

The Western Australian Council  
of State School Organisations Inc.

# P&C PRESIDENT'S GUIDE



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supporting public schools



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PO Box 6295  
EAST PERTH WA 6892

Phone: [08] 9264 4000 Fax: [08] 9264 4948

E-mail: [info@wacssso.wa.edu.au](mailto:info@wacssso.wa.edu.au)

Website: [www.wacssso.wa.edu.au](http://www.wacssso.wa.edu.au)

Every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the information contained herein, but no responsibility is taken for any lack of coincidence with the School Education Act 1999, the School Education Regulations 2000 or the Associations Incorporation Act (1987) (as amended). These Acts of Parliament, together with the P&C Constitution are the definitive documents in this area.

All references to meeting protocol have been taken from Foyster & Carr's 'take the CHAIR' produced by the Australian Rostrum Council. See also Appendix C of the WACSSO Constitution and Rules.

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# The Role of P&C Associations

Parents and Citizens' Associations are established under the School Education Act 1999 for the purpose of supporting a strong government school system, for the benefit of the students.

The P&C Association at your school helps you and your children by:

- ◆ giving parents an opportunity to learn about the school's policies and programs;
- ◆ organising ways in which parents can share in shaping and developing school policies so that they reflect the broad agreement and support of the school community;
- ◆ bringing parents together to share information and views;
- ◆ assisting the school to build positive attitudes to students and their families;
- ◆ stimulating community interest and participation in education;
- ◆ raising funds and providing additional resources and amenities for the benefit of children attending government schools.

Where both a P&C Association and a School Council exist in a school it is expected that they will have different functions but operate in a complementary way.



# President's Guide

The purpose of the guide is to not only outline the roles and responsibilities of the P&C President but also to provide some ideas and tools to enhance their skills.

So what exactly does a P&C President do?

## Role of the President

Vital link between parents and the school administration.

The President acts as the vital link between the parent body and the school administration, and needs to develop and nurture a good working relationship with both.

Observes Constitutional formalities.

Put simply, ensuring that you and all members of the P&C abide by your P&C's constitution.

Chairperson for the P&C Association's meetings.

To effectively run meetings the chairperson requires knowledge of meeting procedure and protocols. However, well-run meetings also require the Chairperson to have an understanding of group dynamics, the ability to use their interpersonal skills to get the best out of all members and to deal effectively with the difficult situations that can occur.

Ensures all office bearers fulfil their duties.

A knowledgeable President is vital to the smooth operation of any organisation. Good Presidents recognise the importance of their role and ensure that, in addition to knowing the scope of their powers, they are well aware of their responsibilities. They must not only understand their own role, but have a good working knowledge of the other office bearer roles too.

The public face of the P&C handling media enquiries and all external enquiries.

As President, you are the public face of the P&C. When media enquiries are directed to you as the President of the P&C, you are representing ALL of the parents at your school, not just the financial members of the P&C. At no time should you be giving a personal opinion.

Signatory to accounts.

You have the right and responsibility to sign cheques for the P&C.

Ex officio member of all sub-committees.

By virtue of your title, you are a voting and speaking member of all sub-committees.

Effectively manage any P&C paid employees e.g. Canteen worker, Uniform shop worker.

# What skills are required by Presidents?

P&C Presidents:

- have the confidence of the community with which they are working in that they;
  - are aware of the different sections within that community; and
  - are aware of protocols of different cultures and are able to communicate cross-culturally.
- understand the groups members' strengths;
- have a good working knowledge of the subject under discussion/ the issues facing the group; but presents a neutral position on the issues being discussed;
- deal with how things are done (the process), rather than with what is done (the content);
- value as relevant, everything that happens at the meeting, and everyone who attends it;
- enable everyone to have the opportunity to express their view;
- understand what being representative means;
- trust the ability of the group to work through processes and achieve its task;
- trust themselves to do the job well;
- believe that the value of the group is greater than the sum of its parts;
- keep the meeting purpose in mind at all times;
- get the job done, and done on time;
- are comfortable with managing and resolving conflict;
- act naturally and openly;
- are enthusiastic;
- can stimulate discussion;
- can laugh at themselves and with others;
- support, guide and inform members and involve them in decision making;
- act on decisions that have been made;
- do not dominate proceedings;
- do not allow interruptions;
- keep members to the agenda;
- know which topics relate to governance (policy making) and which relate to management (responsibility of school principal); and
- know who may vote at the meeting.

Read the above list again and tick those skills that you feel you already possess. Now look at the skills you haven't ticked and think about how you could either gain these skills or improve your performance in them.

# 1. Link between parents and school administration.

As President, one of your key tasks is to be an effective link between parents and the school administration.

So what does this mean exactly? It means you need to be able to establish and maintain successful working relationships with both groups in order to pass information, concerns and issues from one group to the other, and back again.

These relationships can be easily achieved through clear, open, frequent and honest communication.

To ensure these relationships are successful, sometimes you will have to carefully plan exactly what you want to say, to whom and when – particularly if the issue relates to you or your child!

Here are some tips to further enhance your communication skills:

## 1. Have commitment and perseverance

Start communicating fully and openly yourself. Ask yourself what your P&C hopes to achieve in the coming year? What specific things does everyone need to do to help get it there? How can you encourage others to help you achieve the goals?

## 2. Start spreading your message

Make sure everyone knows you value what they do and that their contribution makes a difference. Your members need to know this and they won't unless you communicate it.

## 3. Do what you say

Most people aren't born great communicators. We all need training, practice and feedback to keep getting better at it. Helping yourself and others to communicate is a real investment in your association.

## 4. Earn the respect of others

We can't influence people if they don't respect us. A good communicator is someone who's genuinely interested in people and understands their way of looking at things, even if it's different to your way. A good communicator can state ideas and points of view clearly and in a way that doesn't cause offence. People become better communicators once they acknowledge that deep down inside, we're all pretty similar. Remember, you are supposed to be working towards the same goals. There are a number of ways in which you can make people feel comfortable with others. We can do this through our body language or our voice, or the way we use words, or we can establish points of common interest or experience.

## The power of the voice

Try saying the following sentences out loud, each time putting heavy emphasis on the words underlined:

- "I never said you stole the money."



Here you have a sentence of only seven words and it can have seven completely different meanings. Our voices give us away. Watch the way you emphasise words as that can cause someone to misinterpret what you're saying.

## The power of body language

The body speaks louder than words. Research shows that 93 per cent of a message comes from our body language and our voice, and only seven per cent from the words we use. We all read body language to some extent and the better we're able to understand it, the more effective we're going to be as communicators and as people. Knowing how to read and use body language is a useful communication skill.

There are two basic groups of body language postures: OPEN/CLOSED and FORWARD/BACK.

OPEN/CLOSED is the most obvious. People with arms folded and legs crossed and bodies turned away are signalling that they are rejecting messages. People showing open hands, fully facing you and both feet planted on the ground are accepting them.

FORWARD/BACK indicates whether people are actively or passively reacting to communication. When they are leaning forward and pointing towards you they are actively accepting or rejecting the message. When they are leaning back, looking up at the ceiling, doodling on a pad, cleaning their glasses they are either passively absorbing or ignoring the message.

## The power of listening

The better we listen, the more we learn about how to persuade people because we discover what's important to them and find out about their world. Actively listening to others obliges them to listen to us. It's like saying "Okay, you've had your say and I've listened so now I'll have my say while you listen to me."

Listening helps us to build better relationships. It also helps us find out what's really going on, which means we can make better decisions, solve problems more effectively, and reduce the number of conflicts and disputes.

The words 'listen' and 'silent' use the same letters but are quite different things. If we're just silent, we end up listening like a stunned mullet and we really need to listen with our hearts and eyes and our minds as well as our ears. Listening is really hard work and doesn't come easily to most of us. It needs practice.

## 2. Observe Constitutional formalities

So what does this mean for you? All you have to do is ensure that your P&C is abiding by the rules which govern P&C Associations.

Please take some time now, to discover exactly what these rules are and their implications for your P&C.

The formal operating guidelines which govern P&C Associations are:

1. School Education Act 1999.
2. School Education Regulations 2000.
3. Associations Incorporation Act 1987.
4. P&C Constitution (September 2001).
5. Terms of reference (sub-committees).



Furthermore, businesses that operate on school premises or employ people must adhere to current legislative requirements. It is a P&C's responsibility to ascertain which, if any of the following are applicable to their circumstances:

1. Commercial Tenancies (Retail Shops) Agreements Act 1985 (WA)
2. Fair Work Act 2009
3. Federal Privacy Act 1988
4. Food Act 2008 (WA)
5. Food Regulations 2009 (WA)
6. Industrial Relations Act 1979 (WA)
7. Long Service Leave Act 1958 (WA)
8. Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993 (WA)
9. Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (WA)
10. School Education Act 1999 (WA)
11. School Education Regulations 2000 (WA)
12. Workers Compensation and Injury Management Act 1981(WA)

Relevant industry awards are a high priority in conjunction with applicable Acts.

Historically, P&C Associations have operated school canteens and uniform shops, though schools may look at alternative ways that these businesses can operate.

All P&C Associations must be incorporated to comply with Section 145 of the School Education Act 1999. Once incorporated, the P&C Association takes on the obligations specified in the Associations Incorporation Act (1987) as well as those already specified in the School Education Act 1999. These are incorporated into the P&C Constitution.

Important clauses of these Acts are that the P&C Association must:

- hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) once (and only once) in each calendar year. This AGM must be held within 4 months of the end of the Association's financial year [Associations Incorporation Act, Section 23 (1)]. For the majority of P&C Associations the financial year ends on December 31st.
- ensure that adequate financial records are kept showing transactions and financial position [Associations Incorporation Act, Section 25].
- present an annual financial report to its members at each Annual General Meeting [Associations Incorporation Act, Section 26]. Copies of the audited financial statements must be given to the

principal of the school and to WACSSO [School Education Act 1999, Section 147(b), and P&C Constitution Rule 12.9].

- maintain a list of the names and addresses of the Association's members (known as the Register of Members) and make this register available to members upon request [Associations Incorporation Act, Section 27 and P&C Constitution Rules 11.3 and 13.1].
- maintain the Association's Rules (the Constitution, and where applicable, By-laws) and make these rules available to any member who requests them [Associations Incorporation Act, Section 28].
- maintain a record of the names and addresses of office bearers and Executive Committee members elected at each Annual General Meeting, and make this record available to any member on request [Associations Incorporation Act, Section 29]. This information must also be given to the principal of the school and WACSSO [School Education Act 1999, Section 147(a), and P&C Constitution Rule 11.5]. WACSSO provides an Officer Bearers form for this purpose.

The Department of Commerce will investigate any breaches of the Association Incorporations Act (1987)

These Acts and Regulations also place certain limitations on the Association's authority. P&Cs must ensure that:

- the annual subscription fee does not exceed \$1.00 [Education Regulation 124(2)(a), P&C Constitution Rule 6.1].
- it does not attempt to exercise any authority over the teaching staff of the school, or the day to day management of the school [School Education Act 1999, Section 143(2)(a)(b)(c)].
- all profits are spent to the benefit of children attending a government school [School Education Act 1999, Section 143(3)].
- they become incorporated within three months after being formed [School Education Act 1999, Section 145(2)].
- an Association that was not incorporated at the start of January 2001 will become incorporated within 2 years [School Education Act 1999, Section 146(2)].
- all Associations adopt a constitution that has been approved by the Minister for Education [School Education Act 1999, Section 145(3)].

## Executive Committee Constitutional Responsibilities

### Executive Committee Composition

Schools of over 100 students	Schools of 100 students or less
✓ President	✓ President
✓ Vice-President	✓ Vice-President
✓ Honorary Secretary	✓ Honorary Secretary / Treasurer
✓ Honorary Treasurer	✓ Not less than 2 other financial members
✓ Not less than 3 other financial members	✓ Principal (ex-officio)
✓ Principal (ex-officio)	
TOTAL: 8 people (min)	TOTAL: 6 people (min)

The members of the Executive Committee are voted in to these positions at the Annual General Meeting. They are responsible for managing the affairs of the association when it isn't possible for all members to meet.

There are also some specific obligations stated with respect to members of the Executive Committee, who must:

- ◆ declare any direct or indirect personal or pecuniary interest in a contract or proposed contract [Associations Incorporation Act, Section 21(1)]. The committee member is also not allowed to participate in any discussions or voting relating to such a contract [Associations Incorporation Act, Section 22(1)].
- ◆ make sure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the P&C Association fulfils its obligations under the Associations Incorporation Act, Section 42.

Failure to comply with any of these requirements may result in a fine, it is therefore important that all members of the Executive Committee are aware of both their own and the P&Cs obligations under the Associations Incorporation Act.

## The P&C Constitution

The Constitution currently used by incorporated P&C Associations was developed in conjunction with Crown Law solicitors, the Minister for Education, the Education Department's legal advisers and WACSSO. It is important that all members of the P&C Association, particularly the Executive Committee members and Office Bearers are aware of the implications and requirements of the Constitution. Some of the features of a standard P&C Constitution are discussed below.

