

# P&C Information Sheets



**ACT Council of  
Parents & Citizens  
Associations**

*The parent voice on public education*

**The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is the peak body for P&C associations in the ACT.  
Council represents over 60,000 parents in 86 ACT public schools.**

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# Welcome



Congratulations on being elected to your school Parent Association! We hope you find the role enjoyable and that your volunteered time is valued.

Council (the ACT Council of P&C Associations) is here to assist you in your role. Our office is available to answer questions and provide advice.

## Information for Parent Associations

Here we have a comprehensive collection of information to answer your questions, help your association function well, and to assist you in your role on your Parent Association/P&C.

This information is intended to provide a starting point for parents and parent associations. We encourage you to also visit our website for up to date information, events, meetings, training and useful links for P&Cs and parents.

We also have several publications which are worth looking out for: our quarterly magazine *ParentACTion* which is delivered each term to your school (and available online); and a fortnightly email bulletin (P&C office bearers are signed up when you fill in our Office Bearer's form, or sign up on our website).

We welcome any comments or feedback which would contribute to making this a more useful resource.

## What is Council?

Council is the peak body for public school parent associations in the ACT. All ACT P&Cs are members of Council and our role is to support all our members with the challenges of running their association. One or two delegates from each school P&C come together to make up the Council and through this we are able to promote and represent parent views to decision makers. See Part Five of this guide for more about us.

## Contact us

Our office is open 9:30am - 2:30pm on school days and we are available to answer your queries.

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### Please note:

We have provided this information in good faith, but it does not constitute legal advice. Council will not accept responsibility for actions taken on the basis of this advice, and recommends that P&C associations check the currency of advice when contemplating actions.

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# PART ONE:

## Schools and Parents



Outcomes for children are the best when families, schools, communities and governments work together. Parents are important partners in schooling by virtue of their role as the central provider and carer, and the role they play in their children's learning and development.

Research has consistently shown that family involvement in schooling improves student achievement with better grades, attendance, attitude and behaviour.

Parents have the right to be involved in all aspects of the education of their children: at home, at school and at the system level.

There are many ways in which parents can be active in their partnership with the school. These include:

- supporting learning at home
- attending interviews with teachers about their children's progress
- reading school newsletters and other communications
- helping in the classroom and with a variety of school programs such as reading, craft, sport and excursions
- sharing their talents at school (such as coaching a sporting team)
- providing feedback about school programs and educational issues through parent forums and discussions, school surveys and so on
- sharing in decision making, for example, as a member of the school board
- becoming an office bearer of the P&C association
- helping in the school canteen or library
- assisting with fundraising
- representing the parents of your school at P&C Council meetings
- representing the wider parent community on ACT education committees and advisory groups.

Parent participation contributes significantly to better outcomes for all students. It enables the school system and individual schools to respond more effectively to community values, aspirations and needs. It enhances the strength and vibrancy of the public education system and builds a stronger school community.

The ACT Education Directorate (EDU) have produced resources for schools and parents on ways to best engage parents in the school and their children's learning. They are available on the [EDU website](#).

Council has developed a checklist to assess how well your school is engaging parents in effective partnerships. See [Information Sheet 2](#).

Part of being involved in your children's education is to raise concerns if they arise. See [Information Sheet 4](#).





Use this checklist to assess how your school rates on parent participation.

### Communication

- Enquiries to the school office from community members are handled in a courteous and helpful manner.
- The school has a regular form of communication with parents and carers.
- The school produces clearly-worded, attractive publications about its policies & programs.
- Interpreters and translated materials are used where necessary.
- Parents are regularly informed about current issues in education.
- The school holds regular sessions where curriculum areas and teaching methods are demonstrated and discussed (using interpreters if necessary).
- Meaningful written and verbal reports about student achievement are provided on a regular basis.

### Parents and learning

- Parents and carers are encouraged to help improve their children's learning through appropriate family activities.
- Parents are informed about classroom activities and learning areas.
- Parents who are involved in classroom programs are invited to help shape the future directions of these programs.
- Parents have the opportunity to take part in programs which help them understand how children learn and how they can assist the learning process.
- Resources are available which help parents assist with home learning and understand teaching methods.

### Parents and school decision-making

- Parents' views are respected and can be seen to influence the work of the school.
- The school board takes seriously its responsibility to ensure that as many parents as possible contribute to school policy-making.
- The P&C is a forum for discussing school policy issues and is not expected to confine itself to fundraising.
- Parents are represented on school curriculum/education/policy committees.
- Parents participate in the evaluation of school policies and programs.
- Useful suggestions and new ideas are considered on their merit, regardless of their origin.
- Queries about aspects of the school programs or organisation are followed up and feedback provided.

### School community development

- Parents are invited to take part in school committees.
- Parents are included in school teams to attend in-service programs.
- The school board helps to identify issues to be addressed at in-service days.
- Parents act as a resource for the school as appropriate.

- School community members are informed about professional development programs which might be of interest to them.

### **School facilities**

- There are well-placed signs telling people where various sections and facilities of the school are located.
- There is a place where parents can meet informally.
- There are multi-lingual signs if needed.

### **Finance and administration**

- The school's financial position is known and understood in the community.
- Parents contribute to identifying resource needs.
- The school board has an open, well-publicised budget process.
- Administrative arrangements for handling and collecting voluntary contributions, including subject levies, ensure that the privacy and dignity of individual parents and students are maintained.



## Information Sheet 3

# Supporting your child's education

*This sheet is written for the information of migrant and refugee parents. It was developed with Companion House and is available in a number of languages common among refugee families - Arabic, Tamil, Burmese, and the Burmese dialects of Karen and Mon from [www.companionhouse.org.au](http://www.companionhouse.org.au).*

## General information

There are some simple ways to support your child's education:

- Make sure your child goes to school every day (except when sick).
- Get involved with the school as much as you can.
- Communicate (talk, email, write) with the teacher.
- Help your child to do their homework. Give them time and a good place to work.
- The Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services (MARSS) has a free homework program (PASS) for high school students. Phone 6248 8577.
- For younger children, read to them each day and listen to them read when they are old enough, in either English or your language, both will help them learn to read.
- Preschool is free for all 4 year old children in Canberra. Migrant children can sometimes start when they are 3½ years old. Check with your local preschool.

## Get involved with your child's school

There are many ways to get involved and build a good relationship with the school:

- All parents and carers are always welcome at the school. Call the school's front office if you have any questions about the school. Remember to record the school's telephone number each year.
- Chat with the teacher and other parents at school drop-off and pick-up time.
- Go to parent/teacher nights where you can ask questions and raise problems with the teacher. You may bring a friend or relative to help.
- You can ask the school to get an interpreter for the parent/teacher meeting too.
- Help at the school canteen, or in the library, with the school fete, working bees etc.
- Help in the classroom. Ask the teacher what help they need. This could be help tidying up or sharing your skills.
- Go on class excursions if you can with permission from the school.
- Attend the P&C (Parents and Citizens Association) meetings – you can bring a friend with you. All parents are welcome and encouraged to come to the P&C meeting.

## If there is a problem

**If you have a problem, ask for help. Teachers at the school want to help.**

- If you would like to use an interpreter to help you talk to the school, the school can book a free interpreter from the Translating and Interpreting Service. Phone 131 450
- Talk to either your child's teacher or the English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D) teacher if one is available.
- You, or the school, may decide to involve the year coordinator, senior teacher, deputy principal or principal to help as well, depending on the type of problem.
- You can contact the school counsellor for help at any time. Their contact information will be available from the school's front office or website or newsletter.
- If you still need more help contact Companion House 6251 4550.
- To find out more about the role of parents in schools, contact P&C Council: 6241 5759.



Parents sometimes need to raise concerns about their children's schooling. This can be difficult but it is important to discuss any problems or concerns. Doing nothing in the hope that the problem will go away may work on occasion, but you run the risk of the situation becoming more complex and more difficult to resolve.

### Raising concerns with a teacher

You should raise any problems you may have with the learning program or your child's wellbeing with their classroom or subject teacher. This gives the teacher a chance to respond and, if necessary, work with you to resolve it. Remember that teachers will be more prepared to listen and to act upon problems and concerns if they know they are supported. This means you have a responsibility to help and to give credit when it's due!

#### Step 1: Get a good grasp of the problem

Before you visit the school, work out what it is that is really bothering you. Concentrate on describing the problem clearly. This will help you decide whether approaching the teacher is warranted. The teacher will respond best when your facts are correct and you show your willingness to be part of the solution. 'Shooting from the hip' only encourages defensiveness.

#### Step 2: Arrange an interview with the class (or subject) teacher

Any problems deserve more than a few hurried words before the bell goes, so make an appointment. Mentioning the reason for the appointment is not only courteous but also promotes efficient use of valuable time by giving the teacher an opportunity to prepare for the meeting in the same way that you have.

#### Step 3: Discuss what's bothering you

- Don't leave the teacher guessing. Observe the social niceties but remember the real purpose of your visit. A friendly, relaxed, but business-like manner will work best.
- State your problem calmly and clearly.
- Show that you want to be part of the solution by expressing your concern and asking what can be done.
- Avoid intimidating behaviour such as shouting, aggressive body language, sexist or racist language, making threats, etc. Work at staying calm and objective. This can be hard to do where the welfare of your child is concerned.
- Listen at least as much as you talk. You might learn something new!
- Keep an open mind.
- Expect to compromise. Summarise agreed actions so that you and the teacher understand the important points in the same way.
- Arrange a follow-up meeting if necessary.

#### Step 4: Carry out the action you agreed to take

Depending on what was discussed, the sooner you start on an agreed course of action the better. Be patient with your child and the classroom teacher - changes don't happen overnight. Most meetings with the teacher result in satisfactory outcomes.

### School-based concerns

Occasionally you may want to address your problem or concern to someone other than the classroom teacher. This may be the case when:

- you have already approached the classroom or subject teacher but no satisfactory resolution could be arrived at
- you believe that it is a school rather than classroom matter or your problem or concern is not about a member of the school's teaching staff
- the matter relates to student wellbeing or social issues.

In secondary schools, there are other staff members you might contact such as a pastoral care teacher, year co-ordinator, student welfare officer or subject co-ordinator. The above steps recommended for meetings with class teachers still apply in these situations. Some additional suggestions are:

- try to get the problem resolved at the lowest possible level of authority
- involve as few people as possible, but having support can be helpful
- avoid discussing the issue with others while your child is present
- aim for a co-operative, problem-solving approach. (This does not mean that you should minimise the importance of your problem or concern or be less tenacious in your efforts to do something about it. You can be determined and reasonable at the same time.)

Using these avenues will help you to resolve most of your school-based problems and concerns in a satisfactory way.

Alternatively, **concerns of a less personal nature** (not specific to just one student) can be **brought to P&C meetings** for discussion with other parents and the principal. See [Information Sheet 6](#) on the role of the P&C. If the meeting is unable to resolve the issue at the school level (for example, it is dependent on system-level policies, not able to be changed by the school) the P&C may decide to refer the issue to Council.

### Council addresses concerns across the school system

Council (the ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations) is a strong advocate for parents, and represents their concerns at a system level to the relevant Minister and government Directorate. At each Council General Meeting, a place is reserved on the agenda for parents, usually through the school's council delegate, to voice concerns from their school community. Parents should first bring an issue to their P&C meeting which may then resolve to bring it to Council. For more about this, see [Information Sheets 33 to 35](#).

### Complaints resolution

If your concern is not adequately addressed, however, the ACT Education Directorate (EDU) has a formal complaints resolution process. The best avenue is to call the Liaison Unit, but if your complaint is serious, it is recommended to put it in writing.

To lodge a complaint by phone, contact the Liaison Unit directly on 6205 5429. Written complaints can be submitted via an [online form](#). Be clear about the problem and what your ideal resolution is. Give as much information as possible.

#### What happens to a complaint?

EDU will assign an independent officer to examine your complaint who will speak with the school. If you don't think the person dealing with your complaint is independent, you can ask for your complaint to be assigned to someone else. EDU must keep your complaint private.

You can also make a complaint about an ACT Directorate to the [ACT Ombudsman](#) on 6276 3773.



Each public school in the ACT is governed by a board comprising parents, teachers, community members and, in secondary school, students. The board makes school-level decisions – setting the direction, managing the budget and keeping in touch with community expectations. The roles of the school board are to

- establish the strategic direction and priorities of the school
- monitor and review school performance and report on school performance to chief executive, parents and staff
- develop, maintain and review the curriculum
- develop and review policies at the school
- establish budgetary policies and approve budgets and expenditure
- establish policies for the efficient and effective use of school assets and management of financial risk
- develop relations with the community
- make recommendations to the Education Directorate (EDU) on issues affecting the school.

### Accountability

The board is accountable to EDU and to the school community through a report prepared at the end of each school year. This annual report should be widely available and discussed in community forums such as the P&C association.

### Parent representatives

Membership of a school board includes the principal, three parents, two teachers, two students (high schools and colleges only) and an EDU nominee. All members except the principal are elected for two-year terms and may be re-elected. One of the parent representatives is usually selected as board chair while the principal is the board's executive officer.

The [School Board Manual](#), published by EDU, is an important resource for parents on the school board. Part nine of this manual '*Practical hints for school board members*' is particularly helpful.

### Elections

Elections for a new parent representative are held whenever a parent's term on the board ends. The election is overseen by an Assistant Returning Officer at the school. All parents or guardians of students at the school (including teachers who are parents/guardians) are eligible to vote. In addition, any adults resident in the area who specifically request that right can vote.

