

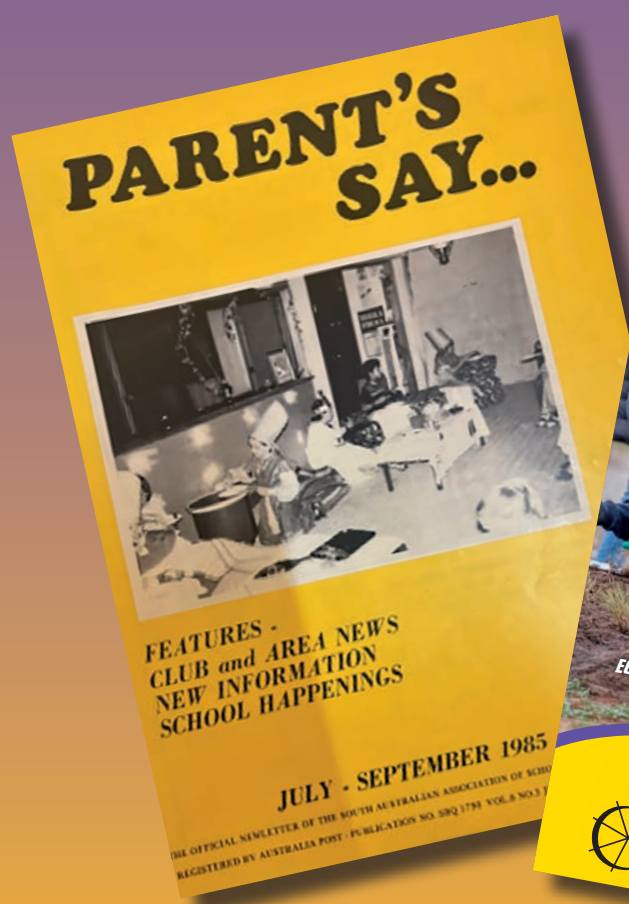
PARENTS SAY

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PARENT COMMUNITIES INC.

VOL. 49 NO. 2 | MAY 2026

FINAL ISSUE

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PRESIDENT'S SAY



JENICE ZERNA
PRESIDENT

Welcome to the final edition of *Parents Say* magazine.

Over the years I have written many of these columns to welcome readers and give a brief outline of activities but I must admit that this one has been the hardest one of all to do knowing it is to be the last one.

It is with a heavy heart that I let you know that after 70 years of SAASPC we are winding up the association. The decision to do so was a very difficult one to make and not made lightly or in haste. A special general meeting was held in May and a special resolution put and the vote taken was in favour of winding up.

Over the life of SAASPC much has been done and achieved, too much for me to put into words – what to include and what not to include, what's important and what's not important, I can't decide. So instead in this final edition we have finished off with a short history of our association – we hope you find it interesting.

Who was SAASPC

It was a statewide association and a strong and committed supporter of public education. The officers who served on the Executive were a group of dedicated volunteers who willingly gave up their time to assist and support parent groups and parents within our public preschools and schools.

We promoted and developed the interests of parents in the education and general wellbeing of children at preschool and school, developed and maintained contact with parent groups throughout the state, acted as an advocate for parents in educational matters, and provided information and formal face-to-face information sessions for parents and volunteers.

That was us.

Memories

I have many memories of my years with SAASPC, as other members will have. The friendships formed along the way and opportunities to meet and work with so many people

involved and interested in education whether as members of our association, in preschools and schools, from the Department for Education or from other associations and groups.

I have appreciated the opportunities we have had to travel around the state to talk with parents and volunteers and present our information sessions on How parent groups operate, on Responding to abuse and neglect, education and care (mandatory notification), and on Merit selection for governing council panel nominee. We have been to the conferences of other organisations and association and have attended interstate conferences and meetings held by the national parent association, the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO) and by the Federal Education Minister. These have given us a chance to catch up with those from the interstate school parent associations and hear about what they were doing and what was happening in their state and territory and to share information.

Two of us were even given the opportunity to travel with a group of educators to China to see the educational system there.

Over the years that I have been involved with SAASPC I have seen many changes, some positive and some not. Education is evolving in many ways and in some areas quite quickly eg the use of technology and its impact everywhere, whether we like it or not.

