



# P&C Guide



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## Introduction

Welcome to your local P&C Association.

Joining the P&C is a great way to get involved in your school community, keep up-to-date with what's happening at the school, contribute to your child's education and make new friends.

The P&C Association is a group of volunteers working together to improve the facilities and opportunities available at the school. By participating in the P&C, you are supporting the school community. In return, you may be supported by the school community to learn new skills and take on new responsibilities. Participating in the P&C gives you an opportunity to share in the school's decision-making processes and shape the school's future. Your contribution to the P&C can be as large or small as you can manage. Your ongoing support is invaluable.

The P&C Guide is designed to support P&C Associations with the management and operation of the Association. The Guide describes the roles of P&C members and officers, the legal framework that a P&C operates within and the activities a P&C can undertake. It also provides advice on keeping records, running meetings and ensuring that the P&C operates in a way that is professional, friendly and supportive. The Guide is intended to provide general information for P&Cs. More detail is included in the Constitution and the Accounting Manual. Detailed support and advice is always available by phone or email from P&Cs Qld State Office.

You will notice references and links to [the info place](#) throughout the P&C Guide. [The info place](#) is P&Cs Qld's online resource hub built for its members where you will find an abundance of information, fact sheets, links and templates to utilise. You will be asked to register when you first access [the info place](#).

The P&C Guide is intended to be an online resource that will be updated regularly. We recommend returning to this document online to access the latest version (see footer for version number).

## What is a P&C Association?

The objectives of a P&C Association are focused on the school for which it is formed. P&Cs exist to promote the school's interests, facilitate the school's development and contribute to the school's improvement.

A Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) is a group of people who take a formal role in supporting a school by enabling and providing:

- close cooperation between parents, community, staff and students
- feedback on school policies and activities
- resources to enhance student learning and improve the school environment (often by raising funds)
- opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's education and the broader school community.

Each P&C operates under a Constitution which is approved and adopted by its members.

The Education (General Provisions) Act 2006 (the Act) and the Education (General Provisions) Regulation 2017 (the Regulation) determine the formation, objectives and functions of P&Cs.

The Act declares a P&C to be a statutory body under the Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangement Act 1982 (QLD) (SBFA Act). As a statutory body under the Act, P&C Associations cannot be incorporated. Rather, a P&C is registered as an 'Other Unincorporated Entity' on the Australian Business Register (ABR).

P&Cs are sanctioned under the Collections Act 1966 (Collections Act). This means that P&Cs are deemed to be charities under the Collections Act and may conduct fundraising. It also means that all P&C fundraising must comply with the Collections Act.

[Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006](#)

[Education \(General Provisions\) Regulation 2017](#)

[Statutory Bodies Financial Arrangement Act 1982 \(QLD\)](#)

[Collections Act 1966](#)

[Department of Education Parents and Citizens' Associations Procedure](#)

## Why join a P&C?

P&C membership is open to any adult who wants to contribute to the school, including the parents of children attending the school, the school's teachers and staff, and interested people in the wider community.

Joining the P&C is a way of keeping informed about school activities and participating in school events. P&C membership does not bring with it any obligation to attend meetings or participate in activities but is essential if you want to contribute to decision making: only members are allowed to vote at meetings.

Vibrant P&C Associations with members who actively contribute can create a strong sense of community and generate positive outcomes for the school. Participating in the P&C contributes both to the wider school community and to the education of your child. Research shows that parents who are engaged in their child's education make a significant contribution to the child's success at school.

## How is a P&C structured and managed?

Each P&C must comply with relevant Acts, Regulations, policies and procedures. The Executive Officers are responsible for ensuring that the P&C meets its responsibilities by adhering to the Parents & Citizens' Association Constitution (Constitution) and the Accounting Manual for Parents and Citizens Associations (Accounting Manual), both described below.