### Parents, the P&C and the school board

Parent representatives on the school board are known as 'parents and citizens members'. They represent the views and interests of members of the school's P&C. It is their role to ensure that issues and priorities discussed at school board meetings are communicated to members of the P&C. The P&C meeting is the most obvious way to do this. Parent board members should also garner the views of the P&C at meetings to report back to the school board. They should also seek feedback from the wider parent community; other mechanisms such as the school newsletter, questionnaires or parent meetings should be used to report to

and listen to parents. It is particularly important that major items on the board agenda, such as financial priorities, new school policies or programs, and annual action plans are widely discussed so that parent views contribute to board decisions.

A strong spirit of co-operation should exist between the P&C and the board. The members of the P&C association should assist parent representatives to perform effectively as board members and support parent representatives who will ensure real participation. There should be a regular place on the board agenda for a P&C report, and vice versa, and the board and P&C should routinely exchange minutes. A parent board representative may also be a member of the P&C executive.

### **Board meetings**

The dates of all board meetings and their agendas should be widely advertised within the school community. Observers from the school community should be made welcome at board meetings unless there are confidential matters being discussed. Such observers may be invited to participate in discussion but do not have voting rights.

### **Principals and boards: Who does what?**

The board is responsible for deciding on school policies, within EDU guidelines, while the principal is responsible for implementing those policies, as well as for the day to day running of the school.

The principal acts as the board executive officer following up matters and being responsible for the administrative functions of the board. The principal informs the board of EDU policies and priorities and has ultimate legal responsibility for making sure that the school follows relevant regulations. Provided that they have acted in good faith, board members are not subject to legal liability arising from board actions.

The board also determines how school funds will be spent based on the school's educational priorities. The principal or finance committee prepares an annual budget in line with those priorities. The budget must be put to the board for approval, and made available to the school community. The principal signs the school's half yearly financial statements to certify that they are correct while the board chair signs a statement that he or she has seen them.

The board is responsible for the school's strategic plan and the overall direction of the curriculum. The principal and teaching staff then need to prepare programs to meet the board's objectives. Each year the board must present an annual report to EDU and the school community. Usually, the principal and board chair collect information and compile the report on behalf of the board.

It is the principal who plays a major part in appointing, transferring and promoting staff. The board decides the selection criteria for the principal's position. The board chair speaks informally to applicants, and is a member of the selection panel.

It is important to remember that the board is not just a "rubber stamp" when it comes to decision-making. The board chair and principal should speak regularly and informally about matters affecting the school and work together to address community concerns. In most schools, the shared role works well because there is openness and trust, and board members and the principal have confidence in each other.





# PART TWO:

## Your Parent Association



The P&C/parent association is a feature of nearly all public schools in the ACT. Schools benefit from the support of their P&Cs. The role of the parent association is to:

- support the school for the benefit of all students
- promote parent participation in the work of the school and encourage strong positive community support
- provide a forum for parents to discuss and debate school issues
- provide parent input to educational issues and policies (especially via Council).

The specific aims of your P&C are detailed in your association's constitution, under 'objects'.

### Shared goals

Parent associations can fulfil these broad aims in various ways and there may be a great deal of variation in the particular emphasis from one P&C to the next. What is clear however, is that P&Cs work best when there are clear, shared goals – a well understood sense of what you are there for and what you are trying to achieve. It's important that your committee talk about this and that the P&C aligns with the aims of the school and the wishes of parents. A survey to find out what is most important to parents can be useful.

It can help to ask whether your P&C is primarily a social, educational, advisory or fundraising body. This will then inform the types of activities you pursue and how they are organised.

If you decide that community connectedness is your main focus, you could create events with opportunities for socially interaction, like a Friday morning coffee session or 'stay and play' picnics after school hours. You might run a disco, but the emphasis could be on family participation (parent's dance competition, dinner before the dance), rather than ticket sales.

If you think your parent association should be an educational body, you could run forums for parents on topics such as helping with readers, cybersafety, drug and alcohol awareness or just understanding their teens (we have a list of possible [topics and speakers](#)).

Your P&C might consider itself primarily an advisory body, acting as a sounding board for the principal and providing parent feedback on school operations, home/school communication and so on, in which case your meeting format would encourage parents to come and discuss important aspects of the school, or you might set up class representative contacts.

For other P&Cs providing services to the community – such as the canteen or uniform shop – will be a major focus.

Fundraising may not be your major role.

Parent associations may also support the school by:

- providing opportunities for parents to volunteer in the school, and encouraging volunteers to help in the library, classroom and at excursions, sports days and so on
- organising working bees to enhance the school environment
- supporting school events by, for example, providing catering and encouraging social interaction.



Parent associations create opportunities for parents and carers, students and staff to interact, building a feeling of respect and a stronger, safer, school community. Schools also benefit from the support of their P&Cs in providing school services and events, communicating with parents and fundraising for resources.

**Being involved also benefits the parent and their family.** Research shows that when parents are involved, their children get better grades and have a better attitude to school and improved behaviour.

Being involved in the P&C can have several advantages for parents:

- meeting other parents in the community which leads to a feeling of belonging and enhanced wellbeing
- getting to know teachers better, especially the principal, which makes it easier to approach them if there is a question
- understanding more about what happens at school so that you can assist your child more effectively
- having a chance to voice your opinion about school matters
- acquiring new skills (for example, business, management and financial skills, experience running meetings, event planning)
- demonstrating a positive attitude to schooling to your child which has a great influence on their attitude and achievement
- the satisfaction of contributing directly to your child's education by helping provide additional resources for their school.



The P&C association is an important part of any school and it is strongly recommended that one is established as soon as possible in a new school or where the P&C has been disbanded in an existing school. Council can help with this process.

To set up a new P&C association, take the following steps.

### Call a meeting

Work closely with the school's principal to call a meeting of parents. In new schools, it is best to do so before the school has opened.

### Establish an organising committee

Establish an organising committee which will set priorities and form specific sub-committees for areas such as canteen, outside-school-hours care, fundraising, constitution, social aspects and so on, whatever is considered necessary.

### Incorporate

Officially 'incorporating' your association and registering it with the ACT Government establishes your P&C as a legal entity. This means the P&C can enter into legal agreements (purchase insurance, employ canteen staff, sign uniform supply contracts, etc.), own property, and that the P&C is separate and distinct from individual members, which is important for liability considerations (the P&C is liable for a canteen accident, for example, rather than an individual parent). Application forms (a fee is payable) and details of the process of incorporation are found on the [Access Canberra website](#).

Once incorporated, certain procedures must be followed (penalties may be incurred for non-compliance):

- holding an Annual General Meeting (AGM) (see [Information Sheet 23](#))
- lodging an Annual Return (see [Information Sheet 23](#))
- appointing a public officer (see [Information Sheet 16](#))

Incorporated P&Cs should hold a copy of their *Certificate of Incorporation* in their files.

### Create a constitution

In order to incorporate, the P&C needs a constitution – a legal document which details how the association runs, its rules and objectives (see also [Information Sheet 9](#)). It must comply with *Associations Incorporations Act* (1991). Council has a [model constitution](#) for P&Cs which you can adapt as necessary.

### Get seed funding

All new P&Cs are eligible for seed funding of \$500 from Council and can also apply, with Council's support, for additional funds from the Education Directorate. Contact us to arrange for these funds to be paid to your new P&C.

### Foster community support

- Establish a range of mechanisms to communicate with the school and parent

community and make sure you keep people informed about what is happening. (See [Information Sheet 13](#) for more on communication strategies.)

- Keep parents interested by tackling the most relevant concerns.
- Initiate and maintain a resource list of parent skills and knowledge, and use it.
- Hold events to involve more parents in the association (see [Information Sheet 10](#) for more on growing your P&C).
- Hold regular, well run, meetings. To help get you started, Council has [template documents](#) for meeting agendas and minutes. [Information Sheets 18 - 20](#) address good meeting procedure.



As an incorporated association, your parent association must have and abide by a constitution.

### What is a constitution?

The constitution is a legal document which identifies the P&C by its official name and sets out the aims of the association. It also identifies the duties and responsibilities of office-bearers, membership of the association, frequency of meetings, quorum numbers, voting rights, etc.

### Why you should read it!

Committee members should be aware of the requirements of the constitution as they are legally binding. Your constitution holds the answer to many questions you might have about how your association runs, such as how often to hold meetings, who can vote at meetings, as well as a guide for you in pursuing the aims of your association. The constitution for your association should be kept in the files of the president and secretary and also in a general file where important P&C documents are stored.

### A sample constitution for P&Cs

Access Canberra now requires all associations to adopt constitutions which follow a particular model. Council has a [sample P&C constitution](#) which meets these requirement that you can adapt as necessary.

### Changing your constitution

If your constitution is out of date and no longer reflects current practice, it can be changed via a Special Resolution at a Special General Meeting. Notice for this meeting must include the wording of the proposed Special Resolution and details of the proposed changes to the constitution. The notice period required by law is a minimum 21 days (but check your constitution in case it specifies more). At this meeting the proposed changes can be debated and ratified.

Your updated constitution then needs to be provided to Access Canberra, along with their [Change of Rules Form](#) and Checklist, plus a written statement of the changes and a \$46 fee (lodged within a month). If your P&C is a registered charity, your new constitution must also be uploaded through the [ACNC's charity portal](#).

If you need help drafting changes to your constitution, we hold [training workshops](#) on this from time to time, or contact the office.

For more detailed information, refer to the [ACT Government Guide for Incorporated Associations](#).



All school parents are automatically members of the parent association (as stated in your constitution). There should be an ongoing process of encouraging members to be actively involved in their association. If parents are reluctant to become involved, try finding out why.

Remember that how parents become involved in the education of their children will depend on what suits their family and time constraints. Not everyone has the time or interest to come to meetings. Parents support their children's school in many ways and these must be recognised and valued.

### Promoting the association

Council has resources to help encourage parents to be involved in your school's P&C, available on the '[Promoting your P&C](#)' page of our website.

- A suite of graphics in our P&C Promotion Pack to call for volunteers and help fill key roles in eye catching ways
- Brochures advertising the benefits and roles of the P&C. There are a couple of template options, which you can modify for your own situation.
- Sample form for school enrolment packs to collect parent emails (approved by the Directorate).

You can also read about what other P&Cs have done to increase participation in our series of articles called '[At our P&C...](#)'.

Other ideas for promoting your association include the following.

- Have a beginning of year event or BBQ to welcome new families and advertise your association and your AGM.
- Provide a welcome note, or even a small gift for new families, including an introduction to the P&C ([see some examples](#)).
- Set up a P&C information table at well-attended school events such as parent information evenings or parent-teacher interviews. Provide some free tea and coffee and a friendly face from the P&C to chat to people and share the benefits of being involved.
- Introduce the P&C at your school's kindergarten or preschool information sessions for parents.
- Use a regular spot in the school newsletter to highlight the benefit that the P&C brings to the school (items purchased from fundraising for example).
- Promote the personal benefits of being involved (see [Information Sheet 7](#)).
- Set up an attractive P&C noticeboard somewhere obvious in the school and have pictures of things you have achieved (happy people at events, gardens created at working bees, new resources purchased for the school) and services you run. Make it clear all parents are welcome.
- Make sure notices, communications and meetings have a friendly, welcoming tone.
- Keep parents interested by tackling the most relevant or common concerns.
- Run events that are of interest to parents. For example, invite an interesting speaker on a topic of concern for parents (see [suggested examples and speakers](#))
- Always publicise P&C achievements – services run, money raised, events held. The

end of the year is a great time to reflect on what the P&C has done for the school and community.

### Encouraging parents to come to P&C meetings

Members should be a vital part of the organisation – decisions should not be left to just a few. Below are some tips to attract more parents to meetings.

- Vary your meeting routine to suit more people, such as introducing daytime meetings providing childcare and allowing for social interaction.
- Provide food and drinks.
- Run meetings well – keep them short and effective – so that people want to come back. (*Information Sheets 18 - 20* address good meeting procedure.)
- Ask everyone to bring an acquaintance to the next meeting to boost the number of new faces.
- Hold separate executive meetings so that general meetings don't get bogged down in detail.
- Merge the preschool parent group with the P&C and encourage preschool parents to come.
- Have a parent representative for each year group.
- Present relevant topics (the principal or a guest speaker could present on a topic of interest).
- Ensure parents know what is being discussed through effective communication (see *Information Sheet 13*).

### Encouraging volunteers

Recruiting volunteers can be one of the most difficult part of running the P&C. See *Information Sheet 11* for ideas.





Whether it is finding a new treasurer or enough hands to run a fair, fostering a strong volunteer workforce is a perennial effort for parent associations. Here are some ideas to help.

### Make a plan

- Identify your volunteer needs and make a list of jobs with brief job description and benefits
- Targeting a particular group, such as Kindergarten parents, may help.
- Remember to make it possible for parents with limited English to be involved.

### Start early

- Give plenty of notice for events so that people can put the date aside.
- Start looking for next year's committee this year.
- Encourage volunteers to step up: this year's disco coordinator could be next year's vice-president, and being vice-president is a great way to learn the president's role!

### Spread the word

- Consider every possible means to get information to parents on the help needed: emails, social media, the school newsletter, the school's road-side sign, a sign-on sheet for volunteers at the front office, a dedicated note home in school bags.
- Highlight the benefits of volunteering (see *Information Sheet 7*).
- Have a designated parent contact for each year group who can recruit among those parents.
- See more on communicating with parents in *Information Sheet 13*.