### Name

This is the name as it appears on the Certificate of Incorporation issued to the Association by the Commissioner for Consumer Protection. Present a professional image by using it on the Association's letterheads, receipts and bank accounts. Any committees (e.g. canteen) which have been given the power to operate a bank account should show the full P&C Association name with the relevant committee name in brackets, e.g. :

Anytown Primary School Parents and Citizens'  
Association Inc.  
(Canteen Committee)



### Objects

The objects are the P&C Association's statement of goals and purpose, and are specified in the School Education Act 1999, Section 143. These objects enable P&C Associations to:

- act as a formal, recognised parent forum for discussion of educational issues;
- develop community interest and gather community opinion on educational issues;
- elect a representative to the School Council;
- participate in the formulation of the educational policies of the school through representation on the School Council;
- promote the interests and well-being of the children attending the school;
- work to bring about greater cooperation between the school and the home; and
- provide additional resources and facilities for the school.

### Powers

The powers of the Association enable the P&C to carry out its objects. Powers of the P&C Association include the power to:

- raise funds;
- borrow or invest money;
- operate bank accounts;
- purchase, lease or hire property;
- appoint or remove employees (e.g. canteen, uniform shop);
- appoint committees;
- make representations to the school administration, the Education Department and to government either directly or through WACSSO; and
- affiliate with WACSSO.

## Income and Property

Any surplus P&C funds, over and above administrative costs, can only be spent to benefit children attending a government school. Funds cannot be transferred to any individual P&C Association member.

The majority of P&C Associations are not registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST). To avoid paying the GST component on items purchased for the school, use the following process:

- Discuss the proposed purchase at a P&C General Meeting and ensure that there is a resolution in the minutes showing the Association's intention to purchase that particular item.
- Ask the Principal, in writing, to purchase the item. The school is registered for GST and will be able to claim back the GST component of the purchase price.
- Give the school a cheque for the purchase price less the GST component. This money is a conditional donation to the school funds. The Goods and Services Tax Ruling GSTR 2000/11 allows P&Cs to make donations to non-profit organisations (schools only) and to specify what the money is for, as long as there is no material benefit to the giver (the P&C) and the donation is made voluntarily.

The following are examples of inappropriate use of P&C funds:

- teachers' morning teas, tea funds, allowances;
- items for the staff room, such as tablecloths, dishes, microwaves for example;
- staff or administrative computers and equipment;
- gifts, presentations, flowers, newspaper notices;
- wine and cheese for Annual General Meetings, cartons of beer for 'busy bees';
- donations to outside organisations, such as charities, service clubs, non-government schools and private individuals.



As the P&C Association is a non-profit organisation, it is inappropriate for it to have large amounts of money invested unless it is intended for the purchase of large items of equipment such as air conditioning.

Parents have every right to expect that the money they help raise during the school year will be spent to benefit their children during the time they are at school.

## Membership, Fees and Renewals

Anyone over the age of 18 is able to join a P&C Association. Membership is on an individual basis with no provision for family membership.

Payment of a voluntary donation does not give automatic financial membership to the P&C Association. Membership subscriptions must be shown separately to enable those who do not wish to pay the voluntary donation the opportunity to become a financial member of the P&C. If your P&C Association wishes to include membership as part of a voluntary donation that is requested at the start of the year (usually with the school charges and contributions), then it must be clearly stated in accompanying documentation that this is the case and shown as a separate entry in the P&C's cash book. The P&C Association determines the amount of the subscription, up to a maximum of \$1 per year, per person [Regulation 124(2)(a), School Education Regulations, P&C Constitution Rule 6.1].

Anyone wishing to join the P&C Association may do so at any time during the year, provided that the appropriate membership subscription is paid at the time of joining. The Principal of the school is automatically a member of the Executive Committee (ex officio), and may choose to also become a financial member of the P&C.

All renewal subscriptions become payable at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Association. If a financial member's renewal subscription is not paid within 3 months of the AGM, then that person is removed from the membership register and is no longer a member of the Association.

## The Executive Committee

As mentioned before, the Executive Committee comprises the office bearers and committee members elected at the Association's AGM. The P&C members delegate the responsibility of managing the Association's affairs in between General Meetings to the Executive Committee.



Executive Committee positions automatically become vacant at the rising (close) of the AGM of the P&C. The Principal is automatically a member of the Executive Committee and may also be elected to any of the office bearer and committee positions.

If the P&C Association members meet on a regular basis, the Executive Committee may not need to meet at all. However, the Executive Committee may need to meet to deal with urgent matters of business.

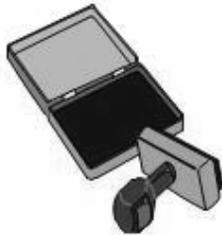
The minutes of an Executive Committee meeting should be presented to the next General Meeting of the P&C Association for adoption. Any resolutions made by the Executive Committee need to be taken with accountability to the full P&C membership.

## Inspection of P&C Association Books and Documents

Any member of the P&C Association may inspect the books and documents of the Association. However, permission to copy or remove any of the books and documents must be obtained from the Executive Committee, which has the right to refuse such a request. The Treasurer is responsible for the financial books and the Secretary for all other books and documents. It is unwise to allow other members to "borrow" these books. Assuming the Executive Committee agrees to a request to inspect the books, it is advisable to copy the relevant information rather than "lend" out the originals.

The appointed auditor has the right to inspect the financial records at any time.

## Common Seal



The Common Seal is a rubber stamp that bears the operating name of the P&C Association and the words "Common Seal". It is required by all incorporated P&C Associations and is used when signing documents such as workplace agreements, committee terms of reference, contracts, etc. A resolution must be passed to use the Common Seal and the Secretary must keep a record of the documents that have been stamped with it.

Any two (2) of the President, the Vice-President, the Honorary Secretary and the Honorary Treasurer may countersign the affixation of the Common Seal.

## Amending the Constitution

The Constitution can only be altered with the approval of WACSSO and the Minister for Education. If the P&C Association wishes to amend its Constitution, it will need to:

- have the proposed amendment passed by a three-quarters majority of financial members present at a General Meeting of the P&C; and
- submit the proposed amendment, in writing to WACSSO, for the approval of WACSSO State Council; then
- WACSSO will submit the approved amendment to the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP) as this will affect every P&C in Western Australia.

However, some clauses of the Constitution are prescribed by the School Education Act 1999 and School Education Regulations 2000 or the Associations Incorporation Act 1987 and therefore cannot be altered. Check with the WACSSO office if you are unsure of the validity of your proposed amendment.

A simpler process to altering the Constitution would be for the P&C General Meeting to adopt a By-law. For example, the P&C may decide that all reports must be submitted in writing 7 days before a General Meeting, and this would be written as a By-law of the Association. However, it is important to note that "By-laws cannot diminish the power of the Constitution in any way". For example, you couldn't reduce the number of members required for a quorum by passing a By-law.

Remember the Constitution always takes precedence over any adopted By-laws.

Please contact the WACSSO Office to obtain your Association's personalised copy of the P&C Constitution.

## Ethical Considerations

An honest and ethical organisation needs to be run with certain standards of behaviour. Being clear about your standards is one of the most important things to keep in mind.

Your first responsibility is to see that your P&C Association is run on a firm, democratic, moral foundation and within statutory and constitutional guidelines. An ethical organisation will ensure that there is full accountability for all its actions. Remember too that every member is a part of the decision-making process. People will never be fully committed to your P&C Association if they are not allowed a voice in planning, decision-making, fundraising and allocating the funds raised.

If you are aware of your responsibilities under the P&C Constitution which abides by; the School Education Act 1999, the School Education Regulations 2000, and the Associations Incorporation Act 1987, and if you are honest and careful in what you do, and you act in good faith with the P&C's best interests in mind, then you are limiting the possibility of any claims of mismanagement.

### 3. Chairperson for the P&C Association's meetings.

Another key role for the President is to effectively chair the meetings of the P&C.

The meeting is the heart and soul of the P&C and nothing is more guaranteed to divide a P&C than a meeting that is poorly-run by an ill-informed and unprepared Chairperson. Regular, effective, face-to-face communications are essential for building and maintaining successful P&Cs. Meetings may be held informally or can be run according to a set of formal rules (Rules of Debate and Standing Orders), and the influence of the Chairperson makes a big difference.

A common characteristic of a great Chairperson is that they have poise. The word poise can stand for:

Planning: a good plan helps the Chairperson be effective.

Observation: a great Chairperson observes the group members and applies that information to the plan.

Instruction: to make a group work effectively together, sometimes timely instruction is appropriate;

Sensitivity: working with the moods, emotions and passions of the group is part of facilitating.

Evaluation: what you learn from each meeting you chair.

Running meetings is not easy and there are whole books written on the subject. The following are some of the key skills required in running meetings:

1. The ability to facilitate group discussions.  
A facilitator is a person who helps move a meeting/discussion/debate along smoothly and fairly. Group discussions can often quickly become social chats if they are not well facilitated.
2. Comprehensive knowledge of formal meeting procedure.  
It is useful to have an understanding of Rules of Debate and Standing Orders even if you don't run your meetings that way.
3. Skills in dealing with conflict and disagreement in the group.  
This Guide will provide you with some very basic ideas for dealing with problems in your meetings. The best way to gain more information is to visit your library and read some of the numerous books that are dedicated to this subject.
4. Knowledge of positive and negative group roles that members take on.  
Get to know the strengths and weaknesses, if any, of all the P&C members. Learn how to get the best from them.
5. The ability to lead problem solving and planning activities without imposing your view.  
The Chairperson should not influence the meeting to the extent that they impose their opinions on the decision-making. However, there will be times when it is necessary for you to take the initiative to move a discussion along. Try to phrase your comments in as neutral a manner as possible.

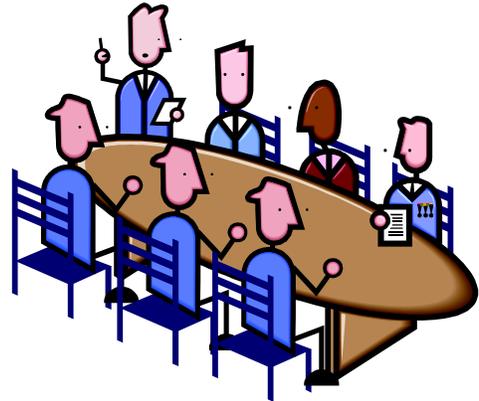
Any problems that you experience as the President of the P&C will often come back to one or more of the above points. Some of these you can learn to do well, others take time. It can be extremely difficult for a person to effectively control a meeting that involves a number of their friends, unless the group understands quite clearly from the outset the scope of the Chairperson's authority.

## Chairing Effective Meetings

### Develop a clear mission and purpose

Even though it seems obvious that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss P&C involvement in formulating school policies and providing funds for extra amenities, reiterating the goals with everyone involved is important.

Many parents think that the only function of the P&C is to raise funds. The reality is that P&C Associations don't have to raise a single cent if they choose not to!



### Meeting Ground Rules

Work with your members to develop a short set of ground rules that govern the meeting and that encourage participation and focus on the planning. People will be more inclined to follow the ground rules if they have been involved in developing them. This can be done formally in writing or just shared informally, but it makes more sense where the members may continually change to have a written set of rules that can be made available to all new members. Review the ground rules on a regular basis and refer members to the rules.

These rules should cover, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- ◆ Respect for other people: no interrupting, no long monologues, no personal abuse, allow everyone to express their views.
- ◆ Confidentiality: agreement on whether details can be discussed outside the meeting. In most instances a P&C will not be discussing anything that cannot be accessed by the wider school community. The P&C must refrain from discussing individual teachers, students or parents. Remember at all times to only discuss the issue that has been raised.
- ◆ Responsibility: everybody agrees to take responsibility for timekeeping, keeping to the agenda and voicing their opinions in the meeting rather than afterwards. Meetings that take place in the car park after the official meeting are almost always undermining the decisions taken by the P&C members. Beware the Car park Boardroom!
- ◆ Decision-making: how are decisions to be made, by consensus or voting? If consensus can't be achieved at what point will alternative decision-making methods be used and who will decide?

# Types of Meetings

## General Meetings

A general meeting is an ordinary meeting of the P&C at which normal business is discussed. General meetings are open to any member of the school community; parents, staff and local community members. Non-members may not speak at the meeting unless permission has been granted by the Chairperson. Only financial members of the P&C are allowed to vote at the meeting.

Under the P&C Constitution at least one general meeting must be held each term (Rule 15.1). Many P&Cs hold monthly meetings, whilst others may choose to meet once a term. All members must be given seven days' written notice of a general meeting.

Minutes of a general meeting are adopted at the next general meeting.

## Annual General Meetings

An Annual General Meeting (AGM) must be held in every calendar year, within four months of the end of the Association's financial year. Ideally, this should be held at the same time each year. For the majority of P&C Associations the financial year ends on December 31<sup>st</sup>. Seven days' written notice of the meeting must be given and the meeting must be advertised.