### The Constitution

The rules that govern the P&C are set out in the Model Constitution provided by the Department of Education, which the Association adopts and the Principal approves. Each P&C adopts its local Constitution from the Model version when it first forms, and then adopts changes when needed (such as when the Department of Education makes changes to the Model Constitution). Changes to the Constitution can be made at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) or a Special Meeting called for that purpose.

P&Cs may only localise the parts of the Model Constitution that are highlighted in grey. The P&C must then adopt the Constitution through a motion passed by a majority of members present at the meeting where the Constitution is discussed. The Principal approves the Constitution (as the delegated officer of the Department's Chief Executive) and notifies the relevant Regional Office of the Department of Education (except Principals of Independent Public Schools who are not required to notify their Regional Office).

[Department of Education link to Model Constitution](#)

### The Accounting Manual

P&Cs must operate under financial requirements referred to in the Constitution, which are fully described in the Accounting Manual for Parents & Citizens' Associations (Accounting Manual) provided by the Department of Education. The Constitution states "the Association and its members are bound to comply with the latest version of the Accounting Manual" which is intended to give P&Cs the expertise and knowledge required to ensure appropriate accountability of the P&C's business and finances.

[Department of Education link to Accounting Manual](#)

## Who can give P&Cs advice?

**P&Cs Qld** provides advice and support to all affiliated P&Cs in Queensland. P&Cs Qld produced this Guide, provides information and training to P&Cs, and takes direct enquiries from P&Cs by phone and email. P&Cs Qld helps P&Cs to meet their responsibilities under legislation.

**The Department of Education** (the Department) provides the mandatory resources that all P&Cs are required to follow to ensure they meet legislative requirements, such as the Model Constitution and Accounting Manual.

**School Principals** are responsible for ensuring the school's P&C is operating effectively and complying with relevant legislation.

**Department of Education Regional Offices** (Regional Office) are responsible for providing the support that Principals need to ensure the effective operation of P&Cs. Regional Offices are also responsible for resolving any parental/community concerns that cannot be resolved at the school level. Regional Directors are responsible for deciding how they deliver these services.



## Membership of the P&C

Membership of the P&C is described in Section 12 of the Constitution.

Within each school community, those who are eligible to be members of the P&C are:

- parents of children attending the school
- staff members of the school
- adult citizens who are interested in the school's welfare.

The [school's Principal](#) is automatically a member of the P&C.

Membership of the P&C is free: members cannot be required to pay a membership fee.

Membership of the P&C is active for the current year only. At the P&C's Annual General Meeting (AGM), all memberships from the previous year lapse and new membership applications (as provided in Schedule 3 of the Constitution) may be submitted. This means that **all** P&C members are required to complete a new membership application each year (other than the school Principal and life members, whose memberships do not lapse). If the new member is unable to attend the AGM, they can submit their form to the Secretary before the AGM for acceptance without attending.

Anyone who wants to become a member following the AGM will need to submit a completed application to a general meeting **in person** for the application to be accepted. Memberships at a general meeting will be accepted as the last item on the agenda.

In signing the membership application form, the applicant agrees to comply with the Code of Conduct in Schedule 2 of the Constitution. This Code of Conduct clarifies the expected behaviours and standards of all members.

The P&C may decide to award an honorary life membership to a person who is (or was) a member who gave long and commendable service to the P&C. The process for proposing and deciding on honorary life memberships is explained in Clause 12.6 of the Constitution.

[Click here for the info place to access templates of membership application forms and code of conduct](#)

## School Principal

The School Principal is the school's on-site representative of the Minister of Education. As the Minister's representative, the Principal is automatically a member of the P&C and is not required to complete the membership form.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring the P&C fulfils its legislative responsibilities.

The Principal is the school's site manager and is responsible for the overall order and management of the school. It is standard protocol for the P&C's Executive to ensure the Principal is aware of any special guests or speakers who may be attending a P&C meeting or visiting the school on P&C business.