### Spread the load

- Make it clear that you aren't asking parents to help with every event but ask that each family helps at least once a year.
- Break each task down into smaller jobs which are not overwhelming.
- Make time-slots for volunteering at an event short and manageable.
- Define roles which can be done outside work hours so working parents can contribute more easily.

### Get out face-to-face

Be active and personal. P&C committee members can meet parents directly and ask them to be involved. Don't rely only on people going out of their way to volunteer. Make phone calls or take a partially-filled roster to wherever parents congregate and ask people if they can fill the missing spots. Take a note pad so that new volunteers can note down where and when they are needed.

### Employ technology where parents are harder to reach

Sometimes it is not possible to approach parents personally as suggested above, particularly at high schools and colleges. In this case, technology can help fill rosters for large events like fairs and BBQs, gather feedback or schedule a meeting time that suits. Several websites (e.g. [www.volunteersignup.org](http://www.volunteersignup.org), [signup.com](http://signup.com), [www.signupgenius.com](http://www.signupgenius.com) and the Australian site [signup.zone](http://signup.zone)) offer volunteer sign-up services where you create your roster online, share the

link with parents who then logon and choose which shift(s) to volunteer for. Most sites then send your volunteers a reminder closer to the time and you can easily keep track of where or when volunteers are still needed. Online tools such as Survey Monkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) can help gather parent feedback and Google's Doodle scheduling tool ([doodle.com](http://doodle.com)) or Microsoft Find Time ([findtime.microsoft.com](http://findtime.microsoft.com)) can help with meeting scheduling. All are free and easy to use.

## Make it a positive experience

If people have a positive experience while volunteering, they will be more likely to do it again.

- Help new volunteers settle in slowly by giving them smaller tasks or start by working with more experienced volunteers.
- Make sure it is clear what to do and how to do it.
- Ensure everyone has something to do to make sure volunteers feel that their time is valued, even if it means doing less yourself.
- Don't ask for more than what volunteers have committed to. No one likes turning up to cook sausages for a one-hour slot, and then getting trapped there for hours.
- Be patient. Volunteers are not necessarily skilled experts.
- Be friendly and welcoming. Resist the natural tendency to only chat with people you already know.
- Provide the opportunity to chat with other volunteers by rostering people in pairs.
- Provide food and a cuppa for your volunteers.
- Listen to your volunteer's feedback and ideas so that they feel part of the team.
- Consider formal training for volunteers, especially treasurers and canteen helpers. This can encourage volunteers by giving them something back.

## Tell volunteer stories

Telling positive stories about volunteering with your P&C, and your volunteers, is a great way to connect with parents, show you value your volunteers and give people an idea about who volunteers and what it involves. That makes it less scary to put *their* hand up! Some examples of stories you can tell:

- Introduce your committee and say why they volunteer or what they love (for example, see our [Why I Volunteer](#) series).
- Pictures of new – or old ! - volunteers enjoying themselves volunteering – and why!
- Something volunteers allowed you to do or achieved (like pictures of the gardens they planted at the working bee, or kids enjoying the equipment paid for by the raffle!)
- A day in the life of...

## Thank everyone

Celebrate success and be effusive with your thanks.

- Celebrate success and report the results so that everyone knows how their efforts helped the school.
- Thank each volunteer on the day.
- Thank everyone publicly, such as in school newsletter, or via email or social media.
- Have a big party, or host a morning tea, once a year to thank all your volunteers.
- Have a prize draw at big events where everyone who volunteered goes into the draw. It doesn't have to be a large gift.



All people employed in schools (including P&C employees) and most regular school volunteers are now required to undergo a background (criminal history) check and become registered with the ACT Government before they are allowed to work with children.

It is an offence for an employee, volunteer or visitor to have contact with children whilst 'engaging in a regulated activity' without carrying a valid registration card. 'Contact' includes physical contact, oral communication, written communication, and/or making a decision that affects children. 'Regulated activities' include **child education services**, childcare services, child accommodation and commercial or counselling services for children.

A volunteer, visitor or employee working in these areas is required to be registered unless an exemption applies. Exemptions include:

- people under 16 years of age
- where contact is limited in frequency (no more than three days in any one month or a total of seven days a year)
- being engaged in the activity in the same capacity as a student
- no contact with children is reasonably expected
- contact is limited to over the telephone

Examples of circumstances in which visitors and volunteers *do not* need to be registered include:

- delivering and collecting children from school
- attending (but not organising or assisting in) school sports days, concerts, assemblies
- participating in P&C or School Board meetings
- canteen volunteers assisting up to three days in any one month and up to seven days a year
- students undertaking Australian School-Based Apprenticeships (ASBAs)
- school-based activities which take place at times when students (other than family or close relatives) are not expected to be present, and their presence is incidental. These might include:
  - fundraising
  - working bees
  - making library bags, typing children's stories
  - writing submissions on behalf of the school.

[Full details about WWVP registration](#) are available from Access Canberra.

### How to register

You can complete a WWVP registration form [online](#) and then attend an Access Canberra Service Centre to verify your identity. Alternatively, you can get an application form from a Service Center or call Access Canberra for one to be posted to you.

It is free for volunteers to apply. For paid employees, there is a fee, which would normally be paid by the employer (e.g. the P&C for canteen staff).

## Volunteer sign in

All P&C volunteers, whether they have a WWVP or not, are required to sign in at the school's front office on each visit. Canteen volunteers should enter the school via the school office (not directly to the canteen) and sign in using the process used at that school. Office staff may need to sight your WWVP card. Some schools have additional Volunteer Nomination forms that should be completed.

## P&C responsibilities

P&Cs and canteens are *not* required to keep a register of **volunteers'** WWVP status as this is administered by the school via their sign-in process. P&C office bearers should also make all P&C volunteers (including canteen volunteers) aware of their obligation to sign in at the school's front office.

P&Cs *are* responsible to ensure that any **staff employed by the association** have their WWVP registration. We suggest that whenever employment contracts are renewed, this process is repeated. Employers may also remind staff that staff are obliged to notify them of any change to their WWVP status.



Keep parents in the know and your P&C is likely to flourish. Each school's communication channels will differ but below are some suggestions and considerations.

### A sustainable plan

Reliability is the key to communications. Updating and making sure the information is right, accurate and helpful will encourage people to keep looking and wanting more. If it becomes unreliable and out of date, that resource loses attraction. Make sure that you choose the options and schedule that match your abilities and available time.

### Simple options

#### The school's road-side notice board

- Best and cheapest way to widely promote events, meetings and due dates.
- Make sure notices go up at least a week prior to events.
- Always check spelling (remember it reflects on the school).

#### P&C section in the school's newsletter

- All parents receive the newsletter so this is an important communication channel.
- Include meeting notifications and brief summaries; event or fundraising reminders, goals and achievements; plus updates on P&C services (uniform shop, canteen).
- Items of interest from Council's fortnightly ebulletin, the Council Communicator can be shared with your school community. A [template page](#) makes it easy to cut and paste items to submit under the P&C Council banner if you wish.
- Keep the tone friendly and include lots of thanks.

#### Emails sent to all parents by the school

- Schools should be happy to send emails to all parents on behalf of the P&C.
- Negotiate under what circumstances this is appropriate with the principal and decide on a protocol for submitting content.
- Great for rapid communication (eg event or fundraising reminders) anything that needs a web link to be followed (eg online volunteer signup, event registration or web-based fundraisers), or where attached details are needed.
- Check spelling and make sure the tone is appropriate for an official note from school.

#### School's foyer monitor/TV screen

- Provide a graphic advertising your P&C (see our [P&C Promo Pack](#)), reminders, or pictures of fun P&C events.

#### P&C noticeboard in school foyer/corridor

- You can add photos here or detailed papers, such as meeting minutes and agendas, for people to look at.
- Provide P&C contact details.
- Include volunteer sign-up sheets for events.
- You could include a 'suggestions' box or envelope.

## Not-so-simple options

### P&C-maintained email list

Email is a great way to quickly reach many parents, including links and attachments.

You can maintain distribution lists manually within a dedicated email account for your P&C eg via Google, Yahoo, Hotmail, or Microsoft. This is preferable to P&C correspondence being done via committee members' personal email accounts as previous correspondence, information and contacts will be available as a new committee arrives. You can create separate mailing lists of known volunteers, interested parents, and executive members and send them specific notices. On the down-side, gathering parent emails and maintaining a list of active addresses can be difficult. To help, Council and the Education Directorate have produced a [form to go in school enrolment packs](#) which new parents can use to provide their email address to P&Cs for the P&C email distribution list. You can also collect email addresses at meetings and events.

An alternative is to set up an email list using online tools such as Mail Chimp, and parents can subscribe or unsubscribe themselves as they wish so that you don't have to manually maintain the list.

### Cautions:

- **Always put email addresses in the BCC field.** This is *vital for privacy*.
- **Never mis-use the list or individual addresses.** They are for P&C business only and should never be used for any type of advertising, passed on to others, or for personal communication.
- Always edit and check emails and ensure they are courteous at all times. Emails are extremely vulnerable to misinterpretation
- Limit your messages so as to keep people informed but not annoyed!

### Facebook account for your school P&C

Some P&Cs have found a social media presence very useful for timely announcements and updates for parents. If you can promote your page and get many parents signed up, it can be a great way of rapidly sending information to your school community. For details on getting started on social media, cautions and suggested policy on posting see [Information Sheet 14](#).

### Website

P&Cs can create their own website, but beware of the ongoing work and expertise needed. There are many tools which support simple websites, including Mail Chimp and Squarespace, and may include an online store, where you can sell everything from uniforms to raffle tickets. This [article](#) is a good place to start. Council's [Canberra P&C Leader's Network](#) on Facebook is a great place to ask for up to date recommendations of systems that P&Cs are using.

A simpler option is a P&C section on your school's website, but this will only be useful for more static information like uniform shop opening times and price lists, as updating will need to involve working with a school staff member.



### Why set up a social media presence?

Some P&Cs have found a social media presence very useful for timely announcements and updates, and creating community conversation. If you can promote your page and get many parents following, it can be a great way of communicating and promoting what you do.

If your P&C is going to be on Facebook, make sure it is discussed and approved at a meeting as a P&C initiative, rather than an activity of one member of your committee.

### Creating a Facebook Page or Group

The best options for your organisation to be on Facebook is to set up either a Facebook 'Page' or 'Group'. Both have administrative controls and privacy settings which you will have to consider carefully. For example, if you allow people visiting your Page to contribute, post and comment, be aware of possible legal ramifications (see below).

A Page is public, whereas a Group is closed and people have to ask to become a member before they can participate. Only members of a Group can post, be tagged, and see content. During the sign-up process, you can request information from potential members and ask people to agree to Group rules – all handy in creating a productive, safe and respectful online community of people involved with your school.

### Managing your social presence

Once your Page or Group is made, choose your privacy settings and add people chosen by your P&C as administrators. You can choose for someone to have full access, just add content, or act only as a moderator (if you have a fully open page it is a good idea to have multiple people as moderators in case something inappropriate needs to be removed).

#### Posting

Once you are a manager of your association's Facebook Page or Group, it will appear under 'Your Pages' on your home page. Note that now you can post **as your association** (your post looks like it came from your organisation), in addition to being able to post **as you**, a private individual. It is important to check that you are posting as you intend! On posts and comments you can choose using a small drop-down menu (look for the arrow) next to the comment or update/post box. Your user image will change to indicate which persona you have adopted.

#### Social media controls

It's important to have clear policies and procedures around your social media so that:

- anyone posting on behalf of the P&C can ensure P&C content is always appropriate (see Council's 'quick guide' below as a sample guide)
- you can administer the page, and all comments, to ensure conversations remain respectful and any inappropriate comments are removed ('Our Community' have a good example of an outward facing policy, it needs to be backed up with clear lines of responsibility in your P&C).

#### Legal liability

A High Court decision determined that administrators of Facebook pages may be considered the 'publishers' of all posts and comments on their page. It is likely the 'publisher' concept may also apply to group communication channels and forums.



People sometimes consider online forums as a way to vent their frustrations. This could make the P&C legally liable for any defamatory or offensive comments made by others on your page. So administrators of social media pages and forums need to be vigilant to ensure that potentially defamatory comments are deleted in a timely manner. See this article for an excellent discussion of the risks and benefits.

This makes it crucial to have clear, published standards of behaviour for the page, and a social media management plan and policy for your P&C.

## Quick Guide to posting on social media

### Before you start

Before you use the social media presence for the first time:

- Obtain necessary permissions and passwords.
- Become familiar with how the Page/Group works. It is easy to mistakenly post as the P&C association when you mean to post personally!

### Each time you post:

Type a draft of your post. Before posting, stop and carefully consider:

- Is the post expressing your association's policy/voice/position? It should be in line with the P&C's stance on the issue, and should not express personal opinion alone.
- Is it something that a P&C representative might reasonably say in public?
- If you have mentioned another person by name, do you have their consent?
- Is it true?
- Is it respectful and appropriate? Please refer below for a fuller description of inappropriate material below.
- Make sure it does not disclose private information.
- Have you linked to the source of any content you are sharing which was created by someone else? This is ensure no breach of copyright.
- Check your grammar and spelling.

### If you make a mistake:

- Do not remove the original post, but acknowledge and correct the mistake using an additional post to the same media.
- Spelling or grammatical mistakes can be edited without need for a corrective post.

