilitating consultation by the project manager
- make recommendation to the Steering Committee at significant times in the development process through the project manager
- refer issues to the Steering Committee for resolution.

The group has representatives from various groups and departments.

Over the year work continued on the Learner Wellbeing Framework with discussions on different aspects of the framework. One of the longer discussions was held around the spiritual/values/beliefs dimensions of wellbeing whether it should be included in the emotional and social dimensions rather than being a dimension on its own. The discussion from the group was that it remain as a dimension on its own; this was also the opinion of schools which responded to a consultation paper.

The final framework document was distributed to all schools at the beginning of the year.

All schools will be required to include inquiry in a locally relevant aspect of learner wellbeing in their strategic or site learning plans for 2007.

The group was also kept up to date with relevant information about professional development and the projects happening in schools.

Evaluation of the project will take place through 2007, which will help in shaping the project for 2008.

Jenice Zerna

DECS Learning Resources and Services Council (LR&SC)

The purpose of the group was to provide advice to the Learning Resources and Service Group within DECS which continued its work from 2006. The group only met for a very short time last year before it wound up. Some of the topics covered were finances, governance, recruitment and placement of teachers.

Jenice Zerna

DECS Middle Years Band Reference Group (Years 6-9 of schooling)

The terms of reference for this group are

- to monitor and provide considered expert advice to the Executive Director, Curriculum Services in relation to implementation issues related to the Middle Years Learning Band and the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework
- to investigate issues and perspectives of stakeholders represented in the group in relation to continued SACSA Framework evolution and implementation, and provide this advice to the group for discussion and action

- to investigate and provide advice to the Chair SACSA Executive about general Middle Years Band related issues associated with curriculum and pedagogy
- to contribute to monitoring and evaluation processes for the Middle Years Learning Band
- to share in their stakeholder groups and the general community, information and expertise to support and inform the ongoing evolution and implementation of the SACSA Framework and Middle Years Learning Band.

Meetings are held twice per term, with representation from a number of groups.

Discussions over the past year have included topics such as Moving Forward with SACSA, Future SACE and the link with the Middle Years, Aboriginal Education Strategy, National Curriculum Outcome Statements - the statements cover civics and citizenship, maths, science, English, information and communication technology and will be integrated into resource and curriculum documents by 1 January 2008.

The middle years website (DECS) was launched last year for teachers, leaders, students and school communities. If you would like more information on the middle years the website is www.middleyears.sa.edu.au Jenice Zerna

DECS Parent Initiative in Education (PIE) Grants Recommendation Committee

Rob Bryson, SAASSO was the independent chair, Gwen Secomb represented SAASPC, Mitzi Nam represented Aboriginal parents, Sue Tonkins, SAASSO and Zoya Shamseden, Multicultural Education Committee, Natasha Lindner, from Special Needs Education Network (SNEN) and Lynette Callaghan from the Children's Services Consultative Committee. Sadly, many applications were not able to be fully funded due to the limited funds available and some applications did not meet any of the three criteria listed on the front page of the application. Even more of a concern was the number who did not read the guidelines and applied for non funded items. However the committee did make recommendations to the Minister to fund projects for the total of the \$60,000 available. Gwen Secomb

DECS Primary Years Band Reference Group

This group meets twice a term on set weeks. Our objective is to promote and provide support networks for primary years teachers. This group has grown and set up a great support network by providing a regular newsletter and a Primary Years Association for teachers. The composition of the group is mainly years 3-5 teachers, principals, university lecturers and parents from SAASPC and SAASSO. Leanne Sheard

Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO)

ACSSO represents the parents of over 2.3 million children attending government schools in Australia. There are ten school parent and school council organisations from all states and territories affiliated with ACSSO. Policy is determined at the annual conference and between conferences the organisation is run by the Executive which includes one representative from each affiliate plus the President. The staff of the secretariat consists of an Executive Director, an Operations Manager and an Administrative Officer.

ACSSO is committed to a quality, fully funded, public education system available to all young people irrespective of their class, culture, gender, level of ability, capacity to pay or where they live. It believes that the most effective way of ensuring that our children receive the best possible education is through participation by parents in all aspects of policy making in schools and school systems. Although ACSSO operates with limited funding (and therefore staffing) it continues to be a strong advocate for public education and to pursue an activist and watchdog role.

ACSSO communicates with schools and interested individuals through a number of electronic publications including *Public education voice*, *Australian education digest*, *Languages education in Australia* and *Ensemble* (about music education).

The president and the executive director continue to have heavy media commitments – perhaps the heaviest in the past few months was around homework, after the release of a paper *Homework: the upsides and downsides* in which ACSSO called for a review of the homework which is provided by schools.

A conference is held each year and in 2006 was in Melbourne in October and again included two days which were open to the public. A major outcome from the conference was a *Blueprint for tomorrow's schools* – this is available on the ACSSO website. The 2007 conference will be held in Darwin 22-23 October.