The Principal holds the same rights and responsibilities as other P&C members. The Principal is eligible to vote, move and second motions, and speak for or against motions at meetings. The Principal is included in the quorum. Like any other member, the Principal is obliged to take direction from the Chair and should speak through the Chair during discussions. The Principal may not, however, hold a position as an officer of the P&C nor be a signatory to the P&C's bank account.

Under the Department's policy, the Principal is required to provide the P&C with monthly reports about school activities and school financial statements.

One of the constituted functions of the P&C is to provide advice and recommendations to the Principal if asked. The Principal has a responsibility to consult with the P&C on matters to do with the operation and management of the school.

## Officers of the P&C

The roles and responsibilities of P&C officers are described in Section 13 of the Constitution.

All officers must firstly be members of the P&C before they can be nominated.

Under the Constitution, the P&C can elect the following officers from its members:

- President
- at least one Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- any additional officers the Association determines are necessary.

All officer positions are held in an honorary capacity. This means that there is no payment for officers of P&Cs.

School staff are eligible to be elected as officers, but the number of elected staff members must not be more than one-third of the members of the Executive Committee. In this context, the Constitution defines a staff member as “a staff member of the school who is not a parent of a child attending the school”. This means that a staff member who is also the parent of a child at the school is considered to be a parent first and foremost. Refer to Clause 14.1.2 of the Constitution for more detail.

While employees of the P&C are entitled to be members, no employee (including a contractor) is eligible to be elected as an officer as this would be seen as a financial conflict of interest. For example, a school parent who is paid as the P&C-operated tuckshop coordinator can be a member of the P&C but cannot be elected as an officer.

The P&C must have a minimum of two elected officers. If there are only two officers, they cannot be school staff and cannot be related to each other. The minimum of two officers ensures that the required signatories are in place to operate the P&C's bank account/s. If two signatories are not possible, the School will be required to temporarily manage the P&C's operations. For more information on temporary arrangements with the school, please contact P&Cs Qld.

### How officers are elected

P&C officers are elected annually at the AGM (or at a general meeting if a vacancy exists).

Any two members of the P&C can nominate another member for an officer position. This can either be done in person at a meeting or by completing and submitting a nomination form to the Secretary prior to the meeting.

Where there is only one nomination for any position, that nominee will be elected if they receive the votes of the majority of members present at the meeting. Where there are two or more nominations received, the nominee who receives the most votes of members will be elected.

[Click here for the info place to access template of executive nomination form](#)

## Executive Committee of the P&C

The roles and responsibilities of the Executive Committee are described in Section 14 of the Constitution.

All P&Cs require an Executive Committee comprised of the following officers:

- President
- at least one Vice-President
- Secretary
- Treasurer.

The [President](#) is the accountable officer and provides leadership and representation for the P&C and its Executive.

The [Vice-President](#) supports the President by chairing meetings in the President's absence and carrying out any duties delegated by the President.

The [Secretary](#) provides administrative support to the P&C, including recording the minutes of meetings, attending to all correspondence to and from the P&C, and keeping the P&C's documents safe and in good order.

The [Treasurer](#) has overall responsibility for the financial management of the P&C, including all subcommittee accounts.

The Executive Committee is responsible for ensuring the Association fulfils its legislative requirements and is accountable for the P&C's operation. Executive Committee members should be familiar with the role they are elected to undertake and understand their responsibilities.

The Constitution provides some limits to the membership of the Executive Committee. Neither the school's Principal nor staff employed by the P&C are permitted to hold a position on the Executive Committee.

While school staff members are restricted to being no more than one-third of the Executive, a waiver on this restriction may be obtained if it is believed that committee vacancies would otherwise remain vacant. This may be relevant in rural or remote schools or environmental education centres. See clause 14.1.3 of the Constitution for further information. If there are vacant positions on the Executive Committee, the remaining Executive members are required to fulfil the responsibilities of the vacant positions until they can be filled.

## The President Role

The President provides leadership to the P&C and is the P&C's accountable officer.

