

DPC Annual Report

Northern Beaches Cluster



In 2016, our Cluster had a name change making the 'old' Peninsular Cluster the new Northern Beaches Cluster. This cluster comprises of 12 Primary Schools stretching from Avalon to the North, Balgowlah to the South with Davidson to the East. There are also 2 Secondary Schools in the Cluster; a co-ed school in Warriewood and an all-boys school in Manly.

This year we have seen parent representation at the Cluster meetings from 11 primary and 1 secondary schools.

In our first cluster meeting at the beginning of the year we welcomed five new DPC representatives to the Cluster Meeting and another 3 in the second term. I mention this to highlight the dynamic nature of the DPC with different schools at different points in joining and contributing to the DPC community. This first meeting had the focus of welcoming new members and updating everyone on the role of the DPC. However, a discussion topic was quickly tabled that most schools are in some way addressing, the topic was 'Social Media' in school communities. This topic was tabled to be put on the agenda of our second meeting as it ties in strongly with the theme of Contemporary P&F's.

In our second cluster meeting each rep talked about how their schools are using social media today. Having 14 different schools we had as many different answers. Some schools are using Facebook and twitter only at the school level, meaning that it is set up and managed by the school. These schools are using twitter and Facebook to send out information about school events to parents and followers. Some schools have parents who have set up 'private' Facebook accounts at the class level. Some schools have class level Facebook pages which are parent managed with school oversight. Some schools have not started using FB or twitter and are asking the question of how can this be done, what are the pitfalls and what are the recommendations? Some schools are happy with the level of communication via the school planner apps and the newsletter and don't really see a requirement for using social media. There seems to be also different expectations from different parents with the younger generation very happy to use social media. Our forum of sharing has offered an opportunity for P&F's to learn from each other.

Our second meeting also had discussion around the structure of contemporary P&F's and whilst there is agreeance that being on the P&F often means that a lot of work is covered by a small group of people, there is little movement from our cluster around the need to change that. Two P&F's have made some attempts at changing names and structure of the P&F. One school now has a Parent Engagement Network and another school now has a HUB instead of P&F's, but both schools have mentioned that the change in name has caused some confusion and not necessarily led to a different approach to getting things done, as they are still guided by the constitution.

Term 3 saw a continuation of the subject of contemporary P&F's and technology. My vocabulary was extended to include Google drive and drop boxes, as Northern Beaches P&F's are turning to new technology to help share information and files amongst teams. At the same time, some more typical questions came up and information was shared for example about how canteens are going with several canteens struggling to get enough volunteers. So it was helpful to find out that some schools have paid managers who keep it open or that some canteens have had to close some days due to lack of volunteers. Another good example of collaboration across the schools was when two schools who have accountants as their treasurers have offered to help each other out with their end of year accounts audit in a reciprocal relationship.

In terms of information and education for parents, we were lucky enough to welcome Michael Grose to the Northern Beaches early in term one. He spoke on resilience in families and raising resilient children. Those who attended the meeting gave very positive feedback. However, considering Michael's fame as a speaker, we expected a much bigger turn-out. There seems to be a trend here with low numbers turning out for big speakers on the Northern Beaches. So we might have to conclude that this is not money well spent for the Northern Beaches as speakers like that are very expensive. On the back of that we tried a slightly different format, which saw the DPC offering some Parent Seminars by using the Parent Education Team at the CSO instead of outside presenters. The Northern Beaches Cluster ran 123 Magic and Emotion Coaching in 2 locations, in Narrabeen and in Manly Vale, and both locations were very well attended by parents. There were also Literacy and Numeracy Workshops offered using CSO experts, which were also well attended. Also well attended was the Next Generation Seminar in August where the DPC offered to pay for 1 parent per school to attend the Workshops which focus on Mental Health and Wellbeing in young children.

In conclusion, there are a lot of people to be thanked: Thanks go to all the Northern Beaches Cluster Reps for their generous sharing of information and collaborative work at the meetings as well as their enthusiasm, time and engagement. Without your active participation at the meetings we could not have such a strong sense of community on the team.

On behalf of the Northern Beaches Reps, I would like to thank a lot of people for their support this year.

Thanks to the DPC President, Maria Smith and all the Executive Members who work more behind the scenes and are often not seen at the cluster level, but who support us with planning, agenda setting, financial management and connection to the greater community of Catholic Parents via the CCSP with Donna Falzon. Thanks go to Carmel Hewitt – Parent Liaison Education Officer (CSO) and Cathie Renfrew - DPC Coordinator, who support us with their experience and knowledge, and also by coming along to our meetings to help with any question that arises.

The DPC has been very fortunate to have strong representation on the Executive Committee from the Northern Beaches Cluster again this year. I would particularly like to thank the Northern Beaches Executive Members for their time and commitment this year: Leonie Scarlett, Donne Tizzard and Rony Rahme also our Treasurer Maria Trussell.

As you know, next year the DPC will host the Council of Catholic School Parents Conference at Manly in September 2017, so there have been several brainstorming and planning events, such as the Think Tank held in September. Thank you to all the Northern Beaches parents and reps who have given their input at these meetings.

Thank you to the School consultant Anne Duncan, Northern Beaches Principals and school staff who have supported our meeting and seminars by allowing us to use your school facilities and by being available for support. And finally thank you to Peter Hamill and the CSO Executive Staff who continue to be strong supporters and facilitators of our DPC parent body, making it possible for us to have access to CSO resources such as staff, expertise and facilities.