The federal Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) provides a briefing for the ACSSO Executive twice a year. The continuation of these briefings has enabled ACSSO to build on its relationship with DEST and to gain valuable information into educational thinking at the federal level. It has been disappointing that unlike the previous Minister, the current Minister has not spoken at any of these briefings.

The president and the secretariat are also involved in consultations and discussion with many other organisations. ACSSO is represented on over 20 committees and organisations, a heavy load for the staff, president and members of affiliates who undertake this role.

Projects

ACSSO, often in conjunction with the Australian Parents Council (APC) – the national nongovernment parent organisation - is involved in a number of projects. Those undertaken this year were

Investing in our Schools Program

The \$1.2 billion Investing in Our Schools Program was announced by the Prime Minister, the Hon John Howard MP, during the election campaign in 2004. The objective of the program was to deliver school infrastructure projects through an injection of additional Australian Government funds. In the period 2005 to 2007, over \$700 million was provided to Australian state schools to help repair, replace or install new items critical to their school's overall needs. The focus was on delivering projects which improved the infrastructure of schools in accordance with priorities identified by school communities – parents, the teaching profession and students. Schools applied directly to the federal government for these funds.

As part of this program, representatives of ACSSO affiliates, along with the principal associations, assessed the applications for their state or territory. This was done online initially and the final decisions were made in a face to face panel; Jenice Zerna and Judith Bundy assessed the applications online for SAASPC and Jenice represented us on the panel.

Values education

ACSSO has dedicated a part of its website to its Values education project. It has guest columnists, often providing a controversial view of issues; information about the Good practice schools project; an online forum; the opportunity for schools to tell their 'Good news stories' about how they 'teach' values; and a quick values audit for schools. In addition as part of this project ACSSO has run focus groups – to find out what is important to Australian parents.

Literacy leaflet

The leaflet 'Parents make the world of difference' has been a huge success. It has been translated into 10 community languages. A directory of resources has been compiled and is on the ACSSO website.

Family school partnership framework

A draft Framework for family-school partnerships has been developed and was trialed in 60 schools around Australia. This is currently waiting for endorsement by education ministers.

Studies of Asia

ACSSO and the Australian Parents Council continue to work closely with the Asia Education Foundation to develop joint strategies to implement a communication campaign about the importance of the study of Asia and its languages.

Languages project

As part of this project an email digest of news and information is compiled and distributed regularly to about 14,000 addresses. A stand alone website has also been developed – www.languageseducation.com.

Between August and November 2006 a national online survey was run to find out about the attitudes to languages education, to highlight and to explore the issues from the various perspectives of parents, students, teachers, principals, departmental bureaucrats and tertiary language instructors. The 3,500 responses were analysed and a draft report was made available for comment; the final report is now available on the website.

For more information about ACSSO visit its website www.acsso.org.au

Judith Bundy

Art Smart Reference Group

The Art Smart Reference Group is overseeing a project which aims to improve learning outcomes for young people across the state; it is the first arts and education strategy in Australia. The Minister of Education has committed to funding the project for four years.

The reference group provides support and implementation for the project which is operating in seven sites (preschool, primary school and secondary school) in the northern and southern areas in low socio-economic areas; it is hoped to extend the program to the far north of the state. There is recognition that not all students will fit into an academic or trades career but can do well in the arts creative industries, and work well in 'high tec' eg SMS polling, supplying music for ring tones. Projects such as these give students the ability to work as a team and come up with innovative ideas.

The reference group meets once a term.

Glenda Woolford

Australian Schools Innovation in Science, Technology and Mathematics (ASISTM) SA Committee

This is a federally funded program where schools and other groups are invited to apply for grants for innovative projects in these areas of learning. It is managed by the Department of Education Science and Training (DEST). The application must be from a cluster of schools and representatives of other (outside) organisations with an interest in the same field who act as advisers eg aquaculture projects which include fisheries experts and University biologists.

The applications are assessed first by a panel appointed by DEST. Selected ones are then forwarded to state committees for further assessment and recommendation back to DEST. The successful applicants are then invited to submit more detailed information about their projects for the final approval. The South Australian Committee during the last twelve months has included representatives from DECS (including the Chairperson), the Science Teachers Association, the Mathematics Association, Catholic and Independent Schools and SAASPC. In 2007 it met on 17 May to assess the applications for the fourth round.

Marion McCarthy

Be Active – Let’s Go Community Reference Group

This Reference Group had representatives from DECS and various interested stakeholders such as the Australian Council for Health Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER), SportSA, SA Primary Schools Sports Association (SAPSASA), SA Secondary Schools Sports Association (SASSSA), Children’s Health Development Foundation Centre of Health Promotion, educators from the University of South Australia, individuals: Katrina Webb OAM (Para-Olympic gold medallist) and Russell Ebert (Port Adelaide Football Club), SAASPC and SAASSO. It ceased to exist as of the end of 2006, when its funding ended. It has been replaced by the Premier’s Fitness Challenge but to date no representation from SAASPC has been sought. However schools have been invited to apply for grants for programs under the new scheme.