The President's role is to:

- represent the P&C (in meetings and at events)
- encourage participation and communication between the P&C, school and local community
- be a member of the School Council if one exists
- chair all meetings when present, according to the rules that govern meetings
- watch for and address any conflicts of interest
- be a signatory on P&C bank account/s
- sign any agreements for and on behalf of the P&C following approval by the members and, if necessary, approval by the Principal
- ensure that fellow Executive Officers and P&C members are aware of the requirements of the P&C's Constitution and Accounting Manual.

The President should:

- conduct meetings efficiently and fairly
- ensure that all members feel welcomed and valued
- be familiar with the Constitution and Accounting Manual
- be familiar with the P&C's rules, operations and meeting procedures
- supervise the Treasurer to ensure the Treasurer is meeting the P&C's financial responsibilities
- NOT hold the office of Treasurer
- develop plans and goals for the coming year, in collaboration with the Executive Committee and Principal
- plan and review the P&C budget and annual operation plan throughout the year.

At meetings, it is the President's responsibility to:

- ensure there is a quorum according to the P&C's Constitution (a quorum is the minimum number of members required to be present at a meeting; the quorum is defined in the Constitution)
- ensure that members are aware of the contents of the minutes of the previous meeting
- sign minutes and reports when endorsed at meetings
- announce business in accordance with the agenda
- give firm rulings and guidance to the meeting
- assist the discussion by guiding debate along relevant lines
- give all members an opportunity to speak while keeping speakers to the matters under discussion
- facilitate members to move and second motions and/or amendments prior to the vote and announce the result of votes
- determine points of order
- provide explanations to those in doubt about procedure or the subject matter under discussion
- introduce guest speakers and arrange for movers of votes of thanks
- ensure that priority items on the agenda are dealt with
- establish the next meeting date and time
- ensure all monetary expenditure is recorded in the minutes
- attend to or delegate responsibility for any business arising
- close the meeting.

More information about the President's role in chairing meetings is included in the [Chairing meetings](#) section of this Guide.

## The Vice-President Role

The Vice-President provides essential support to the President and to other Executive Officers if required. The Vice-President is responsible for [chairing meetings](#) in the President's absence and carrying out any duties delegated by the President.

The Vice-President should:

- consider this position as the President's understudy
- become familiar with P&C operations, rules and meeting procedures
- provide support and assistance to all the Executive Officers
- look on the role as a means of gaining an understanding and supporting all Executive roles.

## The Treasurer Role

The Treasurer has overall responsibility for the financial management of the P&C, including all subcommittee accounts. The Treasurer is the first in line on anything to do with the P&C's finances. This section provides an overview of the Treasurer's responsibilities. More detail is included in the Accounting Manual.

The Treasurer cannot also be the current President or Secretary of the P&C.

It is the Treasurer's responsibility to:

- ensure the P&C complies with the Accounting Manual
- ensure all money received is receipted and banked in the appropriate account as soon as practicable
- pay all accounts when payment has been authorised at a meeting
- issue receipts for all money received
- prepare an annual operation plan and budget in consultation with the P&C Executive
- be involved in the preparation of the school's budget and annual operation plan (where possible)
- maintain an accountable forms register (for receipt books, cheque books, deposit books etc.)
- maintain an asset register detailing all assets purchased by the P&C for P&C use
- monitor wages and ensure all accounts are current and reconciled
- prepare the annual financial statements of the P&C for the auditor, including any subcommittees
- ensure the P&C's annual insurance is paid and monitored throughout the year for one-off events and/or additional stock that may require supplementary cover
- ensure the annual financial statements are audited under the Education (General Provisions) Act 2006
- ensure accounting is open and transparent
- welcome questions.

When first appointed, the Treasurer should:

- obtain all records from the previous Treasurer
- change bank account signatories for the P&C's bank account/s as quickly as possible (including themselves as Treasurer and other new Executive Officers, while removing previous executives)
- identify who was the previous contact person for the ATO and notify the ATO of the new contact person (via AUSkey)
- meet with subcommittees to discuss how they keep their books (if subcommittees are delegated this responsibility)
- begin recording the transactions of the P&C as they occur during the month
- meet with the book keeper (if the P&C employs one) to establish a working relationship.