The AGM is the same as a general meeting with two special functions:

1. the election of the P&C Office Bearers and Executive Members; and
2. the presentation of the audited financial report.

In addition, it is customary for the President and the sub-committee convenors to present an annual report of their activities during the past year. General Business may be dealt with at an AGM; however, it is recommended that only items of business which must be dealt with immediately should be placed on the agenda.

The minutes of the AGM should be confirmed at the next general meeting of the Association, thus confirming all resolutions passed at the AGM including the election of office bearers.

## Special General Meetings

Special general meetings differ from general meetings in that only the business of which notice has been given can be discussed. These meetings are usually called in an emergency and no other business should be discussed. As with general meetings, members must be given 7 days' written notice of a special general meeting.

A special general meeting may be convened by the President or Honorary Secretary, or by request of five financial members of the P&C (a requisition).

If the special general meeting has been called as the result of a requisition, the Chairperson should invite one of the requisitionists to be the mover of the motion dealing with the matter to be discussed.

Minutes of a special general meeting are adopted at the next general meeting of the Association.

## Executive Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee usually meets in between general meetings of the Association to discuss items of an urgent or ongoing nature, and/or to set the agenda for the general meeting. 48 hours notice is required to be provided to all Executive Committee Members. Many P&C Associations find it unnecessary for the Executive Committee to meet on a regular basis.

Any member of the P&C is eligible to attend Executive Committee meetings, however, only duly elected (and ex officio) members of the Executive are entitled to vote. Observers may request permission to speak.

Executive Committee minutes should be presented to the next general meeting of the P&C for confirmation.

## Sub-Committee Meetings

Sub-committee meetings are very often more informal than general P&C meetings. However, members should not lose sight of the fact that the meetings should be short and productive. It is not necessary to produce minutes of sub-committee meetings although you may prefer to do this. Sub-committee convenors must, however, report to the P&C general meeting.

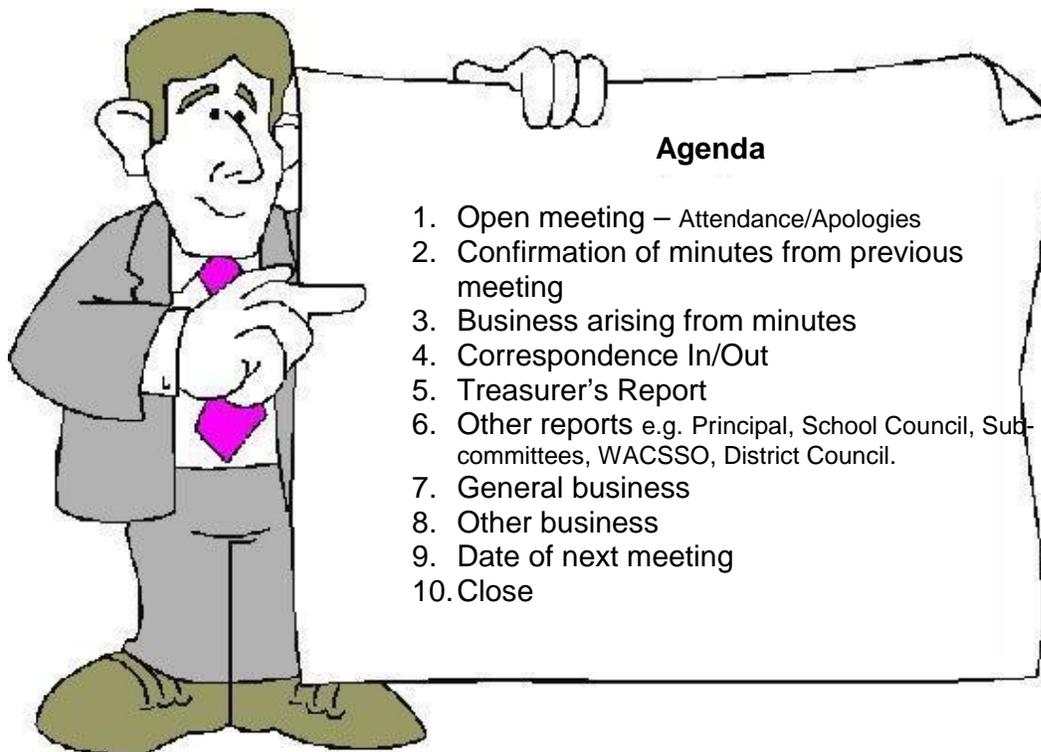
## The Meeting!

### Prior to the Meeting

Develop the agenda ahead of time with as much input from everyone as possible. Encourage members to give plenty of notice, either to yourself or the P&C Secretary, of items they wish to discuss. These can then be placed on the agenda. Place the important items early in the meeting and, where possible, suggest time segments for each item. Then, stick to the agenda.

Make sure that any reports and/or background papers about which decisions need to be made are circulated before the meeting so they can be read and considered.

The order of business on a typical agenda for a general meeting would look something like this:



## The actual Meeting

### Before the meeting starts

- Try to arrive early. This enables you to select a good seat and to talk with other members and the principal.
- Begin meetings with an activity that makes people feel comfortable being there. This can be the sharing of a positive or funny story from school, something personal that has happened, or one of many group exercises. The warm-up activity can make the meeting flow more smoothly and help build group cohesion.

## Opening the meeting

- Always start the meeting on time out of respect to those members who arrive on time. You will need to be aware, however, that some people may follow different time scales, and if there are latecomers, welcome them, give them a moment to settle, and then tell them what the group is doing.
- The Chairperson must ascertain that a quorum is present. A quorum is the prescribed number of members who must be present to constitute a valid meeting. The quorum must be present at all times during the meeting otherwise business cannot be validly transacted.



Quorums required for P&C meetings  
Schools over 100 students  
Executive Meeting

- 5 Executive Committee members

General Meeting

- 10 financial members

Schools of 100 students or less

Executive Meeting

- 3 Executive Committee members

General Meeting

- 5 financial members

- It is customary for the Chairperson to ask for apologies. Most P&Cs maintain an attendance book for meetings, which is passed around before the meeting begins.

## Welcome and introduction

- Welcome members and organise any introductions – take special care to introduce new members. Explain the purpose of the meeting. This is not only useful for new members but will help remind existing members of their role.
- Reiterate any ground rules that have been developed by the P&C, e.g. agreements about confidentiality of discussion; one person speaking at a time; respect for other people's opinions etc.
- Where appropriate, advise of housekeeping details e.g. time and length of meeting breaks, location of toilet facilities etc. – this will be necessary for new members and visitors to the meeting.
- Set a time frame for the meeting and work to keep to it.

## During the meeting

Conduct the business according to the agenda, but remember that the Chairperson does have the right to change the order of business if considered desirable.

The agenda provides a guide for the meeting, determining the order of the business to be discussed. Listing your business on an agenda also helps to ensure that no item of business is forgotten. Items of an urgent nature or requiring a decision at the meeting can be placed high on the agenda to ensure that they are dealt with and not deferred to the next meeting if all the business cannot be completed. For this reason, the order of the agenda could change at every meeting. The Chairperson is responsible for prioritising the agenda items.

## Confirmation of Minutes

It is every member's right and duty to have read the minutes of the last meeting before the current meeting. For this reason, it is preferable for minutes to be circulated as soon as possible after the close of each meeting.



Members present at the meeting need to check that what they observed was accurately recorded. Any corrections that need to be made to the minutes must be made before they are confirmed. Minutes can only be corrected to accurately reflect what occurred, they cannot be amended to show a change of occurrence or opinion.

The Chairperson would normally ask if the meeting will accept the minutes as a true and correct record and put this to a vote (a simple show of hands). Once confirmed, the minutes cannot be altered in any way.

Motion to be put to the meeting: "That the minutes of the meeting of ..... be confirmed as an accurate record."

OR

"That the minutes of the meeting of ..... with the following amendment(s) ..... be confirmed as an accurate record."

## Business Arising from Minutes

The Chairperson should ensure that discussion on the business arising from the minutes is limited to actions which have occurred (or not occurred) since the last meeting, and not provide an opportunity for those not present at the previous meeting to re-debate the resolutions which were adopted.

## Correspondence (In/Out)

Ensure you have a process for collecting and sorting the P&C mail. This should be done on a regular basis and not left until the week of a P&C meeting – or, even worse, the night of the meeting! (See the Secretary's Guide for examples – available from the WACSSO office or on the website at [www.wacssso.wa.edu.au](http://www.wacssso.wa.edu.au).)

Circulate relevant correspondence to members prior to the meeting. Letters do not have to be read to the meeting unless someone specifically requests that the Secretary do so.

Members may ask for clarification on any item of correspondence, but this must be done through the Chairperson, never directly to the Secretary. A vote would normally be taken that correspondence "in" be received; correspondence "out" be approved.

It is good practice for business arising from correspondence to be dealt with as it arises and not be deferred to General Business.

## Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer should always present written reports to the meeting (if possible, these should be circulated to members prior to the meeting), consisting of a monthly statement of income (receipts) and expenditure (payments), a copy of the most recent bank statement, and any other financial information required by the meeting. Treasurers' reports can be difficult to understand, so it is good practice for the report to contain a summary of the main points. (See the Treasurer's Guide for examples – available from the WACSSO office or on the website at [www.wacssso.wa.edu.au](http://www.wacssso.wa.edu.au).)

The Treasurer should also present a list of accounts for payment for approval by the meeting. Careful attention should be paid to this list, as this is where the P&C's money is being spent.

The meeting must vote to receive the Treasurer's Report.

## Other Reports

Open the reports with a regular brief President's report and then other reports may consist of the Principal's, P&C sub-committees, the School Council representative and WACSSO District Council representative.

Encourage sub-committees to provide written reports and, if possible, have them circulated prior to the meeting. This will forego the necessity of verbal reports being given at the meeting, and discussion can begin straightaway on the matters raised or the recommendations contained in the report. It will also make the Secretary's life a lot easier!

It is really up to the Chairperson to control the time taken for these reports and the questions asked of the person giving each report. However, members should ask for points of clarification if there is anything that they feel have not been made clear.

The meeting votes to adopt reports if they contain recommendations that need to be acted upon. Otherwise, the meeting can vote to receive all the reports.

## General Business

This is the time for debate on items and motions that have been placed on the agenda before the agenda was circulated.

Members should be encouraged to submit new general business items to the Secretary, or the Chairperson, before the agenda is prepared and circulated – these are called 'motions on notice'. This enables appropriate positioning of any new items on the agenda having regard to all other matters to be considered.

It is far easier for the Chairperson to control the debate when it starts with a motion. There will be much less inappropriate, irrelevant or repetitious discussion.

## Other Business

Any item of business which arises after the circulation of the agenda should be declared at the beginning of the meeting, and placed appropriately on the agenda, having regard to its urgency and giving preference to those items which were advised at the appropriate time (i.e. before the agenda was prepared).

## Closure

The Chairperson thanks everyone for attending, thanks any special guests, confirms the date of the next meeting and closes the meeting.

## After the meeting

Certain actions need to be taken immediately after a meeting. If these are carried out then the next meeting will run more smoothly.

- Confirm action plans and follow-ups (people often need to be reminded of what they have agreed to do);
- Ensure minutes are checked by the Chairperson for accuracy before circulating to members;
- Determine the time frame for circulation of minutes, new reports, background papers, and the next agenda;
- Everyone wants to know what was discussed and decided in the meeting. Try to post the minutes within 24 hours in a prominent place in the school. Distribute them to all financial members of the P&C and anyone else who is interested.



## Rules of Debate and Standing Orders

Standing Orders are the rules of debate that govern the conduct of the meeting. See Appendix 1 for the Rules of Debate and Standing Orders for use at other meetings. (State Council, P&C Associations, School Organisations, District Councils and other meetings). P&Cs are often tempted to run informal meetings with little or no procedure.

There is a case to be made for the relaxation of procedure at certain times and under certain circumstances, but there must be underlying rules. Once the Chairperson loses control of a meeting it is very difficult to regain it, and almost impossible if there are no rules of procedure.

If Standing Orders are strictly followed, no discussion is permitted except on a motion or amendment, which has been moved, seconded and accepted by the Chairperson. The Chairperson may also request that the motion or amendment be put in writing.

The majority of P&C Associations have a discussion and then formulate a motion to be voted on. This should be done in reverse with a motion being put to the meeting first followed by debate and then a vote.

### Substantive Motions

Many P&Cs allow free discussion, without first requesting a motion. There are a number of disadvantages to this -

- It is difficult to know whether the discussion is relevant, as the issue or problem hasn't been clearly identified by a motion. This can result in the meeting becoming confused, with a number of issues becoming mixed up together.
- The discussion is easily side-tracked onto other related and sometimes, unrelated issues. This in turn can mean that the original problem remains unresolved.
- The discussion can be unproductive with no decision being made.

A substantive motion is simply a formal proposal that an action be taken, that something previously done be approved or, that the meeting express an idea or opinion about something. Motions serve two specific purposes -

- Ensuring that everyone in the meeting is clear on the issue being discussed and voted upon; and
- The Secretary is able to accurately record the decision of the meeting in the minutes.

