

GPBASC 2010 AGM – PRESIDENT’S REPORT

I would like to welcome you to the 2010 Annual General Meeting of the Gladesville Putney Before and After School Care Incorporated and thank you sincerely for making the time to be here.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank Megan Hamilton and Jodie White for their incredible work over the past year. These ladies are truly the heart and soul of this Centre and it is their dedication that makes it the fantastic place that we all know it to be. I would also like them to pass on our thanks to the other members of staff who have been with us this year: Cristy, Natalie, Wanda, Claire and Nick. I’m sure you would all agree that they are a great team who genuinely care about our children.

I would also like to thank my fellow members of the Parent Committee for all their hard work and attendance of a seemingly endless string of meetings. Thank you to Vice President, Katherine Dalton; the Secretary, Louise Laz; our Treasurer Fiona Trigona, as well as, Natasha Ainslie, Peter Laz, Jelena Popovic and Jessica Stewart.

Since the last AGM, the main issues that the Committee have been faced with were the problem of lack of places at the Centre and the on-going discussions about our licence to operate the Out of School Hours Care at Gladesville Public School.

These two issues are interconnected and I am aware that there has apparently been a lot of misinformation and rumours circulating in relation to them. I would like to take this opportunity to detail exactly what has taken place in the past year.

For the benefit of any new parents I would just explain that the BASC leases the Sandstone Cottage and some other areas of the school from the Department of Education. Our current licence agreement, which permits us to run the BASC in the school, will expire at the end of December 2010.

At the beginning of last year, in common with many other Not-for-Profit run Centres, we were presented with a new lease by a representative from the Department of Education, Peter Troy. However, we were not provided with any details of the agreement or the exact costs involved.

After reports in the press that the Minister for Education had not sanctioned these leases and under advice from the OOSH care peak representative body, Network, the Committee declined to sign.

In August 2009, in response to the continued demand for places, we successfully applied to increase our numbers to 60 in the mornings. However, we were having difficulty meeting the government requirements that each child must have 3.25 square metres of space. The reason for this was that we could no longer gain access to some areas of the school which had previously been available to us. For example, during wet weather we had used the Music Hall for indoor games, but this was increasingly occupied by students having music lessons after school.

We decided to hold a Special Committee Meeting and invite the Principals of both schools to attend. The stated purpose of the meeting was to consider the issues relating to this current situation and to the future of the Centre.

The response from Mrs Judi Partland, Gladesville School Principal was that she could not discuss the Centre's lease until the new government policy on OOSH care was ratified. However, the Committee decided to go ahead with the Special Meeting, since there were other issues, such as the shortage of places and space at the Centre, which needed to be addressed immediately. Ms Rhonda Russom the Putney Principal attended and, as the Gladesville Principal was unavailable, Assistant Principal Mr David Roberts represented the school. During the meeting, the option of opening another centre was raised and Rhonda, while supporting the idea, stated categorically that she did not have the space to accommodate this at Putney Public School.

In September 2009, the Education Minister finally released the new government policy on Out of School Hours Care in NSW and in October we were contacted by a new representative from the DET, Dail McGilchrist, to arrange a meeting with both school principals. Due to the difficulties of getting all parties together the meeting eventually took place on 18 November 2009.

At the meeting, the issue of lack of spaces at the Centre was raised. Dail McGilchrist stated that she supported Judi Partland's view that she was losing enrolments due to a lack of places at the BASC and her preference that the Centre should be solely for GPS students.

There were further discussions between the two Principals and the DET representative about the level of demand for OOSH care places and the possibility of a 2nd Centre being needed. Rhonda Russom again stated that there was no room for this at Putney and Judi Partland maintained that no further space was available at Gladesville.

The Committee sought clarification on whether our licence to operate the OOSH care at GPS could be put out to tender and were most concerned to learn that this was an option, if the terms of its renewal could not be agreed upon.

The most urgent problem that was identified at the meeting was that there were no OOSH places available for Kindergarten children from either school, who were starting in 2010. The Committee pointed out that the Centre did not currently have the required amount of space for the number of children enrolled at the present time. This was because GPBASC had increased the number of places the Centre was permitted to offer in August 2009, but GPS was currently not providing access to the amount of room stipulated by the government (ie 3.25 square metres per child). Furthermore, other areas (such as the Little Fort) would also become unavailable for our use due to the impending construction work. The Committee reiterated that we could not look at increasing places further until the current lack of space was addressed, because we were in breach of our accreditation requirements.

On 8 December 2009, Judi Partland emailed the Centre with a proposal to provide extra space at GPS if this would mean that Kindergarten children could be offered places. However, this would be on condition that preference would be given to GPS students over Putney students.

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The Committee’s response was to again explain that there was not yet sufficient space provided by GPS for the current number of enrolments, so no further increases could be made until this was resolved. Furthermore, our Constitution meant we were unable to give preference to enrolments from one school over the other. However, if the two Principals could come to an agreement about the allocation of places then we would certainly honour this.

We were then informed that Rhonda Russom would not agree to GPS Kindys gaining priority over those from Putney who were also awaiting places. There was further email correspondence between the Centre and Judi Partland regarding ways to provide enough places for the Kindys, but the problem of the lack of space for the existing numbers of children was still not resolved by the end of Term 4. To date this problem is still outstanding.

When school began in February the Centre was emailed by a concerned Kindy parent who detailed some of the rumours that she had heard circulating about the Centre. All of them were wildly inaccurate and it was clear that a lot of misinformation has somehow been passed around.

Therefore, I hope that by detailing what has happened in this past year it will be clear that the Committee is doing all it can to secure the Centre’s future, but that we are sometimes restrained by matters that are beyond our control. However we have endeavoured at all times to be fair and transparent in our dealings and to keep the lines of communication open with all interested parties.

As a Committee, our sole aim has been to ensure that the Gladesville Putney Before and After School Care is able to continue providing first-class Out of School Hours care for **all** the children who require it from **both** Gladesville and Putney Public Schools **equally**.

Finally, I must inform you that I will be stepping down from the Parent Committee after this AGM. I am doing so with great regret and only because my children have transferred to another school and are no longer attending GPBASC. I would like to say that it has been an honour to serve as a member of the Committee and particularly to be President, since I felt I was in some small way giving something back to our excellent Centre.

Having just spent 17 weeks on a waiting list for After School Care places at my children’s new school, in a centre which serves 3 different schools and also has space issues, I can tell you that many of the problems experienced here are not unique to GPBASC. What is unique however is the quality of the staff and the service provided here. Since leaving GPS, my children have experienced two other After School Care centres and they are adamant that GPBASC is absolutely the best. It’s a view I would fully endorse. GPBASC **is** a wonderful Centre and it is worth fighting to keep it. Therefore, I would urge all parents to get involved and ensure that this valuable service continues. I personally would not like to see the care of my children put out to tender to the highest bidder, which is what I fear could happen.

Alison Boyd
President
GPBASC Parent Committee