At meetings, it is the Treasurer's responsibility to:

- supply financial statements/reports
- ensure all subcommittees provide their financial statements/reports
- give the Secretary a copy of the signed statements following each meeting for insertion in the minutes.

The Treasurer should plan the year's income and expenditure in a budget. A budget helps to ensure that the P&C's income and expenses are well planned. When the budget is shared with the P&C membership, it can reduce unplanned expenses and off-the-cuff or ad hoc decision making. A good budget will include fundraising goals, operating expenses and expenditure priorities. It is a flexible guide that can be adapted or changed if necessary, rather than as a rigid framework for all income and expenses.

The Treasurer should ensure that the P&C has in place cash-handling procedures for the counting, reconciliation and banking of money as prescribed in the Accounting Manual. These procedures help to protect the P&C against funds mismanagement and provide an appropriate check against unfounded accusations directed at the Treasurer. The Accounting Manual requires that two people count cash together and sign to verify the total to be banked, that the total

money counted matches the total banked, and that the banking be done by someone independent of those who counted the money.

Some P&Cs employ a bookkeeper to manage the everyday accounting of the Association. While a bookkeeper may maintain the bookwork, the Treasurer is the elected officer responsible for the Association's finances. Employing a bookkeeper does not mean that the Treasurer's responsibilities are delegated. A paid bookkeeper can be a member of the P&C, but as an employee, cannot be a P&C officer.

At the end of the financial year (31 December), the Treasurer must provide to the appointed auditor, the P&C's books and accounts including its subcommittees. See Section 21 of the Constitution and the Accounting Manual for more detail of the annual audit and the auditor's requirements. The annual audit should be done as soon as possible following the end of the financial year, to ensure the audit is complete before the AGM that must be held before 31 March each year.

A [financial management for P&Cs training package](#) has been developed by the Department to help Treasurers understand their financial responsibilities. There are a series of modules to read through that contain examples, tools and checklists.



## The Secretary Role

The Secretary attends to the administrative tasks required to operate the P&C, particularly regarding meetings and correspondence.

It is the Secretary's responsibility to:

- prepare and provide notice to members of upcoming meetings within the required time frames
- prepare and distribute meeting agendas to members
- prepare, distribute and present minutes of meetings to members
- act upon any directions given at meetings
- maintain a register of all incoming/outgoing correspondence and distribute correspondence promptly when required
- maintain a register of members, including life members
- maintain a Blue Card register for non-parent members, paid employees and Executive Officers when the P&C operates an OSHC service (in which case the parent exemption does not apply) - more information about Blue Cards is available at [www.bluecard.qld.gov.au](http://www.bluecard.qld.gov.au) and the [Outside School Hours Care](#) section of this Guide
- maintain a volunteer register at every site and activity where volunteers work on behalf of the P&C (see the [Risk management](#) section of this Guide for more information)
- ensure a copy of the P&C's Constitution is accessible and available to members
- organise, record and maintain P&C documents, ensuring that all necessary records are retained/archived appropriately (see the [Record retention and handover](#) section of this Guide for more information)

When first appointed, the Secretary should:

- meet with the outgoing Secretary
- take over management of the records retained by the P&C
- establish the register of current members (noting that all previous membership lapsed at the AGM)
- coordinate any transition of P&C email addresses to ensure that email is received by the appropriate officers.

## The Secretary's role in P&C meetings

Detailed information about how to conduct and manage meetings is included in the [P&C meetings](#) section of this Guide. This section contains some general tips to introduce secretaries to their role.