No matter how relaxed the meeting may be, the Chairperson should always insist that decisions are made by way of a vote on a motion.

Motions usually begin with the word "that" and should be:

- clearly worded, so that everyone can understand them;
- expressed in positive terms; and
- recorded in such a way that it is clear "who" is to do "what" and by "when".

The person who presents the idea to the meeting is the "mover". Before a motion can be discussed it requires a "seconder", i.e. another person who agrees that the idea should be discussed. If the motion isn't seconded, it lapses and is not discussed.

Once the motion has been seconded, the mover then explains the reason for presenting it to the meeting and what it is hoped it will achieve. The meeting is then able to debate the motion. The motion becomes a resolution after it has been agreed to by the meeting.

## The Debate

Standing Orders provide a framework which helps to control debate on a motion and ensure the smooth functioning of the meeting. The rules of debate include:

- time limit restrictions on speakers, unless the meeting grants the speaker an extension. This is particularly useful in avoiding lengthy sermons! The time limits are generally 4 minutes for the mover of the motion, 2 minutes for speakers for or against the motion, and 2 minutes for the mover's right of reply;
- sequence of speakers - each speaker must state whether they speak for or against the motion and state his/her reasons. The Chairperson should ask if anyone wishes to speak against a motion first. If there are no speakers against the motion, there is little point in endlessly discussing something that everyone obviously agrees with, and the vote should be taken right away;
- each speaker may speak only once to a motion, except the mover who has the right of reply. This ensures that the discussion doesn't become repetitive;
- when taking speakers for or against a motion ensure that no more than two speakers speak successively for or against a motion. For example, if two speakers have spoken in favour of a motion and there are no opposing speakers, the debate is closed and the Chairperson immediately takes a vote on the motion. This helps to ensure a balanced debate, by not allowing one viewpoint to dominate. It also helps to ensure that speakers stick to the point.
- the person who is speaking should be standing.

Remember, the purpose of this framework is not to gag debate, but to ensure that it is orderly and productive.

## Amendments

An amendment is a proposal to alter a motion in some way and is frequently used to make the original motion more acceptable to the meeting. This usually involves adding, deleting or substituting words with the intention of improving the original motion.

An amendment must have a mover and be seconded. The amendment is then debated and voted on before being incorporated into the original motion. There is no limit to the number of amendments which can be moved, as long as they are relevant and do not change the intent of the original motion. The Chairperson must use his/her discretion in accepting amendments since too many can result in confusion.

Amendments may be put forward to amend the previous amendment and these must be dealt with in the sequence decided by the Chairperson.

Example – Anytown P&C Association is holding a Quiz Night and the debate focuses on when and where it will be held. In the past they have used the ABC Club which costs xx dollars.

Mr Smith puts the motion -

“That the Anytown P&C Association Quiz Night be held at the ABC Club on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October.”

Mr Jones has made enquiries and found out that the P&C can use the local Scout Hall at no cost. He proposes an amendment to the original motion –

“That the Anytown P&C Association Quiz Night be held at the Scout Hall on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October.”

## Voting

Every financial and ex officio member, including the Chairperson, is entitled to one vote. The rules of P&C Associations do not allow for proxy voting – only members present at a meeting are entitled to vote. Observers at meetings are not allowed to vote. Once the voting on a motion has begun, no one is permitted to either enter or leave the room.

Voting is usually taken by a show of hands, unless a ballot is required under the Association's rules or a ballot/division has been requested by the meeting. The majority of motions are decided by a simple majority of votes.

If any member disputes the count, he/she is entitled to ask for a recount. Such a request must be made as soon as the result of the vote is announced. The Chairperson can also demand a recount if the will of the meeting isn't clear.

If the recount is disputed, members can ask for either a ballot or a division to clarify the vote.



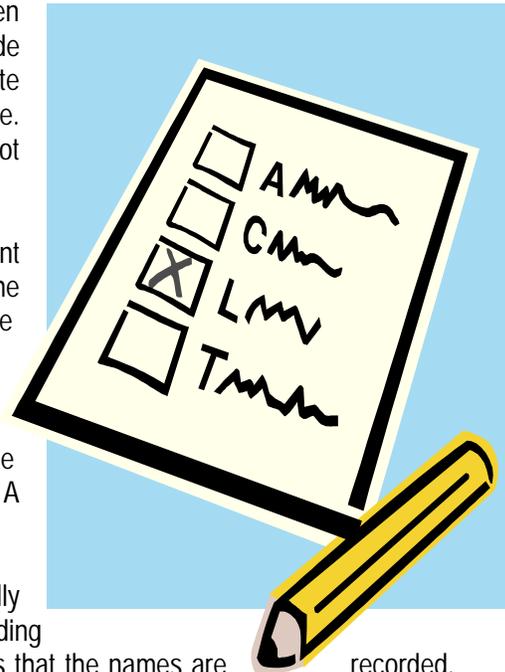
In the event of a tied vote the motion is lost.

## Ballots and Divisions

Any two members may request that a decision be taken by a ballot or a division. Such a request can be made either before or on the declaration of the result of a vote and would normally override the previous vote. Although slower than a show of hands, the result is not open to dispute.

In the case of a ballot, the Chairman should appoint returning officers to distribute ballot papers, count the votes and advise the Chairman of the result. If the debate has been vigorous with strong emotions roused, members may feel intimidated if they have to vote by show of hands. Some people find that they vote to appease the stronger personalities in the group and not the way they would prefer to vote. A ballot can overcome this problem.

In the case of a division, those for the motion generally stand on one side of the room with those against standing on the other side. The important point in a division is that the names are recorded.



## Dissent

When a vote is taken by division, the names of those dissenting are recorded automatically. When the vote is by ballot or show of hands, anyone dissenting may request that the dissent be recorded and this may be done at the Chairman's discretion. Dissenters are under obligation to comply with the decision; however the recording of dissent exonerates them from all consequences of the decision.

## Procedural Motions

Procedural motions relate to the conduct of the meeting and are used to draw the members' attention to an irregularity in the proceedings. Following are some of the most common procedural motions:

### Point of Order

This procedural motion may be used when:

- the remarks of the speaker are irrelevant to the motion being discussed;
- the speaker has used "improper" language i.e. has sworn, become abusive, etc;
- a member is speaking twice to a motion, out of turn or for longer than is allowed;
- a proposal is made which is against the spirit of the Association's rules;
- a proposed motion is contrary to a previous resolution of the Association; or
- an amendment is improperly proposed.

Any member may raise a point of order at any time – thus interrupting the speaker. The Chairperson must give an immediate ruling on a point of order and the Chairman's ruling is final.

### The Closure

The form of this motion is "That the question be now put." This motion can be moved at any time during debate, even interrupting a speaker. It may not be moved nor seconded by anyone who has spoken to either the motion or subsequent amendments. If the closure motion is carried, the mover of the original motion may exercise the right of reply, after which the question must be put. If the closure motion is defeated, discussion continues.

The Chairperson must remember to put the closure motion first then, if it is carried, the actual question (motion). This particular procedural motion is a useful device for those who feel that too much time is being devoted to a particular issue.

## Rescinding Motions

Sometimes the effect of a motion needs to be cancelled. This requires a rescision motion. When faced with a rescision motion, the Chairman should consider the situation carefully before accepting the motion.

In principle the rescision should not be allowed at the same meeting at which the original motion was carried. The resolution represents the collective will of those present when it was put and should not be overturned lightly. However, the Chairman needs to be flexible – it would be silly to deny a rescision motion in those rare occasions when circumstances change before the close of the meeting that make the resolution unworkable or impractical. For example, you may delegate responsibility for a task to a person who then hears during the meeting that they have been successful in obtaining a job interstate.

### Guidelines for Rescision

- A motion to rescind should not be allowed at the same meeting at which the resolution was carried except in unusual circumstances, and then by a two-thirds majority of those present and entitled to vote.
- A rescision motion cannot be moved if the resolution has been carried out. For example, it is pointless to rescind a resolution regarding expenditure if the money has already been spent.
- At least seven days' notice in writing must be given to the Association if you wish to bring a rescision motion at a subsequent meeting.
- A rescision motion is debated in the normal manner.

### “That the Debate be Adjourned”

This motion is used when you would like to return to the debate at a later time (either at the current meeting or at some future time), and is useful when the meeting has insufficient information to make a decision. You cannot interrupt another speaker to bring this motion and you will need a seconder. The only debate required on this motion is to decide when the debate on the original motion may be resumed. This motion cannot be moved by anyone who has already taken part in the debate.



### “That the Matter be Referred to a Sub-Committee”

Another useful motion when the meeting has insufficient information to make a decision, but this one allows the meeting to refer the matter to a committee to research and report back. Any debate on this motion would be limited to the meeting giving directions as to when the committee's report is to be ready for consideration. Needs a seconder and you cannot interrupt another speaker.

### “That the Previous Question be Recommitted”

When debate has been lengthy and several motions have also been debated and passed, members may feel that they've voted the wrong way in the confusion. This motion allows the question, in its final form, to be put again. The motion needs a seconder and must be passed by a two-thirds majority of members present and eligible to vote. This motion should only be used to take a second vote and not be used as an excuse to re-debate issues.

### “That the Chairperson's Ruling be Disagreed With”

Any member disagreeing with a ruling from the Chairperson can bring this motion. It must be seconded before it is accepted by the Chairperson.

Once accepted, the Chairperson is temporarily replaced by another member of the Association (usually the Vice-President). The mover of the motion is then able to explain why he/she disagrees with the Chairperson, and the Chairperson is able to explain the ruling. No other member is entitled to speak.

The motion is then put in a positive form “That the Chairperson's ruling be upheld”. Therefore, those disagreeing with the Chairperson must vote against the motion.

A motion of dissent is not a motion of no-confidence in the Chairperson. It is a simple statement of disagreement. The Chairperson continues to chair the meeting after the vote, whether or not the ruling is upheld.

### Suspension of Standing Orders

This would normally only be used if the meeting was following strict meeting procedures. It needs a seconder and must be passed by a two-thirds majority of members present and eligible to vote. If carried, the meeting goes into committee and unrestricted discussion can take place (without regard to time limits on speakers, etc.) This is a useful motion if you have an issue you want to discuss, but not a motion. Suspension of standing orders allows the meeting to discuss the issue and formulate a plan before presenting a motion. You will need another motion to return to Standing Orders, at which time a substantive motion can be presented. Discussion that takes place out of Standing Orders is not recorded.

## 4. Ensures all Office Bearers fulfil their duties.

So let's now take a quick look at the roles of the other Office Bearers. More details about the Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary can be found in guides similar to this one, and are available on the WACSSO website or by contacting the office on 9264 4000.

### Vice President



The Vice President acts as understudy for you, the President. Some Vice Presidents are people who are considering being President in the near future and use this role as an opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge of P&Cs under your guiding hand. On the other hand, you may be new to the President role and your Vice President is more experienced and able to mentor and help you.

Vice Presidents can chair meetings for you when you aren't able to attend meetings. Alternatively, you can ask them to chair the meeting on a regular basis to enhance their skills.

Vice Presidents can also be a representative on sub-committees. They will only have voting and speaking rights if they are a member of the sub-committee in their own right. Otherwise they can only attend and report back to you what was discussed.

Vice presidents can also be signatories on accounts.

### The Honorary Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for:

- Posting notice of meetings in writing
- Assisting the President to draw up the agenda
- Recording minutes of the meeting
- Dealing with correspondence
- Maintaining membership records
- Being a signatory to accounts; and to
- Observing statutory and constitutional formalities.



## The Honorary Treasurer

The Treasurer's role is to:

- Establish and maintain simple procedures for handling the Association's money
- Always issue receipts.
- Having 2 people to count money and the receipt signed by both.
- Bank all money received.
- Have 2 people to sign cheques and always avoiding conflict of interest.
- Always sight an invoice before signing cheques, and never sign blank cheques.
- Prepare and present a written report for every General Meeting which includes up-to-date bank reconciliation, a copy of the most recent bank statement and a statement of all receipts and payments.
- Prepare books for audit.
- Have overall responsibility for all P&C accounts including all sub-committees.
- Complete GST related documents if required.



## Sub-Committees

- Formed to perform specific tasks on behalf of the P&C.
- Members are elected at the Annual general Meeting.
- Are governed by 'Terms of Reference', which is a flexible document outlining the roles and responsibilities of the sub-committee.
- May elect a convenor, secretary or treasurer.
- Decisions of the sub-committees are subject to the approval of the full P&C.
- May meet as regularly as they wish.



## 5. The public face of the P&C handling media enquiries and all external enquiries.

As President, you are the public face of the P&C and usually its official spokesperson. When media enquiries are directed to you as the president of the P&C, you are representing ALL of the parents at your school, not just the financial members of the P&C. At no time should you be giving a personal opinion.



