

2017 Report of the President for the Annual General Meeting of the Canterbury Schools' Debating Council

Tabled in anticipation of the Annual General Meeting to be held on Wednesday 27 September 2017

Written by Andre Knops

2017 has seen some significant reforms for CSDC. I am pleased with the progress of these changes and the positive reception we have received from teachers and students.

Executive Changes

Two special general meetings were called during the 2017 term. The first was held while I was in Iceland and saw the delivery of the previous year's financial reports and filling the vacant general executive spot. This spot was soon once again declared vacant and the treasurer resigned following questions of performance. At the second general meeting, Sam McLean and Harrison Smith were elected to the executive. The election of these two individuals proved to be pivotal to the performance of CSDC over the remainder of the term. Sam has performed well as treasurer and Harrison has adopted a Junior Development Strategy. The proposed constitutional amendment will see the establishment of a specific Junior Development Officer position on the executive and I fully support this initiative.

With the election of Sam and hard work of Tom, we finally gained full control of our finances. This is to be applauded considering previous executives did not consider this a priority. We now have full up to date financial figures available and this has allowed us to achieve our broader policy objectives for the year.

Round Performance

In a survey conducted all teachers rated the administration of junior rounds either a four or five out of five. I believe Tom has handled himself very well to achieve such a score and while co ordinating rounds on his own. Minor issues identified for the four star rating included the length of adjudications, the consistency of scoring and adjudications and the seeding of teams so that they were not seeing the same teams constantly. The latter is not really something within our power given all teams are at the will of the draw but the other points are something that I would like to be worked on in future. This year it was more strictly enforced that adjudicators needed to be more succinct with their comments and with some people who needed further assistance I believe this works. There is only so much information a student can take. It needs to be recognised that teachers, students and parents also want to get home while ensuring that the student receives sufficient feedback to enhance their performance in the next round. Overall, Tom has done very well in the junior rounds. Whoever works within the role next year will have to meet a high bar of professionalism and expectations that Tom has embedded.

Within the seniors, there were some issues over moot selections and balance. I do accept some blame in this but primarily I allowed both round coordinators to run their tournaments independently and flag any issues to the wider exec as they needed dealing to. Within the survey, some teachers made comments reflecting that on occasion, the senior entry email was dispatched on a Monday rather than the Friday and this made organization difficult. My recommendation is that it is made clear that the round coordinator dispatch the entry email on the Friday, close entries Tuesday night & allocate rounds, allow Wednesday for the schools to deal to any internal administrative matters with their teams and then on Thursday debate. This by far was the preferred approach of teachers as some schools have heavy education outside the classroom requirements and can't just do things with one days notice.

The council is extremely thankful to St Andrew's College and St Margaret's College for hosting our rounds this year. As someone who debated back when the venue was often decided on the day through a challenge of who would blink first it is fantastic to be able to provide stability and consistency of venue.

All teachers were extremely appreciative of the wider administrative reforms that resulted in efficient rounds this year. In previous years, rounds ran late into the night and this drew the ire of parents, teachers and students. This year Junior round 2 never ran later than 8pm and Seniors had everyone out the door by 8:30. Future executives need to ensure this policy is maintained and efficiency gains made where possible. As mentioned earlier, there is only so much feedback a student can take on and no adjudication should be longer than a substantive speech.

Tournaments

Senior Impromptu was run this year following a shift from holding it towards the end of the year to filling the mid year bubble that exists due to the end of semester exams, holidays and then school holidays. Although Tabbycat crashed the day operated well albeit behind schedule.

For next year it is worth reducing the number of preliminary rounds. By the end of the day it was clear that students were exhausted, the quality of debates was starting to diminish. Additionally, greater allowance needs to be made in the timetable for adjudication and movement of students around the venue. We are very grateful to St Andrew's College for hosting.

Junior Regionals was administered extremely well by Tom. Teachers and students were extremely impressed with the day and the fact that the day ended precisely on time was an added bonus. Although some may have thought the use of walkie talkies was a step too far I think they worked extremely well and ensured that there was not a need for constantly typing on messenger or sending runners up and down the stairs. If the budget enables it next year it may be worth CSDC investing in a set so future events may run with such precision. Again, Tom's work means that next years event has a high standard to live up to and if it does I believe the reputation of this organization will be able to grow.

Although a NZSDC tournament, Senior Regionals operated extremely well and Bill is to be commended for his efforts. The use of tabbycat resulted in the tournament operating to time and far more efficiently than in the previous year. It was also fantastic to have life members and out of town judges adjudicate and provide a change in view for schools. I hope that next year's event will

be held slightly later in the year so that schools have more time to practice and receive coaching but this is in the hands of NZSDC.