During a P&C meeting, the Secretary should:

- record the meeting minutes, following the framework of the agenda as outlined in the Constitution
- record details accurately (but succinctly); if the meeting is moving too fast for accurate recording, ask the speakers to slow down
- keep an attendance book, listing the full names of those who attend and those who provide an apology
- record motions clearly. A motion should:
  - commence with "That ..."
  - be quite specific
  - be unambiguous
  - contain only one sentence.
- make sure that every motion is moved by one member and seconded by another member. Record the names of the mover and seconder in the minutes. Names of members participating in the discussion do not need to be recorded
- read every motion back to the meeting to ensure the record is accurate and the meaning is as intended
- keep a motions register so that all motions are recorded in one convenient place and are easy to locate if needed; the motions register should identify the person who is to follow up any action
- ensure all monetary expenditure is recorded in the minutes.

## The Secretary's role in maintaining correspondence

The Secretary's role includes managing the P&C's incoming and outgoing correspondence, including correspondence sent by post and by email.

The Secretary should make all correspondence accessible to members and highlight issues of importance. Having the correspondence available in a folder at each P&C meeting is one way to do this. For each P&C meeting, the Secretary should prepare a summary list of incoming and outgoing correspondence, which should be included in the minutes of that meeting.

When the P&C agrees to send correspondence (either a letter or email), the Secretary should clearly note in the minutes who is responsible for preparing the correspondence on the P&C's behalf. In most cases, the Secretary will prepare a draft for checking and signing by the President. All P&C correspondence should be sent on P&C letterhead or by email with a signature that includes the name of the sender and the contact details for the P&C.

### *Tips for handling correspondence*

- Do not allow correspondence to go unanswered or unopened.
- Keep a register of all incoming and outgoing correspondence (both post and email) and provide a correspondence summary to the P&C meeting. Highlight items that need attention and forward incoming correspondence to the appropriate member or subcommittee.
- At the P&C meeting, it is not necessary to read correspondence out in full; simply report on the correspondence or read relevant paragraphs that require attention.
- Put fundraising information in a display folder that can be passed around during the meeting.
- Bring newsletters to members' attention, then circulate them or put them in a central location where they can be read.
- If the P&C receives any letters or emails that are defamatory or vindictive, do not read them out at a meeting or distribute them for members to read. There may be issues within the correspondence that need to be addressed, and these may need to be discussed at the meeting. For more information about handling defamatory correspondence, see the [Defamation](#) section of this guide.
- Correspondence should be filed in a way that allows for easy retrieval, either in a folder or an electronic file.

## Subcommittees of the P&C

The rules governing P&C subcommittees are discussed in Section 15 of the Constitution.

The P&C may choose to establish subcommittees for purposes it considers are appropriate to its objectives and functions.

Examples include:

- tuckshop
- fete/fundraising
- uniform shop
- school building fund
- outside school hours care.

A subcommittee is a formal working group of the P&C, not an autonomous body. Its sole purpose is to complete specific work of the P&C. All P&C subcommittees are answerable to the P&C members. They operate under the supervision of the P&C and can only act within the scope of the authority given to them by the Association. Subcommittee members must follow the P&C's Constitution and the Accounting Manual.

The only occasion a subcommittee is specifically required is when the P&C operates a school building fund. A school building fund is a public fund with deductible gift recipient status endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO). Apart from paying reasonable expenses in managing the fund, donations are to be used solely for the acquisition, construction or maintenance of a school building. Unlike other subcommittees, the majority of its members must be elected P&C officers. For more information on school building funds, see Section 7 of the Constitution and the [ATO website page for School Building Funds](#).

## Operating guidelines for subcommittees

It is best practice for P&Cs to develop operating guidelines for its subcommittees. These operating guidelines should clearly outline the processes and procedures to be used by the subcommittee and describe how the committee will interact with the P&C. The operating guidelines must be approved by the P&C before they are enacted and be reviewed annually at the AGM.

The operating guidelines should include (but are not limited to):

- processes and procedures
- maximum number of members and number of quorum for meetings
- reporting expectations and processes
- annual operation plan
- budget (including expected income, planned expenditure, working capital and special purpose funds) process for the return of surplus funds.