For us, one of the impacts of technology has meant that online training has become available which has resulted in us presenting less face-to-face information sessions to parents, volunteers and governing council members. This has been a lost chance for parents to meet with other parents and to put a face to a name of the staff. What a pity these will be lost as so many have participated over time. For example with RRHAN-EC from 2011 to 2026 we presented 656 sessions for 7906 participants from 1147 sites; with Merit from 2013 to 2026 we presented 117 sessions attended by 620 people from 577 sites.

South Australian Association of School Parent Communities (SAASPC)

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The relationship between us and the Department for Education unfortunately has changed over the years going from very supportive to very little support, which has been so very disappointing in many ways.

What will be lost

In previous columns for *Parents Say*, I have mentioned what we offer, but this time instead I will list what will now not be available:

- independent, knowledgeable and unbiased advice, support and advocacy for families in public preschools and schools in South Australia
- a voice to represent parents
- conferences and forums
- information sessions especially for parents and volunteers on Responding to abuse & neglect (mandatory notification); on Process for governing council nominees on principal/director merit selection panels; on Parent participation and involvement
- new leaflets
- *Parents Say* magazine
- Facebook posts providing alerts on important information about education
- our website will remain up for a while but it will not be updated after we close.

Thank you

There are many thank yous to be made, but the one that I feel is the most important is to the original ladies who had the foresight and courage to realise the importance of having parent groups in schools and the value of a state parent association. We would not have been here without them and the amazing work that they did in quite different times. To all those that came before us, and there have been many, from both country and metropolitan areas of South Australia – thank you for your time and dedication to our parents and schools.

To the many preschools and schools who affiliated with us, some for a very long time, thank you for your support, it was greatly appreciated. To all the parent groups and families in our preschools and schools – thank you for everything that you have done, and I am sure, will continue to do.

Thank you to the Ministers for Education (10 in my time as President), the Chief Executives of the Department for Education (8 including an interim) and the many staff with whom we have had contact and in some cases, worked with extensively, over the years.

It is hard, as I mentioned, to decide what to put in this column so I think I will leave it with some final thank yous: to all past and present officers of SAASPC for the amazing commitment, dedication and work that was done by you all, life will now be a bit quieter for you; to all who were members of SAASPC's area associations and represented your parents and preschools and schools; to the thousands of volunteers and families in preschools and schools that we had the opportunity to meet and work with a huge thank you for everything that you have done and achieved.

As much as I would like to thank everyone individually, the list would be too long so to everyone we have met, worked with, had an association with – thank you for your support and and maybe for some of us our paths will cross again.

I will miss it, as I'm sure others will too, and some adjusting will be needed as life will be different and definitely a bit quieter and slower.

It has been a great privilege and honour over my years with SAASPC to have had the opportunity to do so much interesting work and to meet so many amazing and dedicated people and especially to be able to represent families from public preschools and schools in this state.

Best wishes for now and into the future.

Editor's note: We thank all those who have so generously contributed to Parents Say – without you we would not have had a magazine, let alone one that has consistently provided useful information and advice. And I also thank all those who have been the editor of the magazine – it's not an easy role and you have all done a wonderful job.

A (VERY) SHORT HISTORY OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PARENT COMMUNITIES

In his 1988 introduction to HJ Lewis' *On behalf of children... a history of the South Australian Association of School Parents' Clubs*, John Steinle, the Director-General of Education said: '...it is the state parent organisation itself that shines through the text... Small school-based clubs coming together to a state conference in 1952, forming a state association in 1957, and taking up an increasingly important role in South Australian education...'

In the beginning

Delegates representing 130 welfare clubs from nearly all parts of the state attended the first conference at the Adelaide Teachers College, which was chaired by Thelma Hallam, President of the River District Schools Welfare Association. This conference was crucial, for although there was, at the time, no state-wide association to pass resolutions, the framework was laid for the formation of such. The enthusiasm aroused by this first conference resulted in a conference being held each year up until 2019, and then recommenced in 2022.

Things were not altogether easy in the beginning. In the early 1950s a number of the women who were very involved in organising the conferences met in the Young Women's Christian Association rooms in Hindmarsh Square, Adelaide, to arrange details regarding the time and location of the annual conference and the speakers for the occasion. These ladies met stealthily in a far corner of Coles' cafeteria (which no longer exists) in Rundle Street, making morning tea last until well after lunch while they sorted out a multitude of business.