### Inappropriate use

Inappropriate use of social media platforms includes, but is not limited to:

- Conducting private or commercial business (including any advertising)
- Using discriminatory, defamatory, abusive or otherwise objectionable language.
- Accessing, downloading or transmitting of any sexually explicit material, violent images or images of gore
- Accessing, downloading or transmitting information on the use and construction of weapons, explosives and other tools of violence or terrorism
- Accessing, downloading or transmitting hate speeches and overt racism; material extolling the inherent or moral superiority or inferiority of a particular race, ethnic group or sexual orientation; racial epithets; or religious bigotry
- Accessing, downloading or transmitting any material deemed to be illegal under ACT or Australian Commonwealth law
- Compromising the privacy of any person
- Using services for personal political purposes
- Any content that is jointly considered to be inappropriate by the Executive Committee.





Fundraising and spending by a parent association is facilitated by good communication with the school principal and the board.

### Deciding what to fund

Deciding how to spend the money raised by the parent association, including voluntary contributions, should be discussed as widely as possible in the school community. Try to involve the whole parent community in decisions about funding priorities and remember to publicise the intended purpose of any fundraising. This will make parents more likely to get involved with the fundraising. You may also like to ask the school's Student Representative Council to identify funding priorities. In some schools, the school board provides a "wish list" for the P&C to consider.

The P&C meeting is the ideal forum to discuss how to spend the funds raised, as both the principal and at least one of the parent members of the school board are likely to be present to explain the school's needs and to suggest priorities. The wider school community should be informed of the decisions reached in such discussions, and the school newsletter is an appropriate way to do this.

### Guidelines for expenditure

Parent associations often choose to help the school by raising funds for specific items, events or services that will benefit students. This may include the purchase and installation of fans for classrooms, sports equipment, home readers, library books or interactive whiteboards. Sometimes, P&Cs may support projects that directly benefit the schools or teachers because there are flow-on benefits to students.

The following principles should apply to the expenditure of funds raised by P&C associations.

- Consult your P&C's own constitution to make sure that you comply with the rules about expenditure of funds.
- P&C associations raise funds to provide extras for their children's education in the expectation that the basics are provided by the government. For example, a P&C association should not agree to fund an ongoing educational program (which might involve the employment of a teacher).
- Any expenditure should be formally moved and seconded at a meeting of the P&C. Major proposed expenditure should be notified in advance of the P&C meeting so as many parents as possible have the opportunity to vote or have a say.
- P&C associations should ensure that they are able to meet their own financial obligations. For example, the costs of affiliation fees to Council, P&C insurance, long service leave and superannuation entitlements of employees and PAYG tax instalments must all be met **before** money is expended on other projects. See ['Budgeting – Section 14 of the P&C's Treasurer's Handbook](#).
- The school board/principal should not request that P&C associations make up shortfalls in the school's budget, nor request specific amounts of money from the P&C association to "balance the books".

## Encumbered donations

There are taxation implications for P&C donations to the school. If your P&C makes a donation – or gift – to the school, it is GST free. However, to qualify as a ‘gift’, it must be free and “untied”. That is, the gift should not be recorded as being for a particular purpose or purchase (that is, the gift must be ‘Unencumbered’). This means that the use of the donation is at the discretion of the school board. P&Cs therefore need to liaise closely with the school board to see unencumbered funds are wisely used. Both P&C and board should be working to the same goal for the benefit of the school and students.

In your meeting minutes, you can record an unencumbered donation something like this:

*MOVED Cruickshank/Bootles that the P&C donates \$10,000 to the school.*

See also ‘[Avoiding GST on P&C donations to schools](#)’ in [Section 17 of the P&C Treasurer’s Handbook](#).



Members of your parent association who have been elected to specific roles are referred to as the office bearers. Together they form the executive committee. The make-up of the executive committee will be specified in your constitution.

### Suitability of office bearers

As an incorporated association, certain people are unable to act as office bearers, for example, those facing insolvency or with a serious criminal conviction. The simplest way to address this is to ask all nominees for office bearer positions to sign a short declaration form asserting their suitability for the role. This helps protect your association from fraud. Council has a [sample nomination and declaration form](#) which also includes a declaration on Conflict of Interest.

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission have excellent publications on [protection from fraud](#) and [managing conflict of interest](#).

### Major roles and responsibilities

#### The president

- chairs all general and executive committee meetings of the association
- provides leadership
- acts as a spokesperson for the association
- reports to P&C meetings about the activities of the P&C (the president's report)
- exercises some supervision over the functions of other office bearers
- ensures adequate and efficient communication exists between the members of the association, the members of the school board and the school/principal
- encourages parents to participate.

See our [template handover notes](#) for more on the president's role.

#### The vice-president

- presides as chair at meetings where the president is absent
- should be familiar with the operation of the P&C and the duties of president
- needs a working understanding of meeting rules and procedure
- undertakes tasks to reduce the burden of the president.

#### The secretary

- draws up, in consultation with president, the meeting agendas
- keeps full and correct minutes of P&C proceedings and meetings
- acts upon decisions as directed by the meeting
- attends to the correspondence of the association, checking incoming mail regularly
- looks after the association's documents
- maintains a register of members (unless otherwise stated in the constitution).

See Council's [template handover notes](#) for more on the secretary's role.

#### The treasurer

- is responsible for all funds received and spent, including all subcommittee accounts
- prepares regular reports to P&C meetings
- prepares the association's account for an annual audit

See our [P&C Treasurer's Handbook](#) for more details on the treasurer's job and the [template handover notes](#).

### **The Council delegate**

- attends monthly meetings of the ACT Council of P&C Associations (Council)
- represents the views of the school's P&C at Council meetings
- reports back to the P&C on items of interest from Council meetings
- initiates discussion on system-wide issues.

See [Information Sheet 34](#) for more details on the role of Council delegate.

### **The public officer**

- is the point of contact between the P&C and Access Canberra
- must be a resident of the ACT and over 18 years of age
- this position is a requirement of the Associations Act, but is a minor role in the running of the P&C and is often held by the secretary or another office bearer.



When you hand over to a new president, secretary or treasurer of your association, make things as easy as possible for them by promptly providing relevant information and documents. A reliable source of information will give them confidence to do the job well.

Council has prepared [template handover notes](#) for presidents, treasurers and secretaries showing the type of information to include. These are available for you to customise from the 'Resources for P&Cs' section of our website. We also have an extensive [Handbook](#) for treasurers, available online or by contacting the office.

Consider what training your volunteers might need. All office bearers benefit from our [free training](#) sessions and treasurers in particular may need specific training on any software which your P&C uses.

### Your handover kit should contain:

- a printed set or disk containing Council *Information Sheets*
- your P&C's Constitution
- a record of minutes from previous P&C meetings (after three or four years these could be stored in the school archives for historical purposes) and template files for agenda and minutes
- a copy of the P&C budget
- the financial records (audited) and cash books
- a copy of the P&C's last Annual Return (AR form) or Annual Information Statement (for P&Cs that are registered charities)
- any guides relating to the operation of the P&C (for example, fact sheets from the Taxation Office, etc.)
- awards and contracts for employing canteen managers, child care assistants, etc.
- written notes (see our [templates](#) for these) which include important association details such as
  - the association's ABN(s), and incorporation number (found on correspondence from Access Canberra (formally Office of Regulatory Services) or search the Access Canberra website)
  - bank account details
  - contact details of the auditor/reviewer usually used by the P&C
  - passwords and processes for accessing P&C email, website, the school photocopier, and so on.

### Other useful material

- a list of major events in your school's year
- P&C Council website ([www.actparents.org.au](http://www.actparents.org.au)) and publications
- the Annual School Board Report
- School Board Budget and Minutes
- School Board Resource Manual

# PART THREE:

## Meetings



Regular and well-run meetings are important for your association to operate democratically. A meeting may be as formal or informal as your P&C wants. The important thing is that decisions and agreements are formally recorded and that anyone who wants to speak has the chance.

### Be prepared

The president and secretary should together prepare for association meetings.

#### Before the meeting, you should:

- prepare the agenda and distribute (see below)
- publicise the meeting date and time (aim for 90 minute meetings at most)
- be clear which items are for discussion and which need a decision
- be prepared to make decisions at the meeting or come with a decision where needed
- discuss agenda items/reports with the people involved to check that they are ready
- discuss the agenda with the principal so that they are prepared.

#### What to take to the meeting:

- sufficient copies of the agenda (including any attachments)
- sufficient copies of the minutes of the previous meeting (to be formally accepted)
- a sign-in sheet to collect names of those attending and gather contact details (optional)
- some food and a cuppa to share!

### Acknowledgement of Country

Meetings should start by naming and respectfully recognising the local traditional owners. This is an important cultural protocol and can help create an inclusive environment. Anyone can do an Acknowledgement of Country, the most important thing is to mean what is said. Schools often have lovely, heartfelt Acknowledgements which students have written – you could ask your principal for one that you could use, or check out these [examples](#) and [tips](#).

### Agenda

The agenda is prepared in advance by the secretary, in consultation with the president. Check your constitution as it may stipulate mandatory items. You should include the meeting start and end time and allocate a time for each item. This will help keep the meeting running on time. Council has an [agenda template](#) for you to use.

The agenda should be distributed to parents at least a week in advance of the meeting so that they can come to the meeting prepared or suggest additional items. If more complex topics are to be discussed, short, relevant papers can be attached as background so the meeting can be as productive as possible.

### Minutes

The secretary records notes of what happened at the meeting. Council has a [template](#) to make preparing minutes easier. Minutes should include:

- a list of attendees and any apologies
- whether or not there is a quorum (see below)
- the time the meeting started ('opened') and ended ('closed').
- any formal motions, including the name of the mover and seconder and the outcome

- any **actions** to be taken and who is responsible. Consider including this in a table at the end of the minutes so it is easier for people to see what they have agreed to do.
- brief notes which capture major points of any discussions
- reports given at the meeting (treasurer's, president's, principal's) may be attached.

Following the meeting, the minutes should be circulated in a timely manner. At the next meeting, the minutes should be confirmed and formally accepted in a motion which is moved and seconded by people who attended that meeting. They should then be signed by the chair.

## Quorum

The quorum is the minimum number of members needed at a meeting in order to be formally able to conduct business. Your constitution states what the quorum is for your association. If quorum is not met, the meeting can proceed for discussions, but no formal motions or decisions can be made (for example, approving minutes or expenditure).

## Motions

A motion is a proposal put to the meeting for consideration, such as a suggestion to accept past minutes, accept the accounts at an AGM, or approve spending. Motions need to have someone who '**moved**' them (made the proposal) and a '**second**' (someone who supports it). They should be provided in advance of the meeting for important matters or large expenditure. Motions are usually first discussed before a vote or decision is taken (more on voting on [Information Sheet 21](#)).

## Chairing the meeting

The chairperson (usually the president) ensures that the meeting is conducted in a proper manner and guides the meeting towards achieving its aims.

### The chairperson has the power to

- rule on procedure and decide who can speak and in what order
- close debate when sufficient discussion on the matter has taken place
- reject motions if insufficient notice has been given or if the motions are ambiguous.

### The chairperson should:

- determine that a quorum of members is present
- begin the meeting on time
- follow the agenda
- sign the confirmed minutes of the previous meeting
- give all members the opportunity to speak
- ensure that discussion is addressed through the chair
- sum up the debate without bias to ensure motions are understood before any vote.

### The chairperson should not:

- influence the debate
- dominate the meeting
- chair the meeting without preparing for it beforehand.

For more on making meetings work see [Information Sheets 19-20](#). For information on voting rights see [Information Sheet 21](#). The AGM is discussed in [Information Sheets 23-24](#).





Meetings are held so that a group of people can discuss issues and make decisions. Meeting styles can vary from a traditional and formal structure to open and informal discussion. They don't have to be formally run, but whoever chairs the meeting will need to take responsibility for how well the meeting functions. The important thing is that a group feels comfortable with its choice of operation so that it can successfully make decisions and follow them through.

Consider the needs of everyone who comes to the meeting. To make it work well, encourage everyone to

- focus on issues not on personalities
- confine the discussion to the topic – stay on track
- listen to all members' points of view
- avoid speaking at great length
- avoid using jargon
- feel free to ask for explanations
- allow only one person to speak at a time
- avoid private conversations while someone else is speaking
- contribute to an atmosphere where all members feel comfortable to ask questions about how the P&C is run
- keep the meeting short (90 minutes at the most) and start on time and finish on time.

It can help to decide before the meeting whether a topic will be discussed or whether a decision is needed. This will affect how much time is allocated in the agenda. If there is not enough time at the meeting, the group can collectively decide to extend the meeting or move the item to the next meeting's agenda.

### Voting versus consensus

Formal voting is likely to be a quick way of getting through a meeting's agenda but it may run the risk of alienating those who lose the vote and thereby damage the group's sense of unity.

Consensus, on the other hand, is agreement reached through a process of gathering viewpoints and through discussion and negotiation. The goal of consensus is to reach a final decision that everyone feels comfortable with although the group decision may not be unanimous. You may need a vote at the end to formally record the decision, especially financial ones as the auditor will require this. While consensus is often more difficult and takes more time, it is the ideal way for a participatory group to make decisions.

To review and discuss the way your P&C meetings are run, use the checklist on [Information Sheet 20](#).

To help, Council has [sample agendas and sample minutes](#).