[Click here for the info place to access Subcommittee Operating Guidelines template](#)

## Subcommittee tenure

A subcommittee's tenure is at the discretion of the P&C. Some subcommittees will continue from year to year, while others will be short term. The P&C must confirm its continuing subcommittees at the AGM. It is best to consider subcommittees ahead of the AGM to determine whether they are still needed.

As an alternative, a working group of the P&C is less formal than a subcommittee, and has no financial responsibility. A working group of P&C members is usually formed to complete a specific task over a short timeframe. Any working groups should report regularly to the P&C meetings. They must follow the Constitution and the direction of the P&C.

## Membership of a subcommittee

Membership of the subcommittee is determined by the P&C at the time the subcommittee is established, and is reviewed at each AGM.

A minimum of three members is required to form a subcommittee. Only current members of the P&C are eligible to hold positions on subcommittees.

The P&C appoints the Chair and a Secretary for each subcommittee. If the subcommittee has any financial responsibility, the P&C also appoints a Treasurer. It is recommended the subcommittee meet before the AGM to decide then bring to the AGM its recommendations for these positions. Officers of the P&C are eligible to also hold officer positions on subcommittees.

## Subcommittee funds

When a subcommittee operates a bank account, it is bound by the same accounting requirements as the P&C and must comply with the Accounting Manual.

Any funds raised by a subcommittee are the P&C's funds and under the P&C's control. All income of the subcommittee in excess of its approved operating fund must be transferred to the primary bank account of the P&C as and when the P&C determines.

Subcommittees may identify specific projects and target funding for those projects. Funds raised by a subcommittee can be designated to a particular purpose by resolution of the P&C. If this project is long term, it is important for the P&C Executive to provide information about existing funding decisions to any incoming executive officers at the AGM.

Only subcommittee executive officers are authorised to operate subcommittee bank accounts. As with all P&C bank accounts, subcommittee accounts must have a minimum of two signatories. The P&C's standard processes for handling cash will apply to the subcommittee.

At each P&C meeting, the subcommittee Treasurer must present a complete set of monthly financial documents (including original bank statements). The subcommittee Treasurer should also present any outstanding invoices for ratification.

The Treasurer of the P&C is responsible for ensuring that the subcommittee's financial reports are accurate and the bank reconciliation report matches the original bank statement.

The number of bank accounts held by subcommittees should be kept to a minimum. This can be achieved by separate accounting of each activity in the P&C's cashbook (through one bank account) except for an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) subcommittee (where a separate account is recommended) and a Building Fund (where a separate account is required).

Subcommittees that manage accounts must bank with the same financial institution as the P&C.

Subcommittees have the same financial year as the P&C and must be audited as part of the P&C's annual financial audit. The subcommittee Treasurer must forward the relevant financial records to the P&C Treasurer in ample time to be included in the P&C audit. A consolidated report is then prepared by the auditor on the financial position of the P&C as a whole.

## Subcommittee meetings and reporting

Subcommittee meetings do not have to be held every month (although this is often desirable). For example, bi-monthly meetings of the swim club may be adequate, or a fundraising subcommittee may meet on an ad-hoc basis. The subcommittee's operating guidelines should note the number of meetings required to be held each year.

Even if the subcommittee has not met since the last P&C meeting, it is still required to report to the P&C at every general meeting, even if the report simply states that there was no activity or meeting for the month. If the subcommittee operates a bank account it must provide the P&C Treasurer with the financial information required for the Treasurer's report at every general meeting.

If a subcommittee is working on an issue that needs a decision before the next general meeting of the P&C, the subcommittee chair may ask the P&C Executive to hold an [executive meeting](#) to decide on the recommendation. Executives of the P&C can act only on matters of urgency. The Executive must minute the decision and have those minutes endorsed at the next general meeting of the P&C.



## P&C meetings

P&C meetings are discussed in Section 18 of the