### Why me?

There may be several reasons why a reporter wants to talk to you:

- You're the official spokesperson for an organisation or event.
- A reporter has asked for someone to respond to a specific school or youth-related story.
- In response to an event, the reporter wants a "reaction clip" (a five- to ten-second bite) that offers an emotional response.
- The reporter wants a fresh perspective and an honest point of view. (That's attractive to reporters who are used to media-savvy spokespeople who always feed them the same lines.)

The information in the following sections will help you learn how to get your message across effectively in an interview.

It is important to remember that just because you are the President of the P&C you do NOT have to give the interview. Often you will be the one responsible for this role; however, you can delegate this role to another member of your P&C at a General Meeting (and give them a copy of the information contained on the following pages). In this way all members will know who the spokesperson is for your P&C, should the media call.

It is equally important to ensure that the message you deliver is representative of the whole P&C and not just your own opinion. Unless you are totally comfortable with the subject matter, don't feel pressured to comment straight away. Make a time for the reporter to call back or meet with you and put down the phone. This way, you can establish group consensus before you go on the record. It is well within your rights to conduct the interview to suit your time frame and their deadlines!



## Before the Interview

### Understand why you are being interviewed.

When asked for an interview, getting answers to the following questions will help you assess the request. These include:

- What is the topic and angle of the interview?
- What was the impetus for the story?
- How will the interview be used - for a news story, a current affairs feature or an entertainment piece?
- Which media outlet - publication, website, TV or radio station – wants to do the interview?
- Who will the interviewer be?
- When and where do they want to do the interview?
- How much time is the reporter requesting for the interview?
- What is the story deadline?
- When will the interview be published or broadcast on air?
- Is anyone else being interviewed for the story?
- What are the characteristics of the media outlet and the reporter?

It is also useful to find out:

- If the media outlet has an apparent point of view on the subject.
- How much the reporter knows about the subject.
- If the reporter or media outlet has done anything on the topic in the past. Check press clippings.
- How friendly or antagonistic the reporter is.
- What the audience of the news outlet is.

Other questions to ask regarding a radio or TV interview include:

- Will it be a live broadcast?
- Will the interview be conducted in a studio, by phone, or in some other location?
- Will it be by remote, with the interviewer not physically present but asking questions from another site while connected by satellite transmission?
- Is the interview being taped for uncut airing, or is it being taped for excerpting?
- Will the broadcast include call-ins or emails from viewers, listeners, or an on-line audience?
- How long will the broadcast last?
- What is the show's format? A panel? One interviewer and one guest? Two interviewers and one guest? Two guests debating?
- If there are other guests, in what order will they speak?
- Will it be before an audience? How will the audience be selected?
- Can visual props be used?
- Will film clips or videotape inserts be used? If so, will you have an opportunity to review them and prepare comments or responses?

Other questions for a print interview include:

- In which section of the publication will the article appear?
- Will a photographer accompany the reporter and take pictures?
- Will photos be taken before, during, or after interview?

### Don't be afraid to do the interview

People often turn down the chance to be interviewed because they're nervous, or afraid they'll say the wrong thing. Instead, think of the interview as a special opportunity for you to convey your message. If perceptions about your P&C, your school, or education in general have been wrong in the past, this is your chance to set the record straight. In fact, it is a great idea to get to know the journalist on your local paper or radio station. That way, if you are asked to do an interview, you should be more relaxed, and building a good relationship with the media will be helpful to the P&C in the long run.

### Know your rights

Remember, you do have a choice about being interviewed. If you're uncomfortable with the idea, you can say no. You can also discuss options with the reporter: you can ask that only your first name be used, you can ask for anonymity, or you can ask to be interviewed off-camera. If the reporter has called to interview you over the phone and you don't feel prepared to talk right away, ask the reporter when you can call him/her back. But don't back out just because you're intimidated. The only way you'll get to be media-savvy is to practice!

All Media bodies with/in Australia must abide by the Broadcasting Services Act 1992. In Part 9, section 123 (1) it states that all licensees and service providers must develop codes of practice that "are to be applicable to the broadcasting operations of each of those sections of the industry". Section 123 (2) goes on to state: "Codes of practice developed for a section of the broadcasting industry may relate to:...promoting accuracy and fairness in news and current affairs programs; and preventing the broadcasting of programs that:

(i) simulate news or events in a way that misleads or alarms the audience...".

Find out what company the reporter comes from and what their particular Code of Practice is, in order to further empower your choice to do this interview! Some codes of practice are freely available over the internet, others you will need to contact the media body itself for. In essence, they all state the body must strive for factual accuracy at all times, amend errors in a timely manner, have a commitment to impartiality and balance and will protect confidential sources.

Let's now take a look at some other laws that apply to both the media and you.

Obligation / requirement	Explanation	Examples of what NOT to say
Prejudice	"noun 1. an unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought, or reason. 2. any preconceived opinion or feeling, favourable or unfavourable. 3. disadvantage resulting from some judgment or action of another. 4. resulting injury or detriment."	"We all know what happens when..."  "What can you expect? They're both children from..."
Sub judice	"Publishing material that tends to prejudice a fair trial." (p80) "The Latin phrase 'sub judice' literally means 'under or before a judge or court' (NSWLRC 2000:8) and applies to the period during which there are limitations placed on what the media may report about a case. The courts have attempted to balance the competing rights and interests of those involved in court cases and those reporting on them by	"I know the Treasurer is guilty of stealing because there's money missing from the account!"  "Of course the equipment was

	<p>restricting what may be published about a case while it is before the courts. The restrictions are considered necessary to avoid 'trial by media', where free speech interferes with the usual safeguards of the legal system with dire consequences for the case at hand and for the public confidence in the administration of justice. The practical concern the courts have here is the potential influence such a media trial might have on prospective jurors (and to a lesser degree, on witnesses). The fear is that their judgement (or testimony) might be tainted by media coverage of the case before or during trial..." (p82)</p> <p>"The fact that sub judice material is later proved to be true is no defence". (p91)</p>	<p>damaged – we just never had time to fix it."</p> <p>"Although I didn't see it, judging by the way everyone says the driver was swerving all over the road they had to be drunk, so of course they drove through the wall!"</p>
Defamation – slander and libel	<p>"Defamation is almost a daily occurrence in our lives. We defame someone when we say or write something to another person that damages someone else's reputation". (p159) "The Macquarie Concise Dictionary, Third edition (1998) defines defamation as 'the wrong of injuring another's reputation without good reason or justification;...slander or libel'. In turn, 'slander' is defined as 'defamation in a transient form, as speech'; and 'libel' as 'defamation by written or printed words, pictures, or in any form other than by spoken words or gestures'." (p160).</p> <p>"...The notion of whether defamation is 'justified' or 'with good reason' is not something that is to be decided by the gut feeling of the person doing the defaming. Any such excuse must fall within the defences developed in the courts and parliaments". (p161)</p> <p>Just because you don't name the person does not mean that defamation laws do not apply. Merely providing enough information to identify a person or group will suffice, if they can demonstrate that "people thought it referred to them". (p176)</p> <p>"To establish a case, plaintiffs need to show that the material was published, that it was defamatory (made others ridicule them or think less of them) and that they were identifiable (although not necessarily named). The defamatory meaning of a statement is known as an 'imputation'. The imputation comes from words or images themselves as well as from the total context of the publication". (p180)</p>	<p>"the following examples of words: sacked, terminated, dismissed, cheated, incompetent, fraud, insolvent, bankrupt, liquidation, convicted, failed, deceived, lied and stole...key topics that are likely to upset people enough to prompt them to sue for defamation... include incompetence, unprofessional behaviour, negligence, misuse of position, misconduct, unethical behaviour, dishonesty, misrepresentation, theft, fraud, criminality, immorality, and stigmas such as mental illness or appearance". (pp172-173).</p>
Copyright Act 1968 Commonwealth	<p>Ensure that all information you use from another source whether quoted directly or indirectly, acknowledges the source, especially when writing press releases.</p>	<p>"As I have often said, to be or not to be, that is the question".</p>
Equal	<p>"The objects of this Act are —</p>	<p>"Boys are renowned</p>

<p>Opportunity Act, 1984</p> <p>Western Australia</p>	<p>(a) to eliminate, so far as is possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of sex, marital status or pregnancy, family responsibility or family status, sexual orientation, race, religious or political conviction, impairment, age or, in certain cases, gender history in the areas of work, accommodation, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services and the activities of clubs;</p> <p>(b) to eliminate, so far as is possible, sexual harassment and racial harassment in the workplace and in educational institutions and sexual harassment and racial harassment related to accommodation;</p> <p>(c) to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the equality of men and women; and</p> <p>(d) to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the equality of persons of all races and of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation, religious or political convictions or their impairments or ages." [Section 3 amended by No. 40 of 1988 s. 5; No. 74 of 1992 s. 5; No. 2 of 2000 s. 28; No. 3 of 2002 s. 47.] 5</p>	<p>for...."</p> <p>"Our older children are all rough so we have tried banning them from using the sand pits and play equipment."</p>
<p>Privacy Act 1988</p> <p>Commonwealth</p> <p>Confidentiality</p>	<p>Ensuring all health, personal, employee, financial and sensitive information is released only to those entitled to receive it.</p> <p>"Confidential information can include documents, ideas, verbal secrets, works of art and objects. It is most commonly information of a sensitive financial, security or private nature... The actual obligation of confidence can arise in a range of situations, including the terms of a contract (written or verbal, express or implied); the employer-employee relationship and associated trade secrets; the professional- client relationship; the transfer of a secret to a third party if the third party knows (or should know) it is confidential; and under legislation as it applies to secret government information, such as defence documents and tax files."(p255)</p>	<p>"Sure, here's a list of phone numbers for all of our members, staff and families."</p> <p>"Here's some photos of a group of children at our school... Have we got permission forms? What do we need those for?"</p> <p>"Here's a copy of our most recent bank statement."</p>
<p>Freedom of Information Act 1992</p> <p>Western Australia</p>	<p>"An Act to provide for public access to documents, and to enable the public to ensure that personal information in documents is accurate, complete, up to date and not misleading, and for related purposes."</p>	<p>"No you can't see our Constitution or members register!"</p>
<p>Criminal Code Act; Compilation Act 1913</p> <p>Western Australia</p>	<p>It is lawful to publish a fair comment; however "whether the comment is or is not fair is a question of fact. If it is not fair and it is defamatory, the publication is unlawful"</p>	<p>"Of course we have a no bullying policy. Whether it's enforced or not... well, you know..."</p>

### What is your reason for wanting to speak to the reporter?

Think about the main message you want to convey, and how to weave it into every single answer you give. That way, even if your answers are cut and spliced during the editing process, your message will still come through.

Your main message is the most important information to communicate to your audience. Here are some tips on how to make your main message effective:

- Keep it clear.  
It's vital that you're clear on exactly what your message is, and why it's urgent to get across to the public. To identify your core argument, ask yourself: "What do I care most about?" Also ask: "Why should the audience care?"
- Keep it simple.  
Above all, your main message must be positive and contain no negativity. It must be concise, and should not contain complexity or hard to follow rationale. Your main message can have several points to it, though it's best to have no more than three that can be said in less than thirty seconds each. This will keep both the interview and the audience focussed on your message. Each point must be easy to understand and clear using simple, straight-forward language and unambiguous statements. Ideally, the messages will connect emotionally with the audience.
- Keep repeating it.  
Weaving your message into everything you do takes practice. The key is consistency. Decide on two or three main points and use them – either word for word or paraphrased – in all answers you give, all the news releases you write and all of the emails you send. <sup>2</sup>

### Be prepared, but not over-rehearsed

"If possible, get a list ahead of time of the questions you'll be asked. This is common practice for television and radio interviews. It gives you the chance to think of what you want to say before you're asked the questions on-air. Make sure you know your subject inside and out. Write down answers to any questions you think may be asked. Say these answers aloud with a colleague or in front of a mirror to evaluate their effectiveness, but be careful to avoid memorizing statements. Reporters dislike prepared statements, because they sound stiff and unnatural, and if you depend on prepared statements you could be thrown off if the reporter asks you an unexpected question." <sup>2</sup>

### Interview Confirmation

Sounds obvious, but confirm the date, time, place and anticipated length of the interview. You may also like to ask about the nearest parking facilities and directions once you reach the front door.

### Arrival, Location and Pre-Interview

Research shows that the average audience remembers only seven percent of the words you say. Therefore your non-verbal communication – voice, face, clothes, personal charm and credibility – are also important. Following are some tips about appearance and nonverbal communication for television interviews:

- Try to look professional and tidy. Wear solid, medium-tone colours; don't wear bight patterns, browns, stripes or white – they make colour adjustment difficult. Do not wear clothes made from shiny or flashy material as these attract glare.
- Wear over-the-calf socks so your shins won't show when you cross your legs.

