



## **Annual Report 2013**

Just over a year ago, a group of concerned parents came together in Canberra to discuss how to improve support for kids who were unable to attend school because of critical or chronic illness. More discussions followed, and in May 2012, the group agreed to apply for incorporation as an Association under the name of MissingSchool. The Association established an ABN and tax file number.

Following incorporation, MissingSchool applied to the Australian Taxation Office for Charitable Organisation status, and subsequently for status as a Tax-deductible Gift Recipient. These applications were approved on 7 Dec 2012 and 15 Feb 2013 respectively. This was all accomplished in a very short timeframe, and we view the rapid approval of our application as community recognition of the value of the work we are undertaking.

Much of the initial set-up work of designing logos and a website, and printing flyers and publicity material, was driven by an invitation to present a consumer perspective at the Children's Healthcare Australasia conference in Sydney in October 2012. This meeting proved to be an invaluable opportunity to make connections with other parties interested in education and child welfare, notably the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY), and the Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute, both of whom have provided useful advice and insights into the issues around research in this area.

A launch website established in September 2012 attracted a significant number of subscribers. It was updated in June 2013, and will be developed to include active blogs and forums, along with webinars and expert panels. Free membership of the Association will be offered to subscribers.

In late 2012, the ACT Health and Education Directorates held a community consultation regarding their proposed new joint framework for supporting students with complex medical needs. Three members of the MissingSchool management committee attended one of the consultation evenings, and found that the proposed joint framework focused largely on medical needs in an educational setting, rather than educational needs in a medical or non-school setting; the project officers at the event admitted that they had not considered the needs of students with complex medical needs who were not actually in school, and asked many questions about our experience and understanding of the issues. MissingSchool followed up the meeting with a formal submission in response to the proposal (see Appendix A).

In November and December 2012, local business Tiny's Green Shed held two "charity days" from which all proceeds were devoted to supporting MissingSchool. Thanks to their generosity, and with the support of several other benefactors, we were able to hold an official launch in January 2013. This was reported in the "Canberra Weekly" and also by local radio station ABC Triple 6, who broadcast an interview with MissingSchool and later provided an introduction to executive officers at the ACT Education and Training

Directorate. In discussions with the Directorate, it was observed that the proposed new “Engaging Schools Framework” might be an avenue for elaborating means of supporting students who miss school because of critical or chronic illness. MissingSchool expects to have input to the development of that framework when it is released in the consultation phase.

Immediately prior to the AGM on 26 June 2013, we held a consultation event to which we invited a number of parties with an interest in providing educational support for children and young people with critical or chronic illness. Our goal in this was to open a conversation around the challenges facing students who miss school because of illness, and to explore the different perspectives of the many different parties involved in caring for those students. Over 20 people attended, including representatives from :

- ACT Education and Training Directorate
- ACT Health Directorate
- ACT P&C Council
- Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools
- Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
- Canberra Hospital
- Families ACT
- MissingSchool
- parents and private individuals
- Ronald McDonald Learning Program / Educational Pathways Project
- University of Canberra
- University of NSW / Sydney Children's Hospital Kids' Cancer Centre

The event was acclaimed as a successful and critical first step in establishing a collaborative, consultative environment in which to discuss the needs of our children and young people. Results and a summary of the consultation will be made available to all participants.

Applications for funding for identified strategic objectives in 2013/14 have been made and are under preparation, and are listed in the table below.

Funding body	Amount of grant	Target activity	Lodgement date
Molonglo Community Bank Group, 100 Community Heroes	\$1,000.00	Bathurst Forum in Canberra.	19/06/13
St George Foundation	\$25,000.00	Research in collaboration with ARACY to confirm statistics on illness-related school absenteeism, best practice (Australia and worldwide), and audit of state and territory legislation.	21/06/13
Australia Post “Our Neighbourhood	\$12,650.00	Development of “Let's go viral” video	28/06/13

Community”		campaign to raise awareness of educational challenges facing seriously sick kids.	
Jetstar “Flying Start”	\$30,000.00	Development of resource toolkit; travel to introduce and consult with stakeholders in other states and regions.	29/06/13

Other plans for 2013/14 include attendance at the H.E.L.P. Conference in September 2012, as well as the Children's Healthcare Australasia Conference in April 2014, which will focus on the intersection of the medical and educational sectors in children's healthcare.

We have made good connections with other organisations involved in the care of seriously sick kids, and will be working to formalise partnerships with those organisations in 2013/14. We will also be broadening our parent membership base in order to reach out to the kids and families whose situations and needs are as variable as the wide range of critical or chronic illnesses which have an impact on education and school participation.



Gina Meyers  
MissingSchool Inc. (Chair, 2012-13)  
8 July 2013