

Sydney Grammar School Women's Association (SGSWA) Parent Survey 25 August 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 25 August 2018 we asked all parents of Sydney Grammar School, College Street (the School) to participate in a survey to comment on the efficacy of SGSWA in providing events or activities for parents and to ask for their capacity to volunteer. Over 300 families responded which represented a 30% participation rate of the School parent body. Of the respondents, 19% spoke another language as well as English at home.

We are grateful for the parents who took time to provide great feedback. And this report outlines the recommendations from parents to assist SGSWA respond to the results, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and service delivery to the School community.

Survey: Purpose and Objectives

The key objective of this survey process was to gather information to provide SGSWA and the School with a better understanding of the following:

- Parent expectations of SGSWA in organising events and promoting a sense of community with the School;
- SGSWA areas of strength;
- SGSWA areas of need of improvement; and
- If the School community required further activities or events that SGSWA may be able to assist in delivering. We are parental volunteers and many events are done through tradition. We wanted to make sure that our limited resources are spent doing what is most effective in terms of building community.

Parent expectations of SGSWA

The survey was heartening in that there were many comments from parents who greatly appreciate the work of SGSWA towards building community, running the School uniform shop and so on. Mothers, who were the main respondents of the questionnaire, recognised that SGSWA is a volunteer organisation, which provides events, which bring the parents together, both within their year group and for the membership at specific times such as the New Mothers' Morning Tea. Some parents indicated that they would volunteer if they had some time, while often stating that they don't wish to volunteer. Some parents were willing to volunteer, but did not have the capacity to attend meetings during work hours. Some parents showed an interest in being Form representatives. The survey respondents were overwhelmingly supportive and respectful of the work SGSWA does. Jenny Booth, SGSWA office manager was singled out for praise in comments for being the friendly and efficient "face" of SGSWA for many parents.

There have been consistent comments in the survey and in previous years at SGSWA events about the level of discomfort that Grammar divides the parent volunteer groups by gender.

Feedback on the communications from SGSWA:

Overall parents are very satisfied with the information they receive. They rely strongly on the School newsletter (SGSWA section) for event and other SGSWA information and many comments mention a desire for smaller support groups or activities which reflect their son's and family interests.

Communication about SGSWA activities

1. The School newsletter is the main source of knowledge for parents on events (80%)
2. Direct emails from SGSWA is their secondary source of information (60%)
3. * Network of friends is the third source (13%).
4. Fourth source of information is the School website (6%)

** Regarding network of friends:*

1. Because there are no formal channels for smaller group communications parents have created alternative communication channels including:
 - a. Form III has a closed Facebook group and a WhatsApp forum exists for which has issues of inclusivity and contents posted.
 - b. Form II has a WhatsApp forum.
2. Parents with children who did not go to Edgecliff or St Ives prep schools are unintentionally not included in informal communication channels, which make it difficult for parents to communicate regarding out of School activities for the children such as Saturday sport carpool. This is especially true for parents who work and do not have the capacity to build relationship through active membership/participation in SGSWA. The WhatsApp forum does not have a comprehensive membership of Form parents.

What Parents like about SGSWA

Some events are winners!

1. New Mothers' Morning Tea (many working mothers take the morning off work for this as it is the first event for Form I parents, though it's not easy!).
2. Literary Lunch – always a sell-out and a chance for a formal get together at a good time of the year – the Friday before Mother's Day. Still an issue for many mothers who work.
3. Form I and II Form party has always been filled to the brim. Latter Form parties, not so much. Therefore in 2019 we are combining Forms III to VI in one event. Comments have included that they would like to see the Headmaster give a short talk (10 mins), which would give a talking point for guests as well as be a reason to attend.
4. The Form 1 Dinner is a great success. Parents like the attendance of tutors and the Master of the Lower House.

What Parents are not so keen on:

1. The PPP (Pink Passion and Purpose dinner). Historically this event has been too late in the year and parents are not sure why it held. (So we've moved it earlier in Tem 4 and are considering changing the name to resonate in order to attract more attendees).
2. The size of the combined Form I and II event. Too successful!
3. The latter Form parties – many thought they were a bit dull and there wasn't any reason to attend except to meet other parents (who they may already know from Sports etc.) on a Saturday night.

When can Parents attend?

People love coming to Big School, because of the location and sense of occasion and they like special events at the Boatshed. They prefer to meet during the week, as shown. The weekend events are for family based events such as the Form I and II first term BBQ where the Form VI boys come and cook and answer questions from the new families and at the same time raise awareness for the Form VI charity of choice.

1. Weekday evenings (from 7pm) 57%
2. Weekend evenings (from 7pm) 47%
3. Weekday after work (5 – 7pm) 32%
4. Weekend daytime 20%

What other events or activities would parents attend:

Events

1. A year group informal dinner (68%)
2. A year group lunch or coffee morning (53%)
3. Old boys talking about their experiences as part of an after work or evening event (37%)

4. A trivia night (33%)
5. A black tie fundraiser (24%)

Comments were many and varied and included:

1. Informal over formal events are much preferred
2. Masters “Special talks” to parents on topics they are expert on for parents
3. Mother and son lunches/breakfasts
4. Events at art galleries
5. A book club (like at St Ives) or other interest groups
6. Comments against the black tie dinner idea (doesn’t fit Grammar culture)

Will parents volunteer to arrange activities?

1. Parents volunteer in the tuckshop (25%) and uniform shop (28%) and they enjoy doing so. A friendly and inclusive experience is vital for goodwill.
2. Not many people will volunteer outside of this in the current SGSWA format. 31% are not available because of work.
3. We have a core bunch of volunteers in SGSWA. 90% of work falls on less than 2% of the mother committee co-hort.

Report Recommendations

1. SGSWA will continue to host similar events and activities as in previous years, with changes to reflect feedback from the survey. For example there will be fewer Form parties and they will be at Big School and the PPP will be earlier in the year. This level of continued activity is achievable so long as the volunteer base remains proactive.
2. Further events and activities and Form based gatherings are possibly only achievable with greater volunteer participation from the parent body.
3. Further to No. 2 above, SGSWA may seek expressions of interest for year-based parent coordinators from the parent body. To increase the efficacy of such people, SGSWA will need to provide detailed information kits on the role of the coordinator and communication channels. Developing these will require assistance from volunteers with marketing expertise.
4. Year Co-ordinators could offer more informal Form events as per the needs of the year. Won’t be on School grounds or have a fundraising component.
Further volunteer participation will allow greater knowledge exchange by the School to parents through smaller events where old boys and Masters speak.

Barriers to achievement by SGSWA of recommendations

1. SGSWA is a volunteer organisation. The consistent application year in year out of extra communications and structure to parents is not consistent with a committee that changes each year.
2. Jenny Booth is a hard working asset to SGSWA and increasing her workload to provide more to the parent body is not achievable.
3. SGSWA mailing database is non-comprehensive. It includes only those who have submitted a form as part of their induction pack. Thereby comprehensive communication to the parent body by SGSWA is not achievable, excepting through the inclusion of the overview of the SGSWA activities included in each School newsletter.