Marion McCarthy

Children’s Services State Consultative Committee

This committee has 12 parent representatives, two from each of six Regional Advisory Committees, with other representatives from family day care, Integrated Children’s Services, Northern Metro, Playground Association of SA, parents of a child with a disability, remote and isolated regions, multiculturalism, the AEU, SAASPC, children’s services which are not publicly funded, a member of parliament and the Institute of Early Childhood Education. Its purpose is to

- advise the Minister for Education and Children’s Services and the DECS Chief Executive on matters relating to children’s services in the State
- assess the needs and attitudes in the community
- consider reports and/or motions put to the committee by Regional Advisory Committees
- investigate and report to the Minister on matters referred to the committee by the Minister
- meet at least five times a year with one meeting in an out of city location.

Vicky Hughes

Education and Care Legislation Reform Stakeholder Advisory Group

“The South Australian Government is committed to improving outcome for all children and their families in South Australia. The engagement and participation of stakeholder groups in the reform work will be critical to ensure the development of modern legislation that underpins quality children’s care, development and education provision”. This group was formed by the Minister for Education and Children’s Services to work with the Legislation Reform Unit to support and inform the reform process.

Part of the work of this group is to suggest key issues for inclusion in discussion papers on proposed legislative reforms which will be progressively released for public consultation during 2007 and early 2008.

It also meets with the Legislative Reform Unit to receive draft new and amended legislation for consideration and feedback to the Minister as part of the consultations prior to the Bill being tabled in Parliament.

The first discussion paper that the group provided feedback on was the SSABSA Act. The work on that is almost complete and development has started on the next legislation reform discussion paper The Registration and Regulation of Education and Care.

Jenice Zerna

Family Life SA Council

The vision of Family Life SA is: *To be a major provider of education in the area of sexuality and relationships within the context of family life.* Its mission is: *To provide families, children, and schools with contemporary information that encourages healthy attitudes towards sexuality and relationships.*

Family Life SA aims to

- promote healthy attitudes towards sexual growth
- encourage open discussion between children, young people and their caregivers, about sexuality and relationships
- help children to value the importance of their own family unit
- be a major provider of education about sexuality and relationships for young children, young people, caregivers, schools and the wider community.

Family Life SA is working hard to achieve these aims and has seen a gradual increase in the demand for its school-based services and for training and development for staff. Bookings for 2007/8 are continuing to be strong and the amount of schools joining as members is steadily increasing thanks to the work of Director Gina Dawson.

The support of schools through their co-contribution to family evenings is much appreciated; as is the input from a parent perspective which is valuable for the ongoing development of the organisation.

Vicky Hughes

Inter-sector Values Forums Coordinating Advisory Committee

This committee includes bureaucrats, teachers, principals and parent representatives from the government, Catholic and independent sectors. Its role is to be responsible for the development, delivery and professional support for federal government funded values education forums across the state.

Funding is available to all schools (government and non government) to hold values education forums however the uptake of this funding has been poor and the committee has put in place strategies to encourage schools to hold forums such as supporting teachers to attend the national values conference and providing additional funding to enable schools to work in clusters.

In addition to the school based forums a number of conferences have also been run for both teachers and for the wider school community all of which have been very well attended.

I was grateful that DECS supported my attendance at the national values education forum in Melbourne earlier this year.

For more information about the program see the website www.decs.sa.gov.au/valueseducation/. *Judith Bundy*

Kidsafe SA Inc Playground Safety Project Steering Committee

The goal of the committee was to provide expert advice and support to the development and implementation of the Kidsafe SA playground safety project – the development of a resource kit. It did this by providing advice to the project staff; identifying opportunities for enhancing the project outcomes through members' agency/sector networks; and promoting the project. The project was funded by the Australian government Department of Health and Ageing.

The group met four times this year via teleconference in order to discuss and give feedback on the draft resource kit. The *Playground safety resource kit* was launched at North Adelaide Primary School in May by the Hon Lindsay Simmons, Member for Morialta, representing the Minister for Health. A workshop was held before the launch for a small group of schools, to learn about the kit and test the tools that are used for checking the safety of a playground. The resource kit will be distributed to all early childhood sites.

With the resource kit now completed work has begun on the second stage of the project, which will include a playground audit and inspection service for sites – this will be on a fee for service basis. *Jenice Zerna*

Literacy and Numeracy Reference Group

The group consist of representatives from DECS, SA Primary Principals Association., Catholic Education, independent schools and Glenda Woolford from SAASPC, who is the only parent representative.