- Women should not wear more than their usual amount of make-up and men shouldn't hesitate to ask for make-up at the studio – it helps control perspiration and glare.
- Keep jewellery simple.
- Shave just before you go to the studio.
- Pull the back of your jacket down and sit on it so you don't look like you're wearing shoulder pads.
- Wear your glasses if you need to, but tilt them downward very slightly to eliminate glare. Don't wear sunglasses.
- Sit up straight and don't rock or swivel your chair.
- Make frequent hand gestures and facial expressions, but make sure they're appropriate to the subject matter.
- Don't rest your elbows on the arms of the chair; you'll find them locked there and you won't be able to make natural gestures.
- Bring hand gestures up to your chest, not at your lap or in front of your face.
- Maintain eye contact with the reporter; looking at the floor, shifting your eyes back and forth, or avoiding eye contact will make you look dishonest.
- Show interest in the program, subject, reporter and interview – convey enthusiasm.
- Restrain from making nervous gestures such as looking at your watch or playing with clothing.

Some other tips include:

- Allow plenty of time for the unexpected (no parking spaces, traffic, bad weather...!)
- Arrive at the media outlet 5 -10 minutes early. Expect to wait!
- If the interview is in your office or home, tidy up. Put away piles of paper and clutter, and ensure there is a contingency plan for all phone calls and interruptions (e.g. answering machine, secretary, assistant, and friend).
- If the interview is at your school, ensure you have permission from the Principal to conduct the interview well before the interview is due to start.
- Pre-interviews – some reporters spend up to 30 minutes prior to an interview warming up the subject. Some spend 5 seconds! Take the opportunity to find out what the reporter is looking for and set the tone of the interview. N.B. Even during a pre-interview discussion, you should always operate under the principle that the cameras are always “rolling” and that the microphone is always “hot”.
- Ask when a story or article is going to be run.

## During the Interview

The following tips will help guide you through your interview:

Be positive and stay calm – no matter how tough the question appears to be!

- Use positive, descriptive word images that people can understand. Try not to use jargon or technical terms that may lead to confusion for the reporter and/or the audience.
- Try not to appear negative or confrontational, even if asked a negative question. A hostile attitude will make it difficult for viewers to take your point seriously and erode your credibility. Instead, state your point again and bridge or link to one of your messages.

For example:

Type of Question	Example Question	Explanation	Example Answer
Softball	What's it like to be President of a P&C?	This question gives you a great opportunity to expound all of your messages. Take advantage and	This role is both challenging and exciting. I am pleased to be able

		answer with great enthusiasm. This is the only type of question where your answer could last for longer than 15-30 seconds. Don't waffle and only stop when you've covered all of your positive points and messages.	to be part of a group whose sole intention is to enhance the educational experience of our children. I am proud to be part of such a united, positive team of parents.....
Hypothetical	Do you think there will be any long term effects on the children as a result of this action?	Never speculate, and don't answer hypothetical questions. Discount the questions and bridge to your message.	I can't see into the future, but I can tell you that we are all committed to ensuring our children's success by....
False Facts and Assumptions	So, the Police are charging one of the students from your school for burning down the library?	Don't repeat the false information by saying "No it wasn't one of our students who burnt down the library." Just correct the record and bridge to a message.	That's not correct. The Police are currently questioning a suspect linked with burning down the library. We are intent on focussing on making plans to restore the library in the quickest....
Leading	It has been reported in both local and state newspapers that crime is up in your area because young teens are bored. Is this why the vandalism took place?	Again, don't repeat the question. Set the record straight and then bridge to a message.	I'm not sure about that, but what I do know is we are actively involved in a community forum planning strategies to overcome vandalism.....
Forced Choices	Did the accident occur because the child fell off the equipment or because they were pushed?	Obviously don't agree if both of the choices are incorrect or the answer is not known. Tell what you can if the incident is still under investigation and then attempt a positive message.	At this stage the accident is still under investigation, so at this time we still don't know the cause. We are constantly working with all members of the school and our children to remind them about safety....
Factual About Bad News	Can you confirm that the helicopter that landed on your school seriously injured 6 students and 3 members of staff?	Don't ever try to hide or gloss over bad news.	Yes, right now several members of our school are undergoing treatment in hospital. The most important point to remember is...

Some other bridging phrases or words include:

- "Let me add..."
- "It is important to emphasize..."
- "It is important not to overlook..."
- "What's more important is..."
- "Along those lines, another question I'm often asked is..."
- "That deals with one aspect of a larger issue..."
- "Yes and in addition to that..."
- "No, let me clarify..."
- "It's a bit too early to talk about that, but I can tell you..."
- "I'm not sure about that, but what I do know is..."
- "That reminds me of..."
- "Let me emphasize that..."
- "I'm glad you asked me that. People may have that misconception, but the truth is..."

#### Treat the interviewer with respect.

- Remember that when you speak to a reporter, you're potentially speaking to an audience of hundreds or thousands of people.
- Suggest other sources the reporter could interview. Mention anything that you think might be helpful and offer approaches they may not have thought of.
- Ask the reporter what they like to be called, and call them by that name. First name basis can be helpful and less stressful for you!

#### If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest.

Always tell the truth. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so and offer to get back to the interviewer with the answer later. Make sure you keep that promise though – nothing sours a good relationship with a reporter faster than keeping him/her waiting for necessary information. You could say "I'm not prepared to discuss that today", or "It would be inappropriate for me to discuss that at this point".

#### Speak clearly and firmly.

- Be clear by not burying important points in long answers with too many details. Don't leave it up to the media to interpret what you mean. They might get it wrong!
- Use statistics, facts, examples, anecdotes, quotes and stories. However, offer the reporter just the facts, and don't speculate or estimate, even if you're asked to.
- Don't feel you have to fill "dead air" – that's the interviewer's job. When you've answered a question, stop talking.
- People often remember what affects them, what motivates them, and what others' experiences are. Word pictures, such as "as big as a house" rather than just "big", are what people recall.

#### Repeat your main message as many times as possible.

Stay on message and return to the three key points frequently during the interview. Relate all questions back to them because your goal is to make sure your message gets across. If that's the only answer you offer the interviewer, then they will have no choice but to use it.

#### Don't be afraid to assert yourself.

If you're uncomfortable answering a question, just say firmly that you don't think you are the appropriate person to comment. In order to avoid making a comment, say something like "I'm not prepared to discuss that today".

Remember that no reporter has the right to bully you into answering a question if you don't want to.

#### Wrapping it up

- Leave time for any additional questions, but remember, you are still being interviewed until you part company!
- At the end of the interview, recap any commitments to get the reporter additional information and tell them when you can get back to them. If you are not doing a live show, ask when the piece will run or air. If there were no plans to run a story before the interview, ask if the reporter plans to write one.

#### After the Interview

- Evaluate the interview. Focus on the positive aspects and ask yourself "What went well? What could I do differently next time?" Write down your responses to these questions so you can refer to them before the next interview and enhance your next performance.
- File the news clipping or tape from the interview for future reference.
- Follow up on any materials or information you promised at the end of the interview in a timely manner.

## Getting your story out there - Writing Media Releases

The role of a media release is to notify the media of an upcoming event, an achievement or an important issue. News outlets receive dozens of releases every day, so it's important that yours grabs the attention of the editor and the audience.

Some tips for an effective media release include:

- Ensure that information is presented in decreasing significance i.e. the most important information is given in the first paragraph. The first paragraph should be a brief summary of the whole release and must include WHAT will happen, WHERE it will take place, WHY it is occurring, HOW, WHEN and to WHOM.
- Think of a witty or attention-grabbing headline.
- Clearly date the media release. If you are organising an event, email your media release out with ample time beforehand. This will give the media enough time to do some research if needed, organise a photographer if required and to schedule it into their diaries.
- Keep your release factual and as short as possible using short sentences and short paragraphs. Use positive words and phrases that are easy to read and interesting.
- Include quotes from the P&C Spokesperson. E.g. "P&C President John Smith said it was testament to the hard work and dedication of members and the whole school community that enough money was raised to build the playground six months earlier than expected."
- Avoid using superlatives, clichés, generalisations, jargon and acronyms. If using an abbreviation – always spell it out in full initially, then use the abbreviation.
- Always ensure that any dates, facts and figures are completely accurate.
- Follow a consistent writing style and check your spelling and grammar.
- Have someone proof-read the release.
- Ensure your media release is only one page in length.
- Your contact name, email address and telephone number (including after hours) should be listed at the very end of the release.
- Ensure you send the release to the right journalist, editor or chief-of-staff. Put a call in to the media outlet and find out the name and email address of the best contact.

## Community Service Announcements

Most local newspapers and radio stations will be happy to promote your cause if you provide them with a community service announcement. This should be about 60 words in length regarding the details of an event you are planning. A contact phone number and email address should be given for any enquiries. Timing is extremely important for these announcements to be created before they can be aired or printed, so send in your announcement at least 2 – 4 weeks prior to your event.

## Photo Opportunities

Local newspapers and web-based news outlets are often on the lookout for a good photo opportunity. If you're planning an event, think of how you can set up an interesting photo. Let the media know by providing details of the photo opportunity at the end of your media release. Make sure you have permission from everyone in the photo to have their photo published. If the event or photo opportunity has passed, send the media outlet a fully captioned photo to use.

## 6. Signatory to accounts.

You have the right and responsibility to sign cheques for the P&C. Avoid conflict of interest at all times by never signing cheques for yourself. Cheques require 2 signatures from the following people: you, the Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer and one other financial member appointed for that purpose at the AGM are signatories for all accounts.

## 7. Ex officio member of all sub-committees.

The term ex-officio means by virtue of office or official position. Hence by virtue of being President, you have the same rights as any member of the sub-committee as specified in their Terms of Reference. See p17 for more information about sub-committees. Because of the volume of business being undertaken by P&C Associations, it is no longer possible for all matters to be fully discussed at general meetings. The use of sub-committees has become an essential part of an effective P&C.

Sub-committees may be formed to perform specific tasks (eg fundraising sub-committee), or to research and develop recommendations on behalf of the P&C. They do not have the authority to act on their own behalf, unless this power has previously been given to them by the P&C in the committee's Terms of Reference. The "Terms of Reference" is a flexible document that details the sub-committee's powers and responsibilities. The P&C Association is able to make changes to a sub-committee's Terms of Reference and these should be re-adopted by the P&C at each AGM. A standard Terms of Reference for all sub-committees is available from WACSSO.

Members of sub-committees are elected at the P&C's Annual General Meeting or at the time the committee is formed, and must all be financial members of the P&C Association. There should also be a member of the P&C Executive Committee on each sub-committee. Paid employees of the P&C (eg canteen staff) may participate as observers only and do not have voting rights on the committee.

After the sub-committee is formed, it may elect its own Convenor and, if required, a Secretary/Treasurer. The sub-committee determines the time and place for its meetings.

Decisions of the sub-committees are subject to the approval of the full P&C and sub-committees must report to all P&C general meetings. If finances are involved the sub-committee must submit a financial report to each general meeting.

The Honorary Treasurer of the P&C is responsible for all funds received and expended by any sub-committee. Cheques drawn against sub-committee bank accounts may only be signed by those people authorised to do so under the approved P&C Constitution.

Expenditure of sub-committee's surplus funds must be decided at a general meeting of the P&C Association. The sub-committee may make recommendations, but the ultimate decision rests with the P&C Association. Remember, canteens have no ownership of surplus funds – the money belongs to the P&C and surplus should be transferred on a regular basis to the P&C's general account.

## 8. Employer Responsibilities

Approximately 500 P&C Associations in government schools in WA manage school canteens. Most school canteens employ at least one paid worker and use the services of a number of volunteers, usually parents from the school.

It is important that P&Cs understand what their roles and responsibilities are in regard to being a fair and reasonable employer. Operating the school canteen is no different from running a small business. You, or at least one member of your P&C who is confident of taking on this responsibility, must have an understanding of:

- ◆ Types of employment – full-time, part-time or casual?
- ◆ What is a probationary period?
- ◆ Minimum conditions for all employees.
- ◆ What is an award – State vs Federal?
- ◆ Record keeping.
- ◆ Pay slips.
- ◆ Superannuation.
- ◆ Tax.
- ◆ Workers' Compensation.
- ◆ Occupational Safety and Health (OS&H)
- ◆ Recruiting the right people.
- ◆ What is a Job Description?
- ◆ Performance Management.
- ◆ Grievance and Discipline process.
- ◆ Resolving disputes.
- ◆ Terminating employment.



Information on all of the above can be obtained by contacting the Department of Commerce 9222 7700 or by visiting their website [www.commerce.wa.gov.au](http://www.commerce.wa.gov.au) especially if your P&C is using a State Award. If your P&C business activities come under a Federal Award, you will need to contact Fair Work Ombudsman on 13 1394 or by visiting their website at [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au). It is the responsibility of every individual P&C to seek clarification of their business activity status, so that the correct award is implemented.

It is important to note that this responsibility can be delegated to another member of your P&C who is capable of taking this responsibility on. This person may be:

- The Treasurer: who is already responsible for authorising the payment of wages and therefore must also have an understanding of awards, tax, superannuation, payslips, record keeping etc.
- A member of a sub-committee whose role is to manage the paid employee. This role should be defined in the Terms of Reference for this sub-committee to avoid confusion for the employee and to ensure someone stays current with changes to the laws surrounding employees (e.g. Awards, tax, OS&H, superannuation, WorkCover insurance)

# Some Additional Useful Information

## Information Gathering

P&C meetings deal with many issues – a number of which are dealt with on a regular basis e.g. fundraising ideas. But, often your P&C will be required to have input into school policies and even state level discussions. It will be necessary for you as the President of the P&C to have ways of gathering information and ideas from your members that can be fed back to the relevant authority, be it the School Council, WACSSO or direct to a government enquiry.