The first four conferences were held at the Adelaide Teachers College, for which no charge was made for the hall, common room or gymnasium; typing and duplicating were also free, so that the expenses of the first conference amounted to £26, which was almost covered by a collection at the door. More recently SAASPC has been able to provide accommodation for parents attending from country areas.

Changes to name

In 1957, proposal put to the conference that a state association be formed and that the name State Association of School Welfare Clubs was adopted. Then in 1976 at the annual conference the name was changed to South Australian Association of School Parents' Clubs (SAASPC). And finally, in 2016, in order to reflect the changes in both schools and

the association, the name was changed to South Australian Association of School Parent Communities.

Area associations

Thirty years before the first conferences in the 1950s, welfare committees in schools had come together as broader groups. The Riverland clubs were particularly active in the 1930s and 1940s and others followed. Once the Association had formally formed these groups became Area Associations and in 1987 there were 24 Area Associations covering the whole of South Australia and providing a network of parents – unfortunately since then they have gradually diminished and today they no longer exist.



River Districts ladies visiting Adelaide

Logo - The Wheel

The concept of a wheel was put forward by those attending club and area meetings. The hub or centre of the wheel represented executive and its officers, the clubs spread out around the whole of South Australia became the rim of the wheel, linked to each other by their position on the rim, but joined to the hub by the spokes. The spokes conveyed the energy of the hub to the rim, and formed vital channels through which information was disseminated and, just as importantly, collected. The idea of unity, forward movement, energy, inherent value and every-day practicality demonstrated in a wheel can even now explain the why, what and who of the Association.



Funding

No Government grant was available until the 1970s, with an initial Ministerial grant of \$250 was made. In later years this annual amount was gradually increased until the figure for 1986-87 was \$12,000 and in 2026-27 is was \$64,000. A small amount of other income is received by way of school and preschool affiliation fees. In turn, costs of the SAASPC have also risen, but the Executive Committee use the grant and affiliation fees to the best possible advantage in the interests of children in schools.

The officers of the Association worked in the beginning, as they still do, in a voluntary capacity.

In 1964 the association resolved, for the first time, to pay an annual honorarium to executive officers, for the President £15, Secretary £20, Treasurer £10, Assistant Secretary £5. It was also resolved that sixpence per mile be paid to Executive Officers travelling on official business. While the reimbursement of travel costs still occurs today, the payment of the annual honorarium has long since been dropped.

In 2022, for the first time, a part time Parent and Community Liaison Officer was employed; however her employment lasted only 18 months due to lack of funding from the Department for Education.

Publications

Handbook – updated regularly

Acronym list – originally called *Initial Dismay*, this is a longstanding, unique, and very useful and popular, publication and has been updated every 3 years or so

Leaflets – originally a series of papers was produced called *Consider this* which were written on current topics; more recently leaflets have been produced on:

- SAASPC Is
- Affiliated committees and parent groups
- Connecting families with preschools and schools
- Finding support
- Fundraising
- Information sessions for parents
- Parent teacher interviews

- Parental engagement in student learning
- Starting school
- Transition to secondary school

Website – this was established in 2001 and continues to be updated as required; it will remain a resource for the next few months.

Parents Say

In 1964 the Association began issuing a news sheet to 'spread the word' among members. And in 1965, when funding was provided, a substantial, printed 'Newsletter' was introduced. As years went by, the format was improved and the content of the publication increased. In 1985 the title of the quarterly magazine was changed to *Parents Say* and its distinctive yellow cover adopted; it is now widely known and respected for its content and quality production. Through the magazine information about SAASPC, programs and events in schools and preschools, and updates from the Minister and the Department for Education and much more is provided. Hard copies (and now also email alerts) are sent to all SA public schools and preschools and it is also available on the SAASPC website.



Topics of interest

As one might expect, right from the very beginning, parents were interested in a very wide range of topics – from curriculum to education for girls to sex education to TV in schools to teaching agriculture to children with disabilities to advertising of ladies underwear to flyscreens on windows in schools to

corporal punishment to lack of federal funding of education – still a concern today. More recently, concerns have focused on school bus safety, canteens, school uniforms, behavior of students TV and social media.