There are many ways to work together as a group. The best meeting procedure should be agreed upon by a majority of the members. Use the checklist below to start discussion about your P&C's meeting procedures.

## Introducing people

- Our association has some 'getting-to-know-you' activities at the start of the year.
- Our association has a method of introducing new members which quickly makes them feel at home.
- Our association allows time during meetings for people to get to know each other socially.
- Our association provides tea/coffee during the meeting.

## Information sharing

- Members can put forward their opinions anonymously through a suggestion box.
- Our association explains the issues and tries to avoid jargon.
- Our association sets a regular time at each meeting for questions.

## Problem-solving

Our association has used these techniques to help with problem-solving:

- breaking into small groups
- brainstorming
- short statements from each member with no discussion
- circulating the topics for discussion beforehand.

## Decision-making and who does what

- Our association has made sure that every member knows what sort of decision-making process we use and how it works.
- Our association has discussed decision-making processes and is happy with the way we make our decisions.
- When a decision is made, our association notes who will carry it out and when.
- Decisions our association make are carried out and reported back.

## Consensus

- Are some people unable to speak because others talk a lot?
- Do some members feel overwhelmed by the more powerful in the group?
- Do people in the association agree simply to get things over and done with?
- Do people agree because they don't really understand the issue?
- Do people agree because they're afraid to rock the boat?
- Does consensus in our meeting mean that some people don't have their say?



A vote will sometimes be required at a P&C meeting, for example on important or controversial motions and decisions, or in the election of new Office Bearers. If there is only one nomination for a position, they are considered 'elected unopposed'. A vote is only needed if more than one person nominates for a particular position.

### Who is eligible to vote at a P&C meeting?

All members of an association are entitled to vote. The membership of your parent association will be specified in your constitution. Usually, all parents or carers of students enrolled at the school are automatically members.

The ACT Government requires that all associations (including P&C associations) maintain current lists of members so that any disputes about voting eligibility can be settled immediately and accurately. In practice, for privacy reasons, P&Cs do not have access to lists of all the parents with children enrolled at the school. One way around this, is to include in your constitution, that the principal has the list of parents of students at the school, and if anyone has a reason to see the register of members of the P&C, he/she should see the principal.

Life members (unless they satisfy an association's constitutional requirements for membership) and observers do not vote.

### What does ex officio mean?

Some P&C constitutions specify 'ex officio' members of the P&C. Ex officio simply means that their membership is "by reason of their office" (usually the school principal) rather than through having been elected.

### Can an ex officio member vote?

Ex officio members enjoy full voting rights unless your constitution specifically states otherwise. There is often a misconception that ex officio members are automatically without voting rights, but the term has nothing to do with voting.

P&C Council recommends that the P&C constitution specifies that the principal is a *non-voting ex officio member* of the P&C (see [Information Sheet 22](#)).

An ex officio member, however, is not eligible to stand for election.

### Voting at online meetings

There are several options for voting online. A simple show of hands on camera, typing into a chatbox, or a verbal yes or no will be enough for most votes. Only secret ballots or hotly contested issues will need a formal voting mechanism.

To hold an electronic secret ballot, it is best to be prepared ahead of time, but there are several free online tools available. Try a free account at [www.sli.do](http://www.sli.do), or create a Google Form. You can set up a generic ballot ahead of the meeting with placeholder names (person 1, person 2, etc) to save time during your meeting.



## Your association constitution holds the answers

The first place you should look for guidance on the role of the school principal is your P&C's own constitution. The role of the principal should be specified.

P&C Council recommends that the P&C constitution specifies that the principal is a *non-voting ex officio member* of the P&C.

## Ex officio members

Under most constitutions, the principal is an *ex officio* member of the P&C (and any sub-committees). This term simply means that he/she is a member because of holding the position of principal (and will cease to be member of the P&C when no longer principal), it does not imply limited rights. Unless otherwise stated by your P&Cs constitution, *ex officio* members have full rights at a meeting, like any other member present. That is, they are included in the quorum, are eligible to vote, move and second motions and can speak for or against motions. Like any other member, the principal is obliged to take direction from the Chair and should speak through the Chair during discussions.

*Ex officio* members do not have a right of veto or the right to gag association or sub-committee discussions. However, it is incumbent on the principal to highlight disparities between association discussions and Education Directorate policies. *Ex officio* members must be given notice of every association and sub-committee meeting but their inability to attend is not adequate grounds to postpone or cancel the meeting.

## Non-voting members

In most cases, the P&C constitution specifies that the principal is a *non-voting* member to emphasise the advisory role that he/she plays in relation to the P&C. *Non-voting* members are *not* included in the quorum, cannot hold an executive role and cannot vote on, move or second motions.

Whichever form of constitution a P&C uses, it is appropriate for the principal to facilitate and encourage active participation and decision-making by the parents of the committee.

## Working with the principal

Given the principal attends P&C meetings as a courtesy, it's important to establish a clear channel of open communication. Your P&C needs to work with your school executive and not against it. In the week prior to the meeting, try to discuss the upcoming agenda with the principal. This will give a better understanding of the issues of interest to parents and provide time to get answers to issues if necessary.



The AGM is an important event, but needn't be daunting or overly formal. In fact, it is important to keep it friendly, as it is often the first P&C meeting that parents attend, so allow time for everyone to introduce themselves. It is also a chance to let parents know what the P&C does so that they will want to continue to be involved. Recapping the association's achievements over the past 12 months can be a great way to showcase the value you add to the school.

### When should you hold the AGM?

The *Associations Incorporations Act* (1991) requires incorporated bodies to hold an AGM every calendar year within five months of the end of the association's financial year (most ACT P&Cs use the calendar year as their financial year, so need to hold their AGM by the end of May). Your constitution may state additional requirements. In addition, the auditor's/reviewer's report on the P&C's Annual Financial Statements must be completed two weeks prior to the AGM, so the association's treasurer should be consulted when setting the date (see [Section 11 of the P&C Treasurer's Handbook](#)).

### How much notice do you need to give?

The standard P&C constitution requires at least 14 days' notice of the meeting to be given to parents via the school newsletter. Check your constitution, however, in case it differs.

### What is dealt with at the AGM?

#### Reports

The outgoing president as well as sub-committees (such as for the canteen) should present written reports of the past year's activities. To help, we have a [template president's report](#) to show what you might like to cover. It is best to distribute these beforehand then present a short verbal summary at the meeting. In the absence of a written report, a verbal run-down of the year's activities is fine.

The idea is to give members an overview of what the association did last year. It's a chance to showcase the value the P&C adds to the school so that people feel keen to join in.

#### Passing the financials

The following documents must be presented (usually by the treasurer) at the meeting and accepted by a motion (for further details, see [Section 12 of the P&C Treasurer's Handbook](#)).

- the Annual Financial Statements for the past financial year
- the auditor's/reviewer's report on these financials
- a committee report naming the committee members for the past year; noting the main activities of the association and any significant changes to activities; and the net profit or loss for the year. We have a [template committee report](#) to help you out. If your P&C is a charity (registered with the Australian Charity and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC)), you are **exempt** from this requirement.

An auditor/reviewer with suitable qualifications should also be appointed for the coming year.

#### Forming a new committee

The executive committee (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, Council delegate, preschool representative and so on, as described in your P&C's constitution) is elected at

each AGM. (See [Information Sheet 16](#) for more about office bearer roles.) The procedure for elections is also covered in your constitution.

As an incorporated association, certain people are unable to act as office bearers, for example, those facing insolvency or with a serious criminal conviction. The simplest way to address this is to ask all nominees for office bearer positions to sign, before the elections, a short declaration form asserting their suitability for the role. This helps protect your P&C from fraud. Council's [sample nomination and declaration form](#) is ready to use for this purpose and includes a disclosure of member interest (conflict of interest).

### How can you encourage more people to stand for positions?

All members should feel welcome and encouraged to participate throughout the year. They should be aware of what is involved in the various roles of office. If members are reluctant to take on office-bearer positions, find out why. Do the current office-bearers have too heavy a workload? Can some of the tasks be delegated to other members or divided into smaller roles? Do people need formal training (especially treasurers, canteen volunteers) to do the job well? Offering to pay for formal training which people can add to their CV can be a great incentive for people to gain new skills by volunteering.

To encourage more parents, your AGM could coincide with the school's beginning of year information sessions. (See also [Information Sheet 10](#) on growing your P&C.)

### Is there a limit to the time someone can remain in office?

Your constitution will specify any time limits that may apply; otherwise, retiring committee members are eligible to stand for re-election.

### Can someone take on more than one committee position?

Yes, a person can do more than one role on your committee. For example, the secretary is often also the public officer. However, the committee *must* comprise *at least* three members of the association and they will usually take the positions of president, treasurer and secretary. This is to ensure that financial control is shared between at least three people.

### What if all the positions cannot be filled?

If some positions cannot be filled, they can be left temporarily vacant and filled at a later meeting. They can be left vacant for the whole year if the association can still function. If *essential* positions are not filled, a Special General Meeting should be called and advertised well. Tell everyone what help is still needed, what will be involved, and any events or services (eg canteen) in jeopardy if the position is not filled. Someone will usually volunteer.

The P&C may be able operate with minimal volunteers. For example, as long as a volunteer is willing to look after basic bills and pay the insurance, services may be able to remain open. The hope is that in the following year, more volunteers will be forthcoming. At some schools, the principal has been named as the acting president so that the association can continue until such time that a proper committee can be formed, but check your constitution allows this.

If a committee cannot ultimately be formed, the association will have to 'wind up'. For details on the process of formally winding up or dissolving an association contact our office.

### After the AGM

There are important reporting obligations to fulfil after your AGM – see our [To Do list](#) and information on [reporting to government](#).



Time for your Annual General Meeting? Use our checklist to prepare. Detailed explanations can be found in [Information Sheet 23](#).

Start getting ready for the AGM early - ideally before the end of the previous year.

- The treasurer must **prepare a financial report and get the accounts audited or reviewed**. We have [resources to help](#) or see our [Treasurer's Handbook](#).
- Find people to fill your new committee**. Talk to committee members to see who is willing to continue and approach other people or advertise the positions that will be vacant. Be clear what people are volunteering for. Our [P&C Promotion Pack](#) can help. See also our tips on growing your P&C – [Information Sheet 10](#). It helps to outline the advantages of being involved on the P&C (see [Information Sheet 7](#)).
- Choose a date for the AGM** which suits parents and the school and ensures good attendance (eg linked to a popular event or school information night). You will also need to check that this date suits the Treasurer (see [Information Sheet 23](#))
- Prepare an agenda** for the meeting (see our [template](#) on our website).
- Notify members** of the meeting date (check your constitution for rules about notice) and circulate the agenda.
- Call for nominations** for positions on the P&C and advertise the benefits of being involved (for example, in the school's newsletter). Use our [sample nomination and declaration form](#) to ensure candidates are suitable (see [Information Sheet 23](#)).
- The president should **prepare a brief Annual Report** to present at the meeting. We have a [template](#) to help (on the 'resources for P&Cs' section of our website), but the report can be verbal.
- Prepare a committee report** (see [Information Sheet 23](#) and our [template committee report](#)).
- Prepare handover notes** and files to give to new volunteers. See the [easy to adapt template files](#), and [Information Sheet 17](#) for tips.
- Remind parents** about the meeting and distribute any papers or reports.

# PART FOUR:

## P&C Operations and Services





Sub-committees are accountable for their activities to the P&C association and should present reports and financial statements regularly at P&C meetings.

Most P&C associations set up sub-committees for specific planning and/or management tasks on behalf of the association. A sub-committee has a particular duty. This can be for a specific period of time, or ongoing from year to year (such as the canteen or pre-school sub-committee).

### What is the relationship between sub-committees and the association?

Sub-committees have delegated authority and are fully accountable to the association. Each sub-committee must operate within the terms of reference or rules set for it by the association. Sometimes a sub-committee may write its own rules but these must be properly endorsed by the association before the sub-committee begins its work.

A formal sub-committee must:

- be elected by the association
- conform to the rules of operation drawn up or endorsed by the association
- report regularly to the association (preferably by presenting a written report at P&C meetings)
- hand over any profits which may have resulted from the sub-committee's activities, after all operational costs have been met.

The insurance package provided by Council extends to subcommittees provided these four characteristics are met. These are essential to limit an association's overall exposure to risk.

A sub-committee does not have a constitution separate from the association. The head of the sub-committee is known as the convenor or chairperson.

P&C office bearers should be familiar with the work of any sub-committees as the P&C is ultimately accountable for the actions of each sub-committee. Problems can arise if a sub-committee does not report regularly to the P&C. The sub-committee must understand that it is answerable to the P&C.

### Membership of sub-committees

Members of a sub-committee are elected at the AGM or at the time the committee is formed. The P&C president is automatically a member of all sub-committees. It is advisable to have a second member of the P&C executive committee on each sub-committee. Paid employees of the sub-committees, for example, canteen staff, can participate as observers only; they should not have voting rights on the committee. If the P&C wishes the principal to be on a sub-committee, they can be elected or made an ex-officio member (see also [Information Sheet 22](#)).

## Operation of sub-committees

After the committee is formed, it may elect its own convener, secretary and treasurer. The sub-committee determines its meeting times. At least one P&C office-bearer should attend these meetings.

## How can the P&C association handle the issue of sub-committees acting outside of their operational guidelines?

It is important that all sub-committees have guidelines set for their operation. These guidelines should provide the sub-committee with a clear understanding of its responsibilities. If a sub-committee continues to ignore its responsibilities, the P&C may have no choice but to disband the committee. The P&C executive committee would then take over the function that the sub-committee was performing.

