

Report of the Management Committee to the deferred AGM

For some time, parents throughout NSW have expressed concerns about the outcomes of the Parent Council for Deaf Education. As the only funded parent body in NSW representing the needs of parents of deaf and hearing impaired children, we had serious concerns about the extent to which PCDE was effectively representing the issues impacting on these families to government and the community. We also failed to see outcomes for families, either at the individual level through effective parent advocacy or at the systemic level through representation on key government and planning committees. The poor attendances at the Whole Child Conference in 2004 and 2005 were further evidence that parents had lost confidence in PCDE to adequately respond to their needs.

Parents sought to discuss the issues with the previous Management Committee prior to the AGM in an attempt to broker a solution that would see a change in outcomes and management. This meeting did not reach a resolution and those parents attended the November meeting with the intent of using their voting rights to secure new representation on the Management Committee. The parents have been successful and the new Management Committee is invigorated by the challenges before them and positive that their diverse backgrounds and experiences place them in good stead to take on the responsibilities of PCDE.

Given the inability of the previous committee to present audited accounts of the financial situation of PCDE, the members of the newly elected committee initially appointed a bookkeeper to prepare and track the accounts for the year ended 30th June, 2005 and also to prepare financial statements up to the end of 2005. The results of these activities indicate that the concerns of parents about the mismanagement of PCDE were valid.

The statement of income and expenditure for the year indicates a financial loss of (\$54,619.33). This compares with an operating surplus for the year ending 30th June 2004 of \$13, 899.27.

The profit and loss account indicates that accumulated funds at the end of the 2005 financial years amounted to \$2, 093.03 compared to \$56, 712.36 for the previous year.

Analysis of the accounts by both the bookkeeper and the auditors give rise to serious concerns in the administration of the PCDE under the previous Management Committee. Among the issues raised include:

- PAYE tax not paid or reconciled since March 2004;
- superannuation contributions not forwarded since October 2003;
- failure to submit acquittal against the DADHC grant for the year 03/04;
- failure to lodge Annual Statement for 2004 to Office of Fair Trading;

- declaration of actual wages for worker's compensation payments since June 2004;
- GST payments not made or not reconciled since March 2004;
- inadequate general bookkeeping;
- difficulty in locating invoices to support payments made;
- cheque requisitions missing in relation to some payments and where there were cheque requisitions often they bore only one authorising signature;
- bank reconciliations incomplete;
- difficulty in locating bank statements and some statements missing;
- difficulty in accounting for all cash receipts;
- inadequate controls over petty cash payments;

All these matters are now in hand, but have left the PCDE in a serious financial position.

A number of the items listed above have resulted in fines of **approximately \$11,000**, which will need to be paid this year. In addition, commitments were made by the previous Committee for the development of a website with a cost of approximately \$19,000 in the current financial year, for which an unacceptably small portion of work has been completed. **This account is still in the process of satisfactory resolution.**

As the new Committee became aware of these matters and the urgent plight of the organisation, the Committee received and/or requested the resignation of all employees prior to Christmas.

Since that time the Committee has been working with the bookkeeper, the Department of Disability, Ageing and Home Care, the Australian Tax Office and the auditor in order to ascertain the actual position of Parent Council for Deaf Education.

It is not the intent of the Committee to further analyse the reasons behind the serious position of PCDE. Instead, we have focused on being honest in naming the problems, attempting to attribute responsibility where it is appropriate, tackling the problems at hand and investing in good strategies for moving forward. We welcome all parents to make contact with us and will be working with individuals and groups to ensure that PCDE is truly representative of the broad range of parents and families to whom we are accountable.

Deaf Children Australia

At the November meeting, the Committee invited Deaf Children Australia to present information about their Parent Council Charter. The Charter has been developed to assist in forming partnerships with parent groups nationally through which DCA can provide support to the Committees running these organisations. At the meeting, it was decided to invite Deaf Children Australia to assist the committee in organising a planning day to examine the future of PCDE. That planning meeting was held on 19th January, 2006.

The planning day was extremely successful, with the Committee agreeing a strategy for moving forward, including consultation with stakeholders, identifying needs and opportunities and employing professional support to assist in realising our goals.

The Committee passed a resolution to adopt DCA's Parent Council Charter, with a view that DCA would provide advice and support to both the incoming staff and Committee of PCDE. This decision has been taken in recognition of the fact that volunteer efforts alone will not provide parents with the outcomes they are seeking. Through this partnership, we believe PCDE will be well placed to respond to the challenges that today's parents have identified as critical to their wellbeing.

I have attached a copy of the Charter and welcome any enquiries about it or the future of PCDE.

The Management Committee will be holding a further planning day following the AGM on Saturday 8 April. The focus of this planning day will be the development of an initial plan and key strategies for moving forward. We have allocated time at the end of the deferred AGM for discussion on future directions and welcome the input of all stakeholders in attendance. Following the planning we will advise of outcomes and seek further input from any interested parties.

Berenice Ferguson
President
On behalf of PCDE Management Committee
16 March 2006