Work undertaken

In the early days of the Association, its officers travelled far and wide across South Australia to speak to parents. In 1966, due to the very high demand to speak at meetings, the president made a tape recording that could be used as a substitute for her presence. From 1994 to 1998 a number of targeted visits to schools were made by the officers who had the opportunity to speak to many parents and learn what was of particular concern to them. A report was written after each visit and sent to the Department for Education – some of which were not received with welcome arms. While the demand is no longer so great, officers continue to meet with parents across the state.

Inservice and Information sessions for parents

Beginning in 1973, SAASPC initiated many workshops and seminars to increase the knowledge and skill of parents. These covered topics such as Learning and reporting, Parent leadership, Communication and Submission writing. Area Associations and parent club were also encouraged to run seminars

In 1976 SAASPC obtained a grant to organise a camp for Aboriginal mothers and children from Marree to interact with mothers and children from the Northern suburbs of Adelaide.

Workshops have also been run, sometimes in conjunction with Department for Education officers, on new curriculum areas such as literacy. And for many years SAASPC has offered information sessions on Merit selection for the appointment of principals/preschool directors for governing council nominees and Responding to Risks of Harm, Abuse and Neglect - Education and Care (Mandatory notification).

Media

Print, radio, TV media has always sought the opinion of the Association and naturally their interest has been very broad depending on the many and varied topics that have arisen.

Representation

Over the years SAASPC has represented parents on many committees and research projects, from state education department committees to look at curriculum and wellbeing of students to those with a broader focus such as civics and citizenship, health, girls education, sex education, canteens, transport, dental services and media for children.

PIE grants

These began as PASS (Parents and Students in Schools) grants in 1983; the name changed in 1986 to Parent Initiatives in Education grants and they are now Parents in Education funding; since then SAASPC has sat on the panel to select and recommend programs for the Minister for Education to fund. In 2010 the Department for Education said: *PiE Grants are unique in that they are for parents and selected by parents. They support strong parental engagement in school governance. Preference in the selection process is given to programs that are innovative and that could provide a model for other sites.* In the 40 years the grants have been provided the amount has only increased from \$40,000 to \$80,000.

Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO)

ACSSO was formed in September 1947 to represent the interests of children enrolled in government schools throughout Australia. The intention was to develop unified national parent organisation policies in education and to represent these policies and the interests of its affiliates at the national level. The State Association of South Australian Welfare Clubs could see the benefits of belonging to ACSSO, but repeated and logical applications to become a member of this national body were refused in the belief that the Association accepted affiliation from non-government schools. In July 1976, nine years after its first application, the Association made another formal application to join the national association and it was formally accepted.

From 1976-78 Betty Totthill was elected ACSSO Treasurer; and Judith Bundy was the ACSSO President in 2002-2005.

Association hymn

(Tune: The Marines Hymn)

Come Welfare Clubs o'er all the land
Throughout its breadth and length.
Unite to fight for truth and right
For unity is strength.
For the vision of the shining light
Which leads us on our way,
And brings us all together now
We raise our thanks today.
In the cause of youth's advance we meet.
O may they be inspired
To tread with eager fearless feet ,
With zeal for knowledge fired .
O may our children aiming high,
Press forward to the end.
May they ever on themselves rely,
Yet never lack a friend.
Where' er the need for help is found
Be we never wanting there.
May love, encouragement abound,
One another's burdens share.
May the fellowship this rally brings
Enrich and cheer our days,
So that greater, higher, nobler things
May be our aim always.

Conference organisers and Presidents

1952	Thelma Hallam and Eva Hall presided over conference
1953-1954	Lucy Stirling, Rubina Knight and Verna Wakefield organised conference
1955-1956	Lucy Stirling president of conference
1957	Mavis Rose (first president)
1958-1959	Thelma Hallam
1960-1961	Mavis Rose
1962-1963	B. Russell
1964-1966	Jeanne Sharpe
1967-1969	Judy Quinlan
1970-1972	Shirley Nolan
1973-1975	Joyce Fitzpatrick
1976-1977	Betty Tothill
1978-1980	Shirley Nolan
1981-1983	Helen Kitson
1984-1985	Margaret McKenzie
1986-1989	Gwen Secomb
1990-1992	Elaine Bussenschutt
1993-1995	Judith Bundy
1996-1997	Glenda Woolford
1998-2000	Jane Hodge
2001-	Jenice Zerna