## Bank accounts

Sub-committees are able to hold and operate a separate bank account to the general P&C account (see [Section 6 of the Treasurer's Handbook](#)). However, a sub-committee has no discretion to commit funds or approve purchases, beyond meeting normal operating costs. A sub-committee may make recommendations to the P&C about the expenditure of its profits but the ultimate decision rests with the P&C association and such expenditure should be approved by a general meeting of the P&C association.

Since the treasurer of the P&C is responsible for all funds received and expended by any sub-committee, the accounts of a sub-committee must be accessible to the P&C treasurer. At audit time, the sub-committee's accounts must be audited along-side the P&C's (see [Section 11 of our Treasurer's Handbook](#) for more on the annual audit).



### Plan your fundraising

It is a good idea to plan out the whole year to ensure a mix of activities and fundraiser types, to spread the load over the year, and to avoid clashes with known school events and busy times for school staff. It is also important to identify what you are fundraising for. Note that some fundraisers need to be licensed (see [Information Sheet 27](#)).

### Mix it up

A good mix of fundraisers might look something like the following.

- A major event (such as a fete, family day or evening).
- A product drive (such as cookbooks, biscuits, seeds, lunchboxes).
- 'Something for the kids' (such as melamine plates, tea towels or calendars with children's art work - great at term 3 or 4 for Christmas).
- A community building event (such as a comedy night or trivia night).
- Mothers and Fathers Day stalls, student discos and raffles are extras in the calendar.
- Fundraisers that sit in the background.

### What's it for?

The community is much more likely to support your fundraising efforts if you have a clear aim and can link the fundraiser with a much needed purchase for the school. Businesses are also more likely to donate prizes, and parents are more likely to help. Try to involve the whole parent community in decisions about funding priorities and work in with the school board's plans. It can also be a good idea to ask the school's Student Representative Council to identify funding priorities and needs.

### Is there a Grant?

Many organisations and government departments offer grants for community organisations such as P&Cs for specific projects. We have compiled [tips on getting grants](#) as well as a list of [grants available for P&Cs](#).

### Fundraising ideas

#### Simple options:

- 'Background' fundraisers (see below)
- Catering at school events
- Sausage sizzle (Bunnings, OfficeWorks, Harvey Norman)
- Raffles. There are many companies now organising raffle prizes and tickets. They take a cut, but all you have to do is distribute and sell the tickets.
- Prize baskets - kids bring donations
- Talent quest, photography or art competition with entrance fee or fee to watch
- Pizza Day, Soup, Smoothie, Corn on Cob
- Dags Day or non-uniform day (Students/teachers)
- Discos with competitions and food on sale, or a lunchtime version (Students/teachers)
- Buy-a-brick: engraved plaque for individual or family.
- Family portraits, school receives a percentage of funds collected
- Student-designed Tea towels or T-shirts (anniversary/class/year)

- Selling items such as plants, bulbs, mangoes
- Movie tickets

### Not-so-simple options:

These events may be more complex with larger numbers of volunteers involved, but they bring in more money, bring the community together and raise the profile of the school, so the benefits go beyond the funds raised.

- Auction
- Fete, car boot sale, Bring and Buy sales, Market Day
- Cultural Event e.g. Harmony Day
- Walk-a-thon, colour run or other physical activities
- Exhibition of art/ craft, photographs
- DVD of students singing/performing
- Fashion Show
- Trivia night
- Music Festival
- Recipe book, Calendars
- Special dates e.g. Mother's day/Father's day stall, World Cancer Week, World Environment Day, etc. There are many activities that match particular dates or times in the year. Often teachers can help with whole school educational theme for some special day.

### Background fundraisers

'Background', or 'passive' fundraisers involve a benefit to your organisation when somebody purchases something or takes some other desired action (like depositing money in their bank). When the reward for the school is for a purchase a parent would have made anyway, it really is a win-win situation. These loyalty programs require a one-time sign-up, communicating the offer to your families, and the occasional reminder in your newsletter or via email. They are ongoing and can provide handy extra income and/or product vouchers to use as prizes. You can be involved in as many as you like.

Many businesses offer such loyalty programs, from name label suppliers to the Athlete's Foot shoe shop. Some P&Cs have developed relationships with local real estate agents and receive a percentage of the sales commission when a home is sold for someone referred through the school.

### Getting help

[The Fundraising Directory](#) has a mass of ideas and hints and tips. You can also sign up for informative email bulletins. If you're running a fete, they also have a massive collection of guides, templates, spreadsheets and downloads to make the job as easy as it can be.

Council has collected [more fundraising resources](#) – and examples of what other P&Cs have done - on our website.

Council meetings provide a forum for volunteers from different P&Cs to share ideas and experiences with their fundraising efforts and successes.



Some common types of fundraising require licences and P&Cs should comply.

## Raffles

P&Cs wishing to conduct a raffle (or any scheme where prize winners are determined wholly or in part by chance) where the total prize pool is worth more than \$2500 must apply for a lotteries permit from the [ACT Gambling and Racing Commission](#). Applications for permits usually take seven working days to process and a fee is involved.

Raffles where the total prize value is \$2500 or less do **not** need a permit. A **private lottery**, where participation is restricted to members of the same association (not advertised or sold beyond school parents), also does not require a permit. If the prize winner is determined by **skill alone** a permit is not required. Here, "skill" means any competition that involves a decision or input by the participant, such as guessing a number or weight.

Whether you need a permit or not, ALL raffles must comply with the *Lotteries ACT 1964*:

- total value of tickets sold can not exceed the value of five times the total prize pool
- each ticket must have an equal chance of winning
- the major prize must be drawn first
- all records (number of tickets sold/unsold, winning tickets and people) plus ticket stubs to be kept for 12 months
- results must be made available
- **if** any prize is valued at \$2000 or more, each ticket must show permit number, the organisation, full prize list with values, ticket number, how results will be published, and the date, time and location of the draw.

## Cake/ Food Stalls

Food safety guidelines for fundraising stalls run by community groups such as P&Cs are available from [ACT Health](#) (see also this [Factsheet](#) and [food safety for schools](#)). **P&Cs operating food stalls which are fundraisers**, (not ongoing canteen services) and staffed by volunteers (for example Bunnings BBQs, election day stalls and school fairs) **are not required to register the event nor have an appointed Food Safety Supervisor**.

*School-based* P&C fundraisers involving food (not those off site, such as a Bunnings BBQ) also come under the Education Directorate's [Food and Drink Policy](#).

## Liquor permits

A liquor permit is required if alcohol is being sold at a function conducted by the P&C association. This includes indirect sales of alcohol, for example a raffle with prize of alcohol or charging an entry fee that includes a complimentary glass of wine.

A **Non-Commercial Liquor Permit** can be obtained for a one-off or recurring event. The [application form](#) is available online and help in completing the form is available through Access Canberra (13 22 81). The cost of the permit depends on the how much alcohol will be sold, but ranges from \$50 (less than \$2000 in sales) to \$180.

If your function is on school grounds alcohol is only permitted outside school hours/when students are not present (see the [Education Directorate's Alcohol Policy](#)).

## Movie screenings

Permission is generally needed to screen films, DVDs or videos in public. The fact that someone owns a physical copy of a video, DVD or film does not entitle them to screen it publicly. Except for the exemptions mentioned below, you will need permission from the relevant copyright owners.

You can get permission by renting, buying or borrowing the film, DVD or video from an authorised supplier (who give permission on behalf of copyright owners). Some include:

- Film Australia
- commercial organisations such as [Roadshow PPL](#) (a single title screening licence is needed) or [Amalgamated Movies](#).

Alternatively, some firms set up big screens as school fundraisers and will sort the licencing for you, but they take a bigger cut of your profits (but also do a lot of the work for you). There are some listed on the [fundraising directory](#).

Within the school, screenings for education purposes do not require a permit. Also, a Co-Curricular Licence allows ACT schools to screen films for certain non-educational purposes such as rainy-day lunchtime screenings, excursions and school camps and after-school care programs operated by a school.

## Road-side signs

If you're running a large fundraising event such as a fete, you'll probably be erecting road-side signs to attract a crowd ([this article](#) has some great tips!). You must comply with the [ACT Code of Practice relating to Movable Signs](#). This states that schools and community groups may display up to 20 movable signs for up to two weeks before the event. Signs may be an A-frame or the more familiar board mounted on stakes (no bigger than 900mm x 1200mm, including the frame/stakes). Include your P&C name as small print for identification. Your P&C needs public liability insurance of at least \$10 million to place road-side signs (covered by Council's P&C insurance package – see [Information Sheet 28](#)).

Signs must not be placed anywhere where they obstruct the path of pedestrians. They must be at least 1.2m from the road curb, and cannot be placed:

- on roundabouts
- within 20 metres of traffic lights or the corner of an intersection
- on residential nature strips
- attached to bridges, trees, streets signs, light poles – they must be free standing
- within special 'Designated Areas' (without permission from the National Capital Authority) that is, the Parliamentary Triangle and Canberra's 'main avenues and approaches' including Adelaide Avenue, Monaro Highway, Limestone Avenue – there is an extensive list in the [Code of Practice](#).



All P&C associations *must* purchase insurance. Insurance must be obtained for:

- P&C office holders
- activities sponsored or staffed by the P&C
- equipment owned by the P&C
- workers compensation if your association employs staff.

### Council's insurance package

Council Group Scheme offers an insurance package at below market rates. We have not found an insurer offering more competitive rates for equivalent cover. We have worked with Civic Insurance Brokers since 2012 - they understand the varied and particular needs of P&Cs.

### Completing the paper work

Each year, the brokers send an insurance questionnaire about your activities and needs. Complete this as thoroughly as possible so your P&C gets the right insurance. Invoices are sent to P&Cs in Term 2 for payment before the annual renewal date of July 1.

### What's included in the base package

The insurance relates to activities run, sponsored by, and/or staffed by P&C representatives and equipment owned or purchased by the P&C. It is *not* general school or student insurance. Information about coverage is sent by the insurer to all P&Cs. This sheet should be read in conjunction with that information. The P&C insurance package includes:

- operator's liability (public liability, products liability and breach of professional duty)
- property insurance including:
  - loss through fire
  - burglary
  - theft in the open air
  - machinery breakdown (optional - if required)
  - loss of money
- personal accident for voluntary workers and children in their care (optional).

### Operators liability

Operators Liability covers the legal liability for unintentional negligence of the P&C and its representatives. It covers physical or mental injury, property damage, libel or slander or wrongful arrest and breach of the Trade Practices Act. The cover is designed to indemnify the P&C for demands for compensation based on alleged negligence if a situation develops involving damage to people or property, or an allegation of fault or negligence.

### Fundraising and events

All conventional fundraising is considered an insured activity, except the sale of some items (see below before arranging your mothers' day or white elephant stall).

### Property insurance

This covers loss or damage to items which the P&C owns or purchased. The P&C should keep a register of belongings and purchases, along with a description and receipts.

### Personal accident insurance

This covers P&C volunteers for non-Medicare medical expenses which are not claimed from another source, and lost income or specified additional expenses which arise from an injury



while volunteering. Students at the school are not covered. There is an option to extend this cover to include children participating in Outside School Hours Care for an additional cost.

For risk management purposes the P&C should place on record (in its minutes and with a notice in the school newsletter) its use of volunteers. This will also be useful in establishing the basis for any insurance claims.

### **What's NOT covered**

#### **Jumping castles, inflatables and rides**

Jumping castles, other inflatable attractions and fair-ground rides operated and supervised by the P&C are NOT covered by P&C insurance. Inflatables/rides provided by another operator are unlikely to be adequately insured in today's market. This means that, if provided at a P&C-run event, they still pose a risk to P&Cs, even if an operator's insurance certificate is sighted.

#### **Sale of certain items**

The sale of some items (including second hand) is not covered, including electrical equipment, toys, car seats and beauty products. Check the insurance paperwork for up to date exclusions. Note if a claim was made following the sale of a faulty or hazardous item (including choking hazards), the organising committee's members could be at risk of personal litigation.

#### **Risky activities**

Risky activities (eg, canoeing, dance, yoga, pilates or martial arts classes) need approval as a valid activity. The P&C should notify the insurance brokers in writing. Extra insurance costs *may* be incurred, depending on the risk management strategies in place.

### **Additional cover available if needed**

The insurer also offers additional cover for P&Cs which need it, for example those taking duty of care of children or employing staff.

#### **Worker's compensation insurance**

It is a legal requirement that all employers hold a current workers' compensation policy for all paid employees. This is an additional policy, which can be organised through Council's insurance broker. See [Section 13 of Council's Treasurer Handbook](#) for more information.

#### **Sexual abuse / molestation cover**

All P&Cs need to prevent harm to vulnerable people, by reasonable and appropriate risk management measures. To decide whether to opt for this cover, P&Cs should examine the risk profile of services, activities and events to see if the risk of molestation warrants cover.

P&Cs opting for this insurance must ensure they comply with all insurance requirements (as specified by the insurance policy) *including* having written safeguarding policies and procedures which are embedded in the P&C's culture and day to day operations, reviewed annually, and kept for at least 50 years, along with insurance documentation.

#### **Other cover**

P&Cs are responsible for any other insurance such as for a trailer owned by the P&C.

### **How to claim**

If your P&C needs to make a claim, contact the broker – Civic Insurance – for a claim form.