The following are some ways in which you can gather this information.

### Rounds

“Rounds” are a simple, but effective, technique used to give everyone in the group the opportunity of giving their point of view. Ask each person in turn their viewpoint on an issue. Group members do not have to contribute if they don't wish to. Rounds can also be used as a means of everyone introducing themselves to the group.

Rounds can be used at any stage in a meeting, for example as a warm-up exercise, or in the middle of the meeting to ensure everyone's views on a matter are being considered.

### Working in Small Groups

Sometimes working in a large group does not allow for full participation. It can be a good idea to break into pairs or small groups (3-4 people).

The small group/pair may then feedback to the large group. You may sometimes also use small groups to air personal feelings about an issue. In this instance, it is not usually necessary to formally get feedback to the larger group.

### Brainstorming

The objective of a brainstorming session is to collect ideas from all participants without criticism or judgement. There are some rules you need to follow for conducting productive brainstorming:

- before a brainstorming session, define the subject clearly (usually a “what” or “how” question);
- allow time for all individuals to think before commencing discussion;
- encourage everyone to contribute – don't hold back ideas even if they seem silly;
- allow no discussion during brainstorming – that will come later;
- no-one is allowed to criticise other people's views, verbally or non-verbally;
- build upon ideas generated by others in the group;
- write all ideas on a whiteboard or butcher paper so that the whole group can easily scan them; and
- as President, enforce the rules.

After brainstorming, refine the list of ideas so that you end up with, at most, the three most popular ideas to debate.

- Encourage each individual to prioritise 3-5 items;
- If several groups are brainstorming simultaneously, put the lists on the wall and allow for group feedback or time for members to read other groups' ideas; and
- Have each person identify the ideas that could be achieved easily.

# Working with your P&C Team

## Identifying your Team Members

P&C meetings often attract people who either are inexperienced in achieving group objectives or who resent being shown how to effectively contribute. It is a rare organisation that does not have one or two members who are challenging. Note that challenging doesn't necessarily mean wrong or conflict.

Challenging participants probably do not feel they are being difficult to work with, only that the group is ignoring their position. The decision-making process is very important when working with groups. You must get agreement on each agenda item before you move on. This can sometimes be difficult due to competing ideas or competing personalities.

The bottom line is to ask the question, "Can everybody live with this decision?" That doesn't mean that everyone thinks it is the best decision. It means they can live with it, that it may have an area of compromise for them personally, but that on-the-whole it is a good decision.

As President and Chairperson you will have to learn how to deal tactfully with all individuals to ensure that every meeting is a success. Ask your Vice-President to chair a meeting early on in the New Year to allow you time to watch the group dynamics at work. Within groups you will always find those who are builders, others who excel at maintenance and those who act as roadblocks.

Group Builders	
The Initiator	Suggests new/different ideas/approaches
The Opinion Giver	States pertinent beliefs about the discussion or others' suggestions
The Elaborator	Builds on suggestions made by others
Group Maintenance Workers	
The Tension Reliever	Uses humour or calls for a break at appropriate moments
The Compromiser	Willing to yield when necessary for progress
The Clarifier	Uses relevant examples, offers rationales, probes for meanings, restates issues
The Tester	Raises questions to test if group is ready to come to a decision
The Summariser	Tries to pull discussion together, reviews progress so far
The Harmoniser	Mediates differences of opinion, reconciles points of view
The Encourager	Praises and supports others in their contributions
The Gate Keeper	Keeps communications open, creates opportunities for participation
Group Roadblocks	
The Aggressor	Deflates status of others, disagrees and criticises
The Blocker	Stubbornly disagrees, cites unrelated material, returns to previous topics
The Withdrawer	Will not participate, has private conversations, takes copious personal notes
The Recognition Seeker	Boasts and talks excessively
The Topic Jumper	Continually changes the subject
The Dominator	Tries to take over, asserts authority, manipulates the group
The Special Pleader	Draws attention to own concerns
The Playboy/Girl	Shows off, tells funny stories, nonchalant, cynical
The Self-Confessor	Talks irrelevantly of own feelings and insights
The Devil's Advocate	More devil than advocate!

Table cited from HC Wedgewood's [Fewer camels, more horses: Where Committees Go Wrong](#)

Take some time to think about how you would deal with the stereotypes described above. Remember, however frustrating the behaviour can be, each person has their strengths as well as weaknesses. Try to define the strengths of the various types described above. Consider how, as the President, you can bring out the best in these people.

## Controlling a Meeting



Maintaining control is extremely important and as Chairperson, you have a duty to ensure that effective control is maintained at all times. However, the members also have a responsibility in this area. Encourage the members to increase their knowledge of meeting procedure and Rules of Debate. Make them aware that they have an important role in ensuring that proper order is observed during meetings and stress the importance of careful preparation.

Ensuring that all members are aware of the rules protects you from the member who manipulates proceedings, knowing that most of the other members do not know what it is all about. Many decisions are made at meetings simply by being bulldozed, unopposed, through the procedural route.

Ordered meetings ensure that all members receive equal opportunities to influence the meeting's decision-making processes. If all members had a similar view on all issues there would be no need for any control mechanisms. Given, however, that parent organisations – like every other group in our society – are composed of very different individuals with very different values, beliefs, viewpoints and ideals about how goals can be achieved, the need for discussions which are ordered and fair is essential.

You can maintain control over an unruly meeting by calling disrupters to order, removing disorderly members, refusing to allow rulings on procedure to be disrupted and by adjourning the meeting for a reasonable period to enable order to be restored.

Experience can make a big difference but you will also need to gain the respect of the members. Remember that the members will often be inexperienced in meeting procedure and won't know what conduct is expected of them.

Members require clear guidelines and need to know the extent of their authority. Encourage their cooperation at the start of the year by explaining the P&C's objectives and the authority given to it. Discuss the conduct that is expected of members. Create a P&C Code of Conduct with your members and ensure everyone has a copy of it.

Once the ground rules have been established and the objectives clearly defined then you can work towards encouraging fruitful contribution from all members.

You must encourage discussions that are reasoned, purposeful, free of personal abuse and relatively free of repetition.

A lot depends on your personality and style of management, but with experience you will gain confidence in your own ability to handle difficult situations as they arise and your P&C team will understand the lengths they can go to!

Common sense is the most important ingredient, but there are some areas in which you must be knowledgeable:

- You must develop a thorough understanding of the Association's constitution as well as some knowledge of Rules of Debate.
- You must present an impartial face, despite your private views on a given topic.
- If a meeting becomes difficult you have one very effective card up your sleeve – you may adjourn the meeting. Firstly, you should try to obtain a vote on the motion for an adjournment. If this is not possible you can exercise your right at a public meeting to adjourn the meeting for a reasonable time to allow order to be restored. This is a drastic measure and should be used only when all other attempts to impose order have failed.

### How to Handle a Verbal Attack

What should you do if someone verbally attacks you in a meeting you're running? Thank him/her for their comment, then break eye contact and proceed to your next point. Alternatively, ask the group to respond. At all costs, avoid a verbal duel with the person. Even if you win, you will lose the members' confidence that you can lead the group objectively.

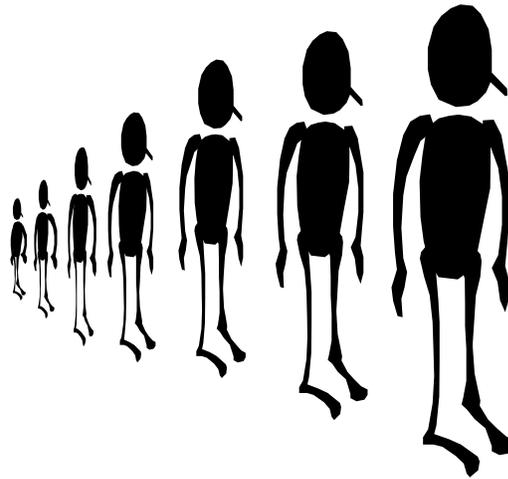


Some tricks you can use for avoiding or defusing heated arguments include:

- When telling bad news, use "I" or "we" as if you "own it". When telling good news, say "You" as if the members own it.
- Restate a person's disagreement and ask if you understand it correctly. Be sure that he/she feels you are taking the disagreement seriously.
- Focus on the issue, not the person. For example, if a person attacks an idea for no apparent reason, ask them to outline an alternative plan.
- Don't take it personally - Challenging behaviour is often displayed to everyone, not just you. Don't take it personally, don't take it home with you, and don't lose sleep over it. If you have a session dealing with challenging behaviour, then take a deep breath to get oxygen into your brain. The brain uses more oxygen than any other organ, and if it hasn't got the oxygen it kind of seizes up and it doesn't work very well. So, take a deep breath or two so you can keep thinking clearly and keep your cool.
- Sometimes, things can get a bit tense and emotional, and it's a good idea to take a break. But, if we do this at the first hint of a problem; if we change the subject at the first sign of a conflict; or if we get all coy with our own emotions; we'll never achieve crystal clear communication, good relationships, or solve problems or all the other things that good communication helps us do.
- Be specific and honest when providing feedback. If we want to give someone a compliment or praise them for some work they've done, it's actually much more powerful to be specific. For example, you might say to a member: "I'm so glad you're in the team. The way you handle the canteen volunteers is just fantastic, you always get it right first time with them and I really appreciate it."
- Avoid railroading. Railroading is moving the conversation along at a really fast pace and not giving a person the chance to say what they're really thinking. If we want to say something it's far better to say it directly and clearly and courteously. We don't need to resort to threats and all the power stuff.

## How to attract new members and retain them!

- Ask people to join the P&C. Research shows that “while some people are more likely to volunteer than others, almost everyone can be recruited as a volunteer. About 80% of those directly asked to volunteer said ‘yes.’ This response rate is fairly consistent across all economic, geographic, racial, gender, and age categories.”
- The most productive route for volunteer recruitment is one-to-one, face-to-face personal request about a specific volunteer job. This technique is even more effective if the person doing the asking is themselves a volunteer (which demonstrates credibility) or is personally known to the person being asked.”
- Keep a list of these people, their contact numbers and the activities they are happy to help out with for future events, if they are not happy to sign up as P&C members.
- Have a “bring-a-friend-night”; where each member of your P&C brings along a friend to uncover what happens in your meetings.
- Greet new members personally and introduce them (and all of your members present) before the meeting begins. Create a welcome pack for potential new members outlining what your P&C do, and how they do it. It should also contain a copy of the constitution, a list of contact names of the Executive Committee members etc
- Establish a buddy or mentor system for new members to ensure that after the meeting the connection is still established in order to encourage them to come back. “There seems to be a 60-day ‘Window of Opportunity’ during which the organization can help shape the attitudes of the new volunteer. If the volunteer does not feel as though they ‘belong’ by the end of these 60 days, the volunteer will begin to disappear.”
- Create a car pool roster to enhance relationships between members.
- Advertise what happens in your P&C meetings in the newsletter or on a notice board. No one ever joins in with something that is unknown or perceived to be a secret!
- Keep your meetings short and to the point by starting and finishing on time. Conduct another meeting if you can’t get it all done in the one go – people are more likely to attend multiple meetings than those which drag on forever. You could also create a Sub committee to do a lot of the decision making and discussion processes. Hold a Special General Meeting to discuss the fair, open day, sports carnival and other events which take a lot of time establishing who will run the sausage sizzle, order and pick up the sausages, etc.
- Consider changing the timing of your meetings to encourage more people to come by meeting their babysitting/child minding, travel and working constraints. Hence change the day, time, or even venue for meetings to suit the needs of your current and potential members.



- Delegate responsibilities when you go away or get too busy. Trust your P&C team to be able to handle the responsibility you give them. Sure they may not do it as well as you can, but your trust and respect will enhance their self confidence and motivate them to continue being an active member of the P&C.
- Establish set of Group Rules with your P&C at one of the first meetings of the year that covers behaviour, listening and speaking practices, length of meetings and other formalities. Draw new members attention to these and at future meetings encourage any suggestions for development of your group rules. Evaluate your Group Rules throughout the year to ensure they continue to meet and satisfy the group's needs and activities.
- Maintain contact with all members and help them stay linked to the P&C by emailing or calling them if they miss a meeting.
- Reward and recognise members appropriately for a job well done. Ensure that your recognition is timely, personal and honest. Recognition does not have to be a trip for 4 to Fiji! Quite often the simplest form is the most effective - praise, cards designed by the children, certificates, mention in the newsletter or at a committee meeting.



## Rules of Debate and Standing Orders for use at other meetings. (State Council, P&C Associations, School Organisations, District Councils and other meetings)

### Definition of Members:

1. Reference to "member" shall mean a person who qualifies under the WACSSO Constitution and Rules relating to a State Council, a School Organisation or a District Council to be a member or delegate or person entitled to attend and vote at a duly constituted meeting.