Its main work is to assess South Australian applications for the National Literacy and Numeracy Awards and to support South Australian activities for National Literacy and Numeracy Week.

National Literacy and Numeracy Award winners will be announced in Canberra at a ceremony on the 16 August and will be presented by the Federal Minister of Education, Julie Bishop.

SA Awards will be presented by the Minister of Education, Jane Lomax-Smith at a ceremony at Sunnybrae on 30 August. The Literacy Numeracy Expo will be held in South Australia on 3 and 4 September at EDC Centre, Hindmarsh. *Glenda Woolford*

Peer Support Foundation Board

The Peer Support group offers training to teachers in all schools that run the Peer Support Programs. This group usually meets once a month. Workshops are held about 3 times a year. The group consists of representatives from Quit SA, Child and Youth organisation, teachers and a parent from SAASPC. *Leanne Sheard*

SCIMAS Strategy Reference Group

This reference group, which had a diverse representation from DECS, other educational institutions, a variety of employer and business organisations, the Australian Education Union, principal associations, SAASPC and SAASSO, had the responsibility of advising on the various projects in schools which were being undertaken as part of this strategy. The initial funding for was for three years, ending in December 2006. It had been anticipated that this would continue, given the emphasis on developing the technologies which are closely related to mathematics and science. The group has not met this year pending the result of a review of the strategy. The latest information I have received is that the results of the review are still being awaited. Fortunately the work is continues in the schools while we wait. *Marion McCarthy*

Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia (SSABSA)

The Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia is an independent statutory authority responsible for the administration of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE). Students from South Australia, the Northern Territory and some Asian educational institutions undertake accredited SSABSA courses.

At the beginning of the year the Merit Ceremony was once again held in the grounds of Government House to recognise the students who received a mark of 20 in at least one subject.

The Board took part in discussions in relation to the Education and Care Legislation Reform Discussion Paper No 1 SSABSA Act and provided feedback to the paper

SSABSA is continuing its work, including ensuring that the students who will be the last to complete the old SACE are not disadvantaged as the work to the Future SACE continues. To assist with the change over the two bodies are liaising with each other, and the work of SSABSA will continue as usual.

This year may be the final year of the SSABSA Board with the Future SACE forming its own board in the near future

After 12 years as Chief Executive, Dr Jan Keightley was farewelled at the end of June and Dr Paul Kilvert was welcomed into the role.

Jenice Zerna

South Australian Dental Service – Consumer Advisory Panel

The Consumer Advisory Panel works within the Central Northern Area Health Services-Community and Consumer Participation Framework. Membership is formed from various associations and community groups and reflect the special needs and interests of the communities that they represent.

Over the past twelve months various topics have been discussed including waiting lists; the State Oral Health Plan; co-payments; and updates from the Central Northern Area Health Services Board by Executive Director Martin Dooland. Of the many discussions/topics that take place during the year, the ones that relate to the School Dental Service are those that are of most interest to us. One of these is the impact on parents of the introduction from 1 January 2007 of a \$35 fee per course of care for all children/students from preschool to primary schools who access the School Dental Service, and who are **not** dependants of, or holders of a Health Care Cards or School Cards.

All children who are dependants of, or holders of Health Care Card or School Cards, will continue to receive free dental care through the School Dental Service.

The first and last courses of care will be free for all children accessing dental care through the School Dental Service, regardless of whether a relevant card is held or not. A letter was sent to all schools at the end of 2006 for inclusion in newsletters to inform parents of the changes.

Jenice Zerna

Special Needs Education Network

This group includes representatives from various organisations which support parents and their children who have disabilities and other special needs. These include such groups as SPELD (Specific Learning Difficulties), ADASA (Attention Disorders Association of SA), PHISA (Parents of Hearing Impaired Association), Downs Syndrome Association, Spina Bifida/Hydrpcephalus Association, Autism SA, Family Advocacy Inc (formerly Parent Advocacy Inc), school system representatives and the two state school parent associations (SAASPC and SAASSO).

The mission of the Network is to *Work towards enabling students with special needs to achieve their full potential in education, and to ensure that they are given every opportunity to do so in the least restrictive environment.*

The DECS representative has been Margaret Lynch, who has kept members informed of issues and developments as well as seeking advice from the group.

Matters of concern have included the lack of Out-of School Hours Care and vacation care places for older children once they have finished school at primary level; and since the recent State budget, the cutting back of funds to these advocacy and advisory groups. This leaves parents with limited access to advice about how to access assistance for their child. An example of this is Family Advocacy Inc which has lost its State funding and must now rely on some federal government funding only. This will limit it in what it can achieve for its clients. The good news is that the parent information brochure has been updated and copies sent to schools, and the Parent Help Hotline is still available on 1800 222 696.

Marion McCarthy