### **Find out more**

Each year Council runs a [free insurance workshop](#). Treasurers and presidents should attend.

#### **Specific queries about insurance can be directed to the broker**

**Civic Insurance Brokers:** Contact David McAlary, 62626115 or [info@civicingurance.com.au](mailto:info@civicingurance.com.au).





For each employee, the P&C must provide an employment contract, pay at least the award rate, make tax, superannuation and long service leave provisions, and meet workplace safety obligations. These aspects are addressed below. Employees working in the school must also have a Working with Vulnerable People card (see [Information Sheet 12](#)).

Other service providers, such as part time bookkeepers, may best be engaged as contractors rather than as employees. This avoids the P&C having to meet employer obligations. The service provider simply provides an invoice for their services which are paid by the treasurer.

### Staff contracts & duty statements

When a P&C association decides to employ someone it is essential, because of the changing nature of P&C committees, that the agreed terms of employment (hours of work, wages, etc.) **be put in writing as a staff contract**. It is also important for the P&C, as employer, and the employee to regularly meet to re-negotiate the contract, perhaps at the start of each year. A duty statement should also be agreed (often appended to the contract). This outlines the employee's exact duties. Take care not to be too prescriptive, as this can lead to inflexibility.

The staff contract is an agreement made directly between the employer (P&C association, usually signed by the president on behalf of the association) and the employee. Contracts must be in line with entitlements included in the relevant *award*, but may exceed them. The relevant modern award for canteen employees is the *Fast Food Industry Award 2010*. A manager will usually be paid at level 3. Further information is available from the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#).

The contract should be fully explained to the employee and signed by them. A copy of the contract should be given to the employee.

A sample contract for canteen managers is available as part of the [ACT Canteen Business Essentials manual](#). See also [Information Sheet 30 – Canteens](#).

### Workplace Health and Safety

All employers are obliged, under the *Work Health & Safety Act* to take out workers compensation coverage, minimise hazards and risk in the workplace, and have an agreed method for consulting with employees about work health and safety matters (see below). There are also obligations to report certain events. Contact [ACT Worksafe](#).

Under the *Work Health & Safety Act*, P&C-run canteens are considered a 'business', volunteers and students on work experience are considered to be 'workers' and the school canteen would be considered a 'workplace'.

The P&C has a primary duty of care to ensure the health and safety of workers while they are at work. Workers have a duty to take reasonable care of their health and safety, to ensure that they don't adversely affect the safety of another person, and to comply with any instruction or policy from the P&C to ensure there is compliance with the Act.

### Identifying and managing risks

The [ACT Canteen Business Essentials manual](#) has an excellent section on workplace health and safety which includes templates for risk management plans and checklists. These make an excellent starting place for thinking through potential risks and documenting how they will be managed.

### Workers compensation insurance cover

There is a legal requirement that all employers must hold a current workers compensation policy for all its paid employees (see [ACT Worksafe](#) for more information). Council's insurance broker can supply workers compensation cover at a negotiated low rate (see [Information Sheet 28](#)).

### Consultation, representation and participation

Small businesses such as P&C-run canteens are no longer exempt from consulting workers on work safety issues. The P&C must agree with workers on a method for consulting so that they can raise concerns and so that the P&C can seek workers' views on health and safety procedures (see [ACT Worksafe](#) for more information). There are three ways you can consult with your workers, whichever suits your P&C and is agreed to by your workers.

- A Health and Safety Representative chosen by your workers represents them in discussions with the P&C about work health and safety matters
- A Health and Safety Committee meets regularly to discuss work health and safety
- Some other way of consulting your workers that is agreed to by them and which suits the size and nature of your business (e.g. a regular meeting).

### Reporting events

The *Work Health & Safety Act* requires businesses to report certain events, including death or serious injury of a person or a dangerous incident at work. Keeping an incident report book to list details of any accident (whether it requires medical attention or not) is strongly recommended.

### Wages and financial obligations

P&Cs with employees must pay staff at the correct rate (in accord with the relevant award), withhold tax from wages, pay superannuation and make provision for long service leave. Details on these requirements and how to fulfil them are covered in [Section 18 of the Treasurer's Handbook](#). All treasurers/canteen treasurers of P&Cs with employees should read this.



Running a canteen is a major undertaking. Luckily there is help available.

The [ACT Canteen Business Essentials manual](#) is a comprehensive guide to running your canteen. It steps you through everything from regulations you need to comply with to information on finances, staffing, purchasing and putting together a healthy menu. It also has loads of useful templates and sample documents, spreadsheets, surveys and more.

The [Healthy Kids Association](#) offers a range of support services and many resources on. Council's website also has a [Canteen Support](#) section which is updated with new resources. The [Canteen Connect Facebook Group](#) is also a great place to crowd source advice and answers from the community of ACT-canteen manager and volunteers.

Many school canteens struggle to be financially viable. The P&C association should consider whether it is willing to subsidise the canteen service or whether it needs to return a profit. Many canteens are only financially viable if they operate part-time. As a guide, aim to be open one day a week for every 100 students enrolled at the school (e.g., for a school of 320 students, a canteen operating for three days per week is probably the best choice).

### Canteen sub-committee

When a P&C association operates a school canteen it is recommended that the P&C establishes a sub-committee which is responsible for its management. The canteen sub-committee should include one or more members of the P&C executive. The P&C constitution usually specifies that the president is automatically a member of all sub-committees. The principal may also be included. A paid canteen manager may be invited to attend committee meetings in an advisory capacity. Only members of the sub-committee are entitled to vote.

The roles and responsibilities of the canteen sub-committee should be outlined in Terms of Reference. We have [sample canteen sub-committee Terms of Reference](#). The subcommittee is usually responsible for

- overseeing, with discretion, the general operation of the canteen
- deciding the basic policy in relation to the serving of suitable food at reasonable cost
- reviewing prices, menus and goods for sale on a regular basis
- the adherence to guidelines regarding hygienic food preparation, serving and storage
- recruiting and encouraging volunteer helpers where necessary
- appointing and paying employed canteen staff and defining their duties (these should be ratified by the P&C association)
- reporting to the P&C association at their general meetings and submitting an audited financial statement at the AGM.

See [Information Sheet 25](#) for more considerations on operating the sub-committee

The canteen committee should aim for open and clear communication between the canteen and the P&C and should be supportive of any employed staff.

## Canteen policy and deeds

The Education Directorate's (EDU) [Public School Food and Drink Policy](#) (2015) details the policy framework under which school canteens must now operate, including healthy menus.

EDU now require individual contracts (deeds) between P&Cs and schools for the provision of canteen services. The principal will have a copy of this deed which the P&C president should sign on behalf of the P&C. See also our [FAQ](#) about the deed.

## Registering as a food business

In the ACT, canteens must register as a food business through ACT Health. Their website has an excellent page on '[Starting a food business](#)'. A fee applies.

## Healthy menus

Canteens should comply with the National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines (NHSCG), which are the basis of the [Food and Drink Policy](#). The guidelines use a traffic light system to categorise food as 'green', 'amber' or 'red' according to their nutritional value. Foods and drinks categorised 'green' and 'amber' provide valuable nutrients and are suitable for sale in school canteens. 'Red' items (such as lollies, soft drinks and iced cakes) can not be sold. Canteens are encouraged to have at least one day a week where only 'green' items are sold.

Nutrition Australia's [Nutrition Support Service \(NSS\)](#) works with canteens to review and improve their menus, and ensure that they comply with the Food and Drink Policy. You can contact one of their dietitians for answers to your food and menu questions on 6162 2583 or [act@nutritionaustralia.org](mailto:act@nutritionaustralia.org), or follow them on Twitter ([@ACTNSS](#)) and [Facebook](#) for tips and useful information

ACT Health have a fabulous [Go For Green](#) guide and a [short interactive online course](#) which explains the Traffic Light System. The guide and course step you through the process of working out if your recipes are Green or Amber and how to improve them, and includes an extensive list of ingredients and their classification.

Find more Healthy recipe ideas at [Healthy Kids Association](#) (along with lovely pictures to advertise them in your school newsletter) or the [ACT NSS](#).

## Allergies

The National Allergy Strategy has [free online food allergy training](#) for staff and volunteers working in schools. FOCis have information on [Allergies and Anaphylaxis](#).

## Food safety

ACT Health's guide '[Food Safety is Your Business](#)' helps managers understand food safety practices. See also [Food safety fact sheet for schools](#). The canteen also must have a designated Food Safety Supervisor. Either the canteen manager or another canteen committee member, volunteer or staff member needs to complete a Food Safety Supervisors certificate to take on this role (this is usually a one-day course). Other canteen staff and volunteers do not need formal training. Council advises when these training courses are being run.

## Employer obligations

The P&C, through the canteen committee, has certain obligations with regard to current award rates, superannuation and long-service leave provision, tax withholding, a legal obligation to

minimise hazards in the workplace and carry workers compensation (see [Information Sheet 29](#) for more information). The correct award for Canteen employees is the Fast Food Industry Award 2010. A copy of the award is available on the [Fair Work Commission website](#).

### **Staff qualifications**

The canteen manager should have completed a canteen manager's course (these are conducted by a number of organisations such as Healthy Kids Association, Nutrition Australia and CIT).

### **Working with vulnerable people**

All staff and regular volunteers must have a working with vulnerable people (WWVP) card. See [Information Sheet 12](#) for more information.



Before- and after-school care programs (outside school-hours care or OSHC) are an important service for school families and as such parent representation in setting-up or maintaining a program is warranted and desirable. Parents, through the forum of the P&C meeting, should be kept up to date with how the program is running. When a new provider is being sought, parent representatives should be included in deliberation around the choice of provider.

OSHC programs should be an agreement between the school and the licensed provider. Principals have access to EDU (Education Directorate) resources, policy and standard license agreements to help them set up these arrangements.

Council does not recommend that P&Cs directly run or manage OSHC programs because of the number of regulatory frameworks and standards with which they must comply. There are also insurance considerations (the standard insurance package negotiated by Council for your P&C may no longer meet your needs - see [Information Sheet 28](#)) and important employer obligations (see [Information Sheet 29](#)) including registration to work with vulnerable people (WWVP – see [Information Sheet 12](#)). Note also that school facilities can only be hired-out as an agreement between with the school's principal/board and the provider.

If the P&C association does run the program, that is, employs and pays the staff, it must establish an OSHC sub-committee which operates in conjunction with the service workers and users. At least one member of the P&C executive, preferably two, must be on this committee and attend its meetings. The committee must report regularly at P&C meetings. See [Information Sheet 25](#) for more considerations on operating the sub-committee.



Many schools offer tutor programs for private music lessons and other activities at the school. Council recommends that tutor programs should be structured as a private contract between the tutor and the parent, overseen by the school and only facilitated by the P&C. The tutor and the school are then responsible for compliance with obligations such as industry licensing, providing adequate insurance, and Working with Vulnerable People registration (see [Information Sheet 12](#)). Principals have access to EDU (Education Directorate) resources, policy and standard license agreements to help them set up these arrangements.

Programs that operate during school hours are the responsibility of the school even if the P&C agrees to assist in their operation.

Some P&Cs have taken on considerable responsibilities in operating tutor programs outside of school hours. If the P&C pays the wages of the tutor/instructor (taking out tax, superannuation and workers compensation insurance – see [Information Sheet 29](#) on being an employer), it must understand all of the responsibilities involved and keep track of the programs/classes being run. Only qualified tutors/instructors should be employed and the risk factor for each activity must be properly assessed. Adequate insurance must also be taken out. The insurance package offered by Council allows the P&C to take out an additional public liability cover of \$10m which will indemnify the P&C for actions brought against it for negligence or contributory negligence. See [Information Sheet 28](#) for more on Insurance

Where a sub-committee organising tutor activities exists, it should report to the P&C on its activities and financial position regularly throughout the year ([Information Sheet 25](#)). Note also that school facilities can only be hired-out as an agreement between with the school's principal/board and the provider. P&Cs cannot hire out school facilities to tutors directly.

### Secondary college community programs

Community programs in secondary colleges provide a range of recreational classes for the public, usually in the evenings or at weekends. These are often business enterprises. Historically, these have operated under the auspices of the P&C association. College P&C associations should have a clear understanding of the way in which the community program is operated as the ultimate responsibility lies with them.

# PART FIVE: Council





The ACT Council of P&C Associations (Council) is the peak body for P&C associations in government primary schools, high schools and secondary colleges in the ACT. All P&Cs in the ACT are members.

We are a representative organisation whose objectives are to:

- foster a quality public education system
- provide support services for our member P&Cs and
- make representation to government on behalf of parents in government schools.

Council is a truly grass-roots organisation and is guided by the consensus of members. Council provides a structure through which parent views are consolidated. This allows all P&C associations to participate in the discussion of system-wide matters, and to inform these discussions with their experience within specific school contexts.

### Council structure

Each member P&C elects delegates to Council. Affiliated high schools and colleges are allowed two delegates and primary schools have one. These delegates meet at regular Council meetings to discuss issues of concern, voice the views of parents at their schools and receive information of interest to parents to relay back to their school community. For more on the role of delegates, see [Information Sheet 34](#).

The executive members of Council are elected from these delegates at Council's Annual General Meeting in November. The executive are responsible for the work of Council between meetings (held twice per term). All major decisions taken by the executive are referred to a general meeting of Council for ratification.

### Council activities

The activities of P&C Council include information dissemination, supporting P&Cs, consultation and co-ordination with members, advocacy and representation and research and policy development.

