

PRINCIPALS WORKING WITH YOUR P&C

The P&C Association is the forum for parents and citizens in government schools who have an interest in their children's education. P&Cs are the only not-for-profit bodies in the whole of Western Australia that have the right to exist under an Act of Parliament. (School Education Act 1999). Associations work best to benefit students when the whole team is a cohesive unit. As the school's leader and site manager, the Principal plays an integral role in the P&C - they have rights and responsibilities like any other member of the P&C.

When the Principal and P&C work together to achieve the same goals:

The school community acts as one in the interests of the students.

P&C planning and budgeting complements the efforts of the school staff to enhance education within the school.



"A successful school has a successful P&C. Where the P&C and the school work closely together, resources are improved and the outcomes for children improve. Honest communication between the school community and the administration of the school is possible where trust is developed."

Gary Quinn - Principal, Dalyellup PS

The role of the Principal on the P&C

- ✦ is an ex officio member of the Executive Committee and, as such, has the same rights and responsibilities as any other Executive member.
- ✦ can propose motions, vote, be elected to a subcommittee or be elected as an Office Bearer if they want to! (This also applies to teachers and other school staff who are financial P&C members)
- ✦ cannot overrule decisions rightfully made by the P&C, unless that decision attempts to exercise authority over the day-to-day management of the school.
- ✦ cannot abolish the P&C. (Only the Director General of the Department of Education has this power)
- ✦ must pay the P&C membership fee if they wish to be counted in a general meeting quorum.
- ✦ Is the site manager of the school and as such provides the final approval for activities held on school property.

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P&C Meetings

- ✦ As an ex officio member of the P&C the Principal has the right to attend and participate in general and executive meetings. However, they will not be counted in the quorum for a general meeting unless they have paid their membership fee.
- ✦ Meetings are a great opportunity for the Principal to provide an update or report to members on school affairs, and to take questions from parents. An objective of the P&C Association (in the P&C Constitution and the Education Act) is the fostering of community interest in educational matters. The Principal's knowledge and experience is very valuable here. If the Principal cannot attend a meeting, they can send a delegate, such as the Deputy Principal.
- ✦ On occasion, a parent may wish to raise a matter or concern relating to an interpersonal issue or regarding an individual child at the school. The P&C is not the forum for this, and as such the discussion should be redirected to a meeting between the parent and Principal at another time.
- ✦ The Principal can propose any motion at a meeting. It is a requirement that at least seven days' notice is provided for financial motions and that requests for funds are presented in a clear and researched format.

"Holding a meeting between the Principal and President prior to the P&C meeting helps develop not only their relationship, but also the relationship between the school and the school community. The P&C is critical to the smooth functioning of the school."

- ✦ It is recommended that the Principal familiarise themselves with the duties of the office-bearing roles and the reporting requirements for each meeting – as an Executive member, they have a responsibility to encourage strong governance processes.
- ✦ Each year after the Annual General Meeting, the P&C must provide the Principal with a list of office bearers' contact details and the audited financial statement.



Fundraising

An Object of a P&C within the P&C Constitution is assisting in the provision of resources, facilities and amenities for the school. At the beginning of the year after the AGM it is a good idea to hold a special general meeting to set the P&Cs budget and priorities for the year. It often works well at this meeting if the Principal provides a 'Wish List' of items the school would like the P&C to fundraise for. The meeting can discuss and agree on items they will work toward providing. It is important to note however that P&Cs are not obliged to fundraise, though most do!

P&C Business

P&Cs have the ability to operate businesses such as a canteen or uniform shop, to service the school.

- ✦ Sub-committees for these businesses may be formed. The P&C may appoint the Principal as an ex officio member of these committees.
- ✦ The Principal cannot make an independent decision to close a canteen, have control over the employees or dictate what is sold in the canteen as long as it is operated according to the Department of Education's Healthy Food and Drink Policy. Their input is the same as any member of the P&C or a sub-committee formed for that purpose.
- ✦ The Principal should ensure they fully understand their role and the P&C's role in uniform supply contracts as directed by the Department of Education.
- ✦ It is recommended that Principals become familiar with WACSSO's Employment Guide and Business Operations Guide.

WACSSO, P&Cs and the Principal

WACSSO is the peak body representing more than 645 affiliated P&C Associations statewide. The organisation is directed by a State Council comprising a President and 28 Councillors, and a pool of staff provide expert advice and conduct the day-to-day operations.



P&Cs affiliated to WACSSO can avail themselves of:

- ✦ training (face-to-face and online)
- ✦ representation
- ✦ advice and support (from State Councillors and staff)
- ✦ regular information and correspondence
- ✦ publications and resources
- ✦ public liability and volunteer accident insurance.
- ✦ annual conference

It is a good idea for Principals to familiarise themselves with the services available from WACSSO, as well as P&Cs governance and reporting requirements. The WACSSO Affiliate Guide is a great first step. The WACSSO office is pleased to assist with P&C matters.

“The P&C is an integral part of the fabric of the school. It is so important that the P&C and the school work together to understand and promote the culture of the school and what the school stands for. This includes the standards, expectations and processes. The P&C President and the Principal must share the vision.”

Alan Kidd - Principal, Kingston PS

Frequently Asked Questions



The Principal cannot attend a P&C meeting and sends the Deputy Principal, who is not a P&C member, instead. Can the Deputy vote?

No, there is no allowance in the P&C constitution for proxy voting. Voting is usually by show of hands following discussion, so a person must be present at a meeting to listen to all sides and register a vote. The Deputy Principal must become a financial member of the P&C in order to vote, unless they are acting in the Principal's role full time for an extended period.



Can the Principal edit and change P&C Meeting minutes?

No, the P&C minutes are the responsibility of the P&C Secretary to produce in a clear unbiased and professional manner. If for some reason the correct process is not being undertaken the P&C Executive or WACSSO can suggest appropriate changes before distribution to the general P&C members.



Can the Principal forbid the P&C from opening a Facebook Page or order the P&C to close one down?

No. Establishing or closing any social media account must be carried out through a vote at a general meeting of the P&C. It is not the decision of a single individual. However, if the P&C has a page and it has become toxic the P&C must reflect on whether it is fulfilling its purpose – benefitting the operations of the P&C and thus the students at the school.