Current executive

l-r

Jenny Polley	Country Vice President
Judith Bundy	Secretary/ Magazine Editor
Leanne Sheard	Metropolitan Vice President
Jenice Zerna	President / Treasurer
Ruth Lenton	Metropolitan Vice President

PARENT GROUPS

What is a parent group

Legislation in South Australia requires that there must be a Governing Council in each school, and it also provides for the establishment of affiliated committees – which are usually parent groups.

A parent group is

- accessible to all parents and other interested members of the school community
- an independent body affiliated with the Council – **not a committee** of the Council
- required by its constitution to elect annually a member to represent it on the Council
- entitled to operate its own bank account
- may elect annually a member to represent it on the school finance advisory committee if it is part of a governing school council's consolidated account.

Parent groups take many different forms depending on the needs and wishes of the parents – for example they can be parents and friends groups, class groups, subject groups, support groups, parent networks, friends of the school. Whichever form of group is chosen, a constitution must be forwarded to the preschool/school's Education Director who will send it to the Minister (or his/her delegate) for approval.

Why have a parent group

A preschool/school parent group can

- provide an opportunity for parents and others in the community to meet regularly to express and develop their interest in education
- act as a forum to gain and share information, ideas and skills, especially those relating to the education policies of the preschool/school specifically and South Australia generally and to the wellbeing of their children
- recognise and represent the views of parents and convey these views to the director/principal and the preschool management committee/Council and, where appropriate, to other preschool/school bodies eg finance, fundraising or grounds committees

- provide a regular link between parents, teachers and children
- assist with parental engagement programs
- assist the preschool/school in material and personal ways to benefit the children
- assist parents to develop skills to become involved in the life of the preschool/school and to participate in decision making
- provide valuable assistance in many aspects of the education of children by working in cooperation with the director/principal staff and preschool management committee/Council
- provide an environment of care and concern that can assist and complement that of the professional educators.

Composition and format

A parent group needs a planned structure to carry out its aims and objectives. It is suggested that

- the group should decide on the number of office bearers (and their duties) that are needed for it to function efficiently
- it decides how often it needs to meet
- a committee may be elected at the annual general meeting to assist office bearers in the running of the group
- general meetings should be open to anyone from the school community. However only members of the group would be entitled to vote.

Constitution

It is a legal requirement that a constitution is adopted as soon as possible after forming a group. Any group that operates without an approved constitution will not be covered by Department for Education's insurance and **MUST NOT** undertake any activities, fundraising, events etc.

A model constitution can be found on the Department for Education's website –<https://www.education.sa.gov.au/docs/psp/governing-council/affiliatedcommitteemodelconstitution.pdf>. It is good practice for the parent group to review its operations every 2-3 years and to update its constitution if required.

Activities of a parent group

Possible activities could be

- organising information and welcome events for new students and parents at the school
- helping with school events and functions, such as a sports day, quiz night or a book fair
- organising second hand book and second hand uniform sales
- organising fundraising activities
- helping to cater or work at fundraising and social activities
- assisting in the preparation of school newsletters, handbooks, information booklets and calendars
- running, or helping in, the canteen or with special school lunch days
- providing parent views to school leadership about school policies such as codes of behaviour, anti-bullying, homework or uniform that have been identified by the school for review.

Always remember that the education, learning and wellbeing of children should at all times be the main consideration of the parent group.

In schools a parent group is able, as an affiliated body of the Council, to enjoy similar benefits in respect of incorporation, insurance etc provided that its activities are sanctioned by the school principal.

For a limited time information about parent groups can be found on the SA Association of School Parent Communities website: www.saaspc.org.au. Some information is also available on the Dept for Education's website.

SA SCHOOL TERM DATES

2026	27 January-10 April	27 April-3 July	20 July-25 September	12 October-11 December
2027	27 January-9 April	26 April-2 July	19 July-24 September	11 October-10 December
2028	31 January-13 April	1 May -7 July	24 July-29 September	16 October-15 December





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