Social Media

Social Media use this year saw our facebook likes exceed 300 and use of our facebook page soar. From the start of the year with our advertising campaign targeted to young people aged between 13 and 18 based within Canterbury we reached thousands of people and saw Rolleston College enter the competition aswell as several new teams from other schools. Next year I believe it critical that CSDC continue to maintain their social media presence albeit with a run through the spell check before posting. Our highest rating post was the open letter of protest upon news that one of the regional teams was being withdrawn. This post saw over 3000 engagements and expressed clearly that it is essential that

Adjudicators

CSDC continues to benefit from a wide dedicated pool of volunteers and all efforts should be made to continue this in future. This year saw 2 CSDC judges accredit and this provided great value to the organization. Subsidy of adjudicator training was experimented this year in conjunction with the University of Canterbury Debating Society. From feedback and results it would seem that while the experiment worked, if it were to be run again greater controls would be needed to ensure the judges continue to attend and adjudicate for CSDC.

This year also saw money spent on rewarding and thanking adjudicators through end of night functions at the Little Brown Jug and providing snacks and food for adjudicators during rounds and tournaments. In my opinion, this needs to continue to ensure that our adjudicators are looked after and acknowledged for their efforts and the sacrifice of their time.

Coaching

This year we have seen a surge in coaching hours used by schools. The three free hours provided with registration works well and was used by nearly every school that did not have their own private coaches. I believe it is important that coaching hours allocation remain an open process whereby suitable coaches are able to volunteer for hours rather than previous methods of select individuals taking as many hours possible. We have also seen many schools this year request particular individuals coach them and I think this should be further encouraged as certain teams have certain styles best aided by certain coaches.

Conflict of Interest Register

This year we established the conflict of interest register following events at the start of the year. This has worked in being able to allay any concerns by schools of bias or unfairness. On at least two occasions this year, I have been able to use the register to establish whether a school has received unfair treatment. The register is confidential to the president and at the end of each debating year is destroyed with students required to re register each year. Although this adds an extra layer of compliance it is important to have in terms of having a written record of any potential conflicts of interest to ensure a fair result for our teams.

Discipline and Complaints

Type	Number
Complaints about Student Conduct	1
Complaints about Adjudicator Conduct	15 complaints* reflecting on conduct of 5 people
Complaints about CSDC/Administration	4

* Some are multiple complaints about the same incident.

All disciplinary investigations were conducted within 24 hours of receiving the initial complaint. The complaint against the student was resolved with the temporary suspension of the student from the competition. Complaints against Adjudicators were typically low level and often fixed with an extra round of training or a discussion. Many were made due to the long length of adjudications.

Complaints against administration typically were for low level things such as adjudicator allocations and were rectified immediately in most cases.

Future Competitions and Expansion

This year we welcomed Ashburton College, Rolleston College and Rudolf Steiner into the competition. Although Kaiapoi did not enter this year, I suspect that they will return in the future. I believe we still have room to welcome more competitors into the tournament and recommend next years executive attempt to contact the schools within Christchurch, Selwyn and Waimakariri that do not presently compete. Typically each school designates a “head of debating” or head of performance co curricula role to a staff member. At some schools this means the teacher only focuses on drama and thus declines our invitations. However, it is likely that at some schools they are simply without information or the teacher that previously blocked the expansion of debating has moved on and it is at these schools we ought to try again.

Another idea I’d like to pursue is a tournament in a similar style to Nga Kete but for Canterbury’s Maori and Pasifika community. I have made some small approaches to some individuals within Canterbury and there was support for the idea. Given the election has now concluded there should be room to continue this idea into 2018.

Conclusion

Next year I recommend the executive continue the policy of creating a calendar and sending that to schools with their registration forms. I would like to see online registration through google forms used in future so that it is much easier to compile an accurate email list. With this calendar it should continue to avoid school holidays and the last week of university to avoid adjudicators being too busy with assignments.

As part of my election I said that I’d likely see the council run with a deficit this year so that we could work to repair our reputation and reward adjudicators more. We are in a financial position to do so once again next year but most of this work is complete as is.

I recommend that that body approve the submitted constitutional amendment to rename portfolios and create a junior development position.

I believe it is imperative that data from rounds is entered into the tab within 24 hours of the round to ensure no data is lost and motions ought to be better supervised.

Social Media use should continue as it currently is and in particular next year the marketing campaign to attract new students should be pursued once again.

For all adjudicators and coaches that have given up their time this year, you have my eternal thanks.

I wish to thank Tom for all his hard work as junior co ordinator and vice president, Sam as treasurer, Megan for her work in seniors and Harrison for his work with Junior Development. I understand all of us are running for re election and I wish you all the very best.