### Representing parents/Lobbying government

Council successfully represents the views and interests of members to the media and government. There are many recent examples where we have successfully brought about change in response to member concerns. Representation to government includes:

- regular, direct meetings with the Minister for Education and senior officials in the Education Directorate (EDU) to raise issues and have input into emerging policies
- being part of many decision-making groups and government panels and committees
- making formal, written submissions to official inquiries and government bodies
- writing submissions on the ACT's annual budget.

In representing parents, Council is guided by a formalised set of Council policies, rather than the personal opinion of individual executive members. These policies on a huge range of issues have been agreed to at Council meetings over the years. This allows Council representatives to present the consensus view of members to the media and government

(see [Information Sheet 35](#) for more on Council policy).

There are many recent examples of Council responding to delegate concerns and representing parents to bring about change:

- our ongoing lobbying for traffic improvements around schools led to pilot programs being established, then extended. This was one of our 2016 ACT election priorities and we were able to secure promises from all parties for funds to improve school traffic safety, including school-crossing supervisors at 20 schools and traffic management plans for all schools.
- initiating a major project to help school canteens in response to ongoing concerns from delegates about their financial viability
- working with the Education Directorate and bus companies to ensure drivers of special transport services receive disability awareness training
- successfully lobbying 2016 ACT election candidates to promise substantially increased funds for improving school buildings
- successfully lobbying the ACT Education Minister to look more carefully at applications for new private schools which affect public school enrolments
- responding to frustrations about the dispersed nature of information on disability services by collating a comprehensive booklet of ACT services.

### Informing parents

As well as providing information of interest to P&Cs parents at its regular meetings, Council's magazine and newsletters are a major source of information on current educational issues, developments in educational policy and the work of Council. [ParentACTion magazine](#) is distributed once a term to all ACT public schools and available electronically on our website. Our fortnightly ebulletin '[Council Communicator](#)' is sent to P&C office-bearers at all schools. Members of the community can also subscribe via our website.

### Helping P&Cs

Council assists P&Cs with all aspects of running their associations and engaging parents via:

- an extensive range of information and resources, detailed information sheets (like this one!), templates and pro-formas, provided on our [website](#) to assist with running meetings, attracting volunteers, applying for grants, running canteens and much more
- free [training workshops](#) for P&C office bearers
- organising meetings and events so that P&C members can [exchange ideas](#), [share expertise](#) and raise concerns
- over the phone advice – available by calling our office
- face-to-face meetings with your P&C (on request) to discuss any problems
- providing insurance at below market rates
- useful publications (see above)
- advocating to resolve school issues.

### Research

Our research forms the basis of submissions, policy development and information for parents about changing practices in schooling.

### Connecting nationally

Council is an affiliate of the Australian Council of State Schools Organisations (ACSSO) which is the national government school parent organisation. ACSSO represents the interests of public-school parents throughout Australia to government and committees at the federal level. Through our membership, Council can lobby and comment on federal educational issues.

## Information Sheet 34

# Delegates to Council



Each ACT P&C elects one (primary schools) or two (high schools and colleges) delegates to Council. The delegate is a vital link between Council and the broad base of parents' opinions on the education of their children.

Delegates relay information between Council and your P&C. As such, they keep your school community informed of what is happening in public education. They also keep Council informed about parent views in the ACT so we can effectively advocate for parents to government (see also [Information Sheet 33](#))

### Attending Council meetings

Council delegates attend the regular general meeting of Council. Meetings are advised by email to delegates and the meeting schedule is available on the calendar on our website. There are two meetings per term, on the fourth Tuesday of the month. P&C associations should appoint alternate delegates so that if delegates cannot attend a meeting for some reason, the P&C is represented by another parent. All parents and carers are welcome at Council meeting, though only delegates (or appointed alternate delegate) can vote.

Most delegates, once they have been to a few meetings and understand more about the school system, find the discussions about educational issues very interesting and informative. Often an invited speaker will address the meeting on a key issue.

A standing agenda item 'Issues from Schools' enables delegates to raise matters on behalf of their own school communities for discussion and possible action

### Responding to issues

Delegates bring issues from their school community to raise at Council meetings. Delegates are expected and encouraged to consult with their own P&C associations on matters to discuss at Council meetings. We suggest that a standing item on your P&C agenda should be created so that parents can bring concerns for delegates to pass on.

When Council needs parent feedback, or there is a current campaign, delegates have a role in engendering interest and possible action in their schools. Council needs to be regularly and fully informed about parent opinion in the ACT to be both effective and credible.

Council has an excellent track-record in bringing about change in response to parent concerns brought to meetings by delegates (see [Information Sheet 33](#)).

### New delegates

New delegates to Council are provided with a comprehensive book of information which will more fully explain their role on Council and supply them with important advice.



#### Council policy

- represents the collective views of P&C associations throughout the ACT
- reflects the values and concerns of the members of P&C Council
- guides the activities of Council and its representatives
- makes possible representative and authoritative responses
- guides the position of our delegates to ACSSO (Australian Council of State School Organisations) which is the national organisation of parents in government schools;
- informs the community of the views of this Council.

[Current Council policy](#) is available on our website.

No P&C association is bound by the policies of P&C Council. They may, however, wish to consider them when making decisions on local school or system issues.

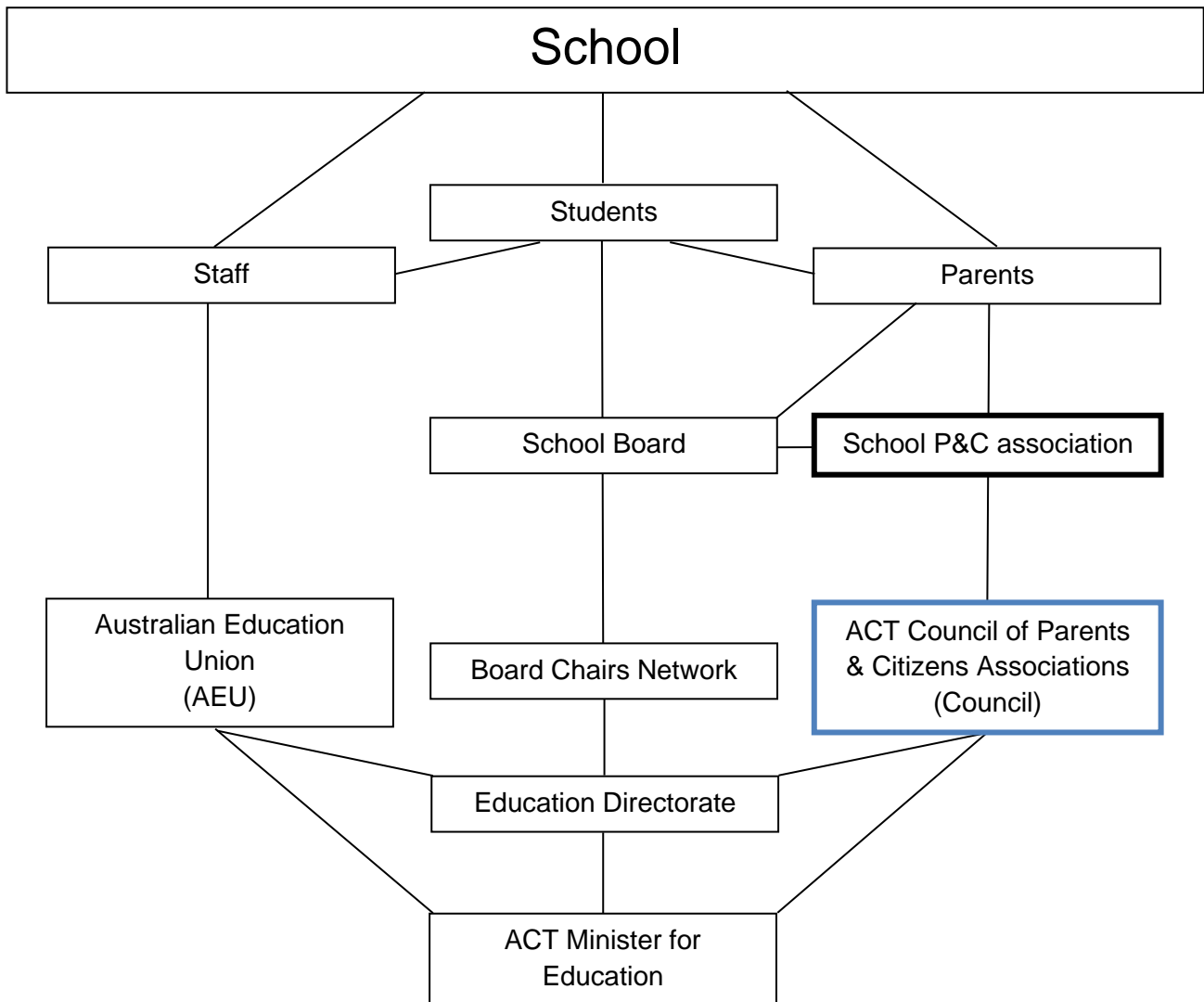
#### Policy Conference

Council policy is formulated at the annual Policy Conference in August which provides a forum to discuss new policies, update others and review interim policies decided by Council in responding to new developments and issues.

Each year in Term two, Council advises all P&C associations of the conference date and seeks proposals to amend current policies and/or introduce new items for consideration. Amendments or new proposals are circulated some months later for the consideration of each P&C association so that the delegate can participate in debate and vote in an informed manner at the conference. Only affiliated associations have the right to vote.

# PART SIX:

## Further Background





A major role of the school board is to plan, monitor, analyse and report on school performance in the four domains of schooling (Learning and Teaching, Student Environment, Leadership and Management, and Community Involvement). The school, in conjunction with the school board and the school community, conducts self-assessment of performance and strategically plans for improved student outcomes. The purposes of school improvement are:

- to encourage whole school community involvement in planning for, and improving, student learning
- to provide a means for schools to be accountable to their school community and to government
- to enhance public confidence in individual schools and the system as a whole.

### What is the review process?

In the first year of review, the school conducts satisfaction surveys of parents and carers, staff and students to establish baseline perception data. Survey questions are in five sections (overall satisfaction, and the four domains of schooling). Schools and their community collect, sort and rate all self-assessment data and prepare a report on the process. The school strategic plan is drafted by the school improvement committee based on agreed priorities for approval by the school board. Schools may establish working groups or utilise existing school committees to contribute to the development of the school plan.

In the second year of review, the school improvement committee, in conjunction with the school board, develops and implements an action plan for the year. Under the leadership of the principal, the committee fosters the ongoing collection, sorting and rating of evidence and engage staff, parents and carers and students in ownership of the school improvement process. The committee writes a self-assessment report on achievements for the year.

In the third year of the cycle, the school improvement committee uses self-assessment tools to critically review and rate achievements against the strategic plan and other areas of performance. The principal, in conjunction with the committee, writes a self-assessment report in preparation for external validation. In term three, a panel of four educators verify the triennial planning and claims made in the self-assessment report. The panel then write a panel report to summarise their findings.

### How can parents and carers participate?

Council encourages parents and carers to take the opportunity provided by the surveys, focus groups or forums to comment on the school's operations. Additionally, P&C associations can provide input and should receive feedback on the process through the P&C representative on the school board or presentations made by the principal to P&C meetings.



Acronym	Term
<b>ACARA</b>	Australian Curriculum Assessment Reporting Authority
<b>ACER</b>	Australian Council of Educational Research
<b>ACNC</b>	Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission
<b>ACSSO</b>	Australian Council of State School Organisations
<b>AEU</b>	Australian Education Union (teachers)
<b>AITSL</b>	Australian Institute for Teaching & School Leadership
<b>APFACTs</b>	Association of Parents and Friends ACT (Independent schools parent body)
<b>AST</b>	ACT Scaling Test
<b>ASQA</b>	Australian Skills Quality Authority
<b>ATAR</b>	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (replaced UAI in 2009)
<b>ATO</b>	Australian Taxation Office
<b>BSSS</b>	Board of Senior Secondary Studies (responsible for the accreditation and certification of Years 11 and 12 courses)
<b>CIT</b>	Canberra Institute of Technology
<b>Clusters</b>	Groups of schools in the same geographical area comprising one college with its feeder primary and high schools
<b>CPS</b>	Canberra Preschool Society (merged with Council in 2018)
<b>COAG</b>	Council of Australian Governments
<b>EDU</b>	Education Directorate (ACT)
<b>DET</b>	Department of Education and Training (Federal)
<b>EALD</b>	English as an Additional Language or Dialogue
<b>EBA</b>	Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment OR Enterprise Bargaining Agreement (depending on the context)
<b>GST</b>	Good and Services Tax
<b>IECB</b>	Indigenous Education Consultative Body (ACT)
<b>KLA</b>	Key Learning Area - these are the Arts, English, Health & Physical Education, Languages other than English, Mathematics, Science, Studies of Society & Environment, Technology
<b>LOTE</b>	Languages other than English
<b>NAPLAN</b>	National Assessment Plan—Literacy and Numeracy
<b>ORS</b>	Office of Regulatory Services
<b>OSHC</b>	Outside School Hours Care
<b>PIPS</b>	Performance Indicators in Primary Schools
<b>SBM</b>	School Based Management
<b>SRC</b>	Student Representative Council
<b>UAI</b>	University Admissions Index (formerly Tertiary Entrance Score)





**ACT Council of  
Parents & Citizens  
Associations**

*The parent voice on public education*