### 1.0 ORDER OF BUSINESS:

The order of business of any meeting other than a special meeting (called for a specific purpose) shall be as follows:

- Open - quorum present? - welcome
- Apologies
- Minutes of previous meeting(s)
- Confirmation
- Business arising
- Correspondence
- Reports (including financial and other committees)
- Membership
- Admissions/resignations
- Election results
- Motions on Notice
- General Business (listed and unlisted)
- Next meeting
- Date, venue, time
- Closure

### 2.0 CORRESPONDENCE:

- 2.1 In dealing with the correspondence, every letter shall be taken without motion as formally "received", unless a motion to the contrary is submitted, and every letter may be dealt with immediately after the contents have been read to the meeting.

### 3.0 DISCUSSION:

- 3.1 No discussion shall take place except on a motion or amendment moved and seconded, and put in writing if so required by the Chairperson.

### 4.0 METHOD OF ADDRESS:

- 4.1 At all times throughout a meeting a member shall address the meeting through the Chairperson and shall stand when doing so unless the Chairperson allows the member to remain seated.

### 5.0 MOTIONS NOT SECONDED:

- 5.1 Motions not seconded shall lapse and will not be debated.

6.0 DEBATING THE MOTION:

- 6.1 The mover and/or seconder of a motion may speak to the motion when initially moving/seconding it or reserve the right to speak later in the debate.
- 6.2 After the motion has been moved and seconded the Chairperson shall:
- if neither the mover nor seconder has spoken or only one of them has spoken to the motion, call for anyone wishing to speak to the motion.
  - if both the mover and seconder have spoken, call for anyone wishing to speak against the motion.
- 6.3 No more than two speakers, including the mover and the seconder, shall speak successively for or against a motion.
- 6.4 No person may speak more than once to any question except the mover in exercising the right of reply, which will close debate.
- 6.5 The following time limits shall apply:
- Movers of motions shall speak for no more than (4) minutes
  - Speakers for or against the motion (2) minutes
  - Mover's right of reply (2) minutes.
- No member shall speak on any matter for more than four minutes unless granted an extension of time by the meeting.
- 6.6 Debate is closed and the Chairperson shall put the motion when:
- two speakers have spoken successively for or against the motion and there is no opposing speaker
  - the mover has exercised the right of reply.

7.0 AMENDMENTS:

- 7.1 An amendment shall not directly negate the intention of the original motion.
- 7.2 When an amendment is before the meeting, discussion shall be confined to the matter addressed by that amendment.
- 7.3 A further amendment shall not be submitted until the current amendment is disposed of, but any speaker to an amendment may give notice of intention to propose (foreshadow) another amendment.
- 7.4 Any member giving notice of further amendment shall not then speak to their proposed amendment until that amendment is before the meeting.
- 7.5 When an amendment is carried it is incorporated into the motion and the motion as amended becomes the motion before the meeting (or 'substantive motion').
- 7.6 Once the first amendment has been dealt with, further amendments to the motion, if any, may then be moved and dealt with one at a time in the order in which notices thereof have been given.
- 7.7 If an amendment is lost and no prior notice of a further amendment has been given the debate on the substantive motion shall resume.
- 7.8 An amendment shall not relate to any part of an original motion which has already been agreed upon as forming part of the amended motion.
- 7.9 Once all amendments have been dealt with further amendments to the motion, if any, may be moved and dealt with at will to the procedure set out in 7.1 to 7.7.
- 7.10 No member shall propose more than one amendment upon a motion.
- 7.11 The mover and seconder of the original motion may speak to an amendment to their motion, but must restrict their speech to the subject matter of the amendment. The mover's speech on the amendment does not constitute the mover's right of reply.

## 8.0 RIGHT OF REPLY:

- 8.1 The mover of the motion shall have the right of reply immediately prior to the vote on the motion (whether or not the motion has been amended) being taken. The reply shall be limited to the answering of matters raised in opposition to the motion and shall not introduce any new arguments.
- 8.2 The mover of an amendment shall not have the right of reply.

## 9.0 CLOSURE OF THE DEBATE:

- 9.1 The debate shall be closed:
- when as provided in 6.3 there have been two successive speakers either in favour of or against the motion and there is no opposing speaker; or
  - if in the opinion of the Chairperson the debate has apparently covered all the ground and is becoming unduly extended or repetitious; or
  - when a motion "that the motion be put" is carried by the meeting.
- 9.2 The motion "that the motion be put" may be moved any number of times during a debate and may be submitted by any member who has not taken part in the debate. No seconder is required for this motion. This motion ('that the motion be put') shall be put to the vote immediately without debate.

If lost, the debate shall continue as if such motion had not been moved.

If carried, then the motion (or amendment) immediately under discussion shall be put to the meeting. If this is a substantive motion the mover can exercise right of reply. There is no right of reply for the mover of an amendment.

## 10.0 ADJOURNMENT OF THE DEBATE:

- 10.1 A motion for the adjournment of a debate may be moved at any time and shall be put to the meeting without discussion.
- 10.2 Adjournment motions may be:
- 'that the item be referred to person/committee', i.e. debate is suspended until such time as that person/committee puts the item back on the agenda.
  - 'that debate be adjourned to time/place', i.e. debate is adjourned to the stated time or place.
- 10.3 If carried, the debate shall be adjourned accordingly. If not carried the debate shall continue.

## 11.0 DISSENT FROM THE CHAIR:

Offers members the opportunity to disagree with the Chairperson's ruling.

- 11.1 A motion of dissent from the Chairperson's ruling shall only be accepted by the Chair if moved and seconded.
- 11.2 On receiving a motion of dissent, the Chairperson shall forthwith leave the Chair and the debate on the original question then before the Chair shall be suspended.
- 11.3 A Vice-President shall take the Chair.
- 11.4 Only the member challenging the ruling and the Chairperson may speak on a motion of dissent. The member challenging the Chairperson's ruling states the reason(s) for doing so. The Chairperson then responds.
- 11.5 The motion of dissent shall then be put in the following manner "That the Chairperson's ruling be upheld" after which the original question shall proceed.
- 11.6 After voting, whether the Chairperson's ruling is upheld or not, the Chairperson returns to the chair and the original question shall proceed. (A motion of dissent is not a motion of no confidence.)

12.0 POINT OF ORDER:

- 12.1 When any member is speaking no other member shall interrupt except to raise a point of order.
- 12.2 The member raising a point of order shall state the point of order clearly and distinctly and then be seated. If a member is speaking such member shall be seated until the point of order is decided. The Chairperson shall rule upon the point raised and not allow a discussion.
- 12.3 An explanation or clarification is not a point of order but may be allowed when the member speaking has finished, but only to the extent of actual misunderstandings or misstatement, and the member making such explanation shall be prohibited from debating the merit of any proposal.

13.0 VOTING:

- 13.1 Financial members (including the person presiding at the meeting) and ex officio members present at a meeting and entitled to remain thereat shall be entitled to exercise a deliberative vote on any proposition before or election held at the meeting. No other person shall be entitled to vote at any meeting of the Association.
- 13.2 On conclusion of debate the matter shall be put to the vote.
- 13.3 In the event of a tied vote on any proposition/motion before a meeting then the proposition is lost.
- 13.4 No member shall enter or leave a meeting while a vote is being taken.

14.0 MOVER AND SECONDER:

- 14.1 Either the mover or seconder of a motion may vote against it, provided that notification of such intention is given to the meeting.

15.0 VALIDITY OF VOTE:

- 15.1 No objection shall be made to the validity of any vote except at the meeting at which the same shall be tendered and every vote not disallowed at such meeting shall be deemed valid.

16.0 RECOMMITTAL:

- 16.1 A matter may only be recommitted provided that two-thirds of the members present and entitled to vote, vote in favour of such recommitment.

17.0 RESCISSION:

- 17.1 A resolution passed at any meeting may be rescinded
- at the same meeting if two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote, vote in favour of such rescission; or
  - at a subsequent meeting if notice of intended rescission is given either at the original meeting or in the notice convening the subsequent meeting.

18.0 BREACH OF STANDING ORDERS:

- 18.1 A member refusing to retract any offensive expression having been first directed to do so by the Chairperson, shall be debarred from taking part in any discussion until such retraction is duly made.

19.0 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS:

- 19.0 Any or all the Rules of Debate and Standing Orders, with the exception of Rules 17 and 18, may be suspended at any time if two-thirds of those present and entitled to vote at a meeting are in favour and when the matter so introduced has been dealt with, the ordinary course of business shall be resumed.

Appendix II Sample Terms of Reference

(SCHOOL Name)  
PARENTS & CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION INC  
(Name of Sub-committee) COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.0 NAME:

- 1.1 The Committee shall be called the (School Name) Parents & Citizens' Association Inc. (name of Sub-committee) Committee.

2.0 COMPOSITION:

- 2.1 (a) Not more than 5 members one of whom shall be a member of the P&C Executive Committee.  
(b) The President of the P&C shall be ex officio a member.
- 2.2 The members shall be elected each year at the Annual General Meeting of the P&C Association by and from the financial and ex officio members of the P&C. In the event of a position becoming vacant on the committee an election may be held at a general meeting of the P&C to fill the vacancy.
- 2.3 The Committee to agree on a Convener/Treasurer and a Secretary.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES:

Subject to direction of the P&C Association the responsibilities of the Committee shall be:

- 3.1 The financial management of the (name of sub-committee) committee.
- 3.2 Establishing nutritional guidelines which are consistent with the Healthy Food and Drink Policy mandated by the Department of Education.
- 3.3 Acquiring all suitable stock and goods for business use, and ensuring all stock and goods are stored in suitable containers within the business.
- 3.4 Acquiring and maintaining suitable equipment provided that the annual expenditure shall not exceed the amount authorised by the P&C Association, which is \$XXXXX. Establishing a reserve account for the purpose of equipment replacement.
- 3.5 Operating a bank account at a level sufficient for the trading capital requirements of the business.
- 3.6 Recruiting volunteers as shall be considered necessary.
- 3.7 Providing reports to all general meetings of the P&C Association and when required to the Executive Committee.
- 3.8 Establishing credit accounts with suppliers as required for the operation of the business, ensuring all deliveries take place in school hours.
- 3.9 Ensuring that Grievance Settlement/Dispute Resolution Procedures adopted by the P&C Association are followed.

4.0 DUTIES OF CONVENOR:

- 4.1 Convenor when present, shall preside at all meetings of the Committee. In the event the convenor is absent, the meeting shall elect a chairperson for the occasion.
- 4.2 The convenor shall ensure that a written report of the activities of the committee is presented to all general meetings of the P&C Association (or executive committee) and at such times as directed by the general meeting of the P&C association. The report to include a written financial report consisting of a statement of receipts and expenditure, up-to-date bank reconciliation statement and a copy of relevant bank statement/s and any recommendations requiring the attention of the P&C.

5.0 DUTIES OF SECRETARY:

5.1 The Secretary shall have custody of the documents of the Committee and shall keep a full and correct record of its meetings. These documents and records shall be made available to the P&C Association.

6.0 MEETINGS:

6.1 Meetings of the Committee shall be held at a time decided by the committee. Notice of the meeting should be at such times and places as determined by the committee provided that not less than forty-eight (48) hours' notice is given.

7.0 QUORUM:

7.1 A quorum shall comprise 50% + 1 (one) of the current membership of the Committee.

8.0 VOTING:

8.1 All members and ex officio members shall be entitled to one vote on any resolution or election at a meeting at which they are entitled to be present.

8.2 Voting shall be by show of hands by those present.

8.3 No proxy voting is acceptable.

9.0 ALTERATIONS TO RULES:

9.1 All proposed amendments to these rules must be approved by the general meeting of the P&C Association.

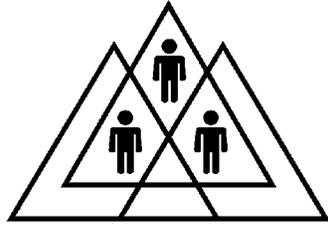
NOTES:

Where the committee is established during the year the members are elected at a general meeting of the P&C. All members of any committee of the P&C must be financial members of the P&C.

THE COMMITTEE IS AT ALL TIMES RESPONSIBLE TO  
THE GENERAL MEETING OF THE P&C ASSOCIATION

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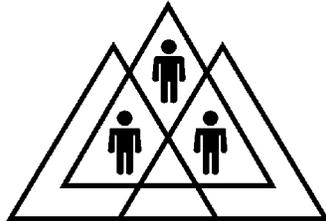
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**WACSSO**

Supporting parents, supporting public schools

## Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc

PO Box 6295  
EAST PERTH WA 6892

Phone: [08] 9264 4000 Fax: [08] 9264 4948

E-mail: [info@wacssso.wa.edu.au](mailto:info@wacssso.wa.edu.au)

Website: [www.wacssso.wa.edu.au](http://www.wacssso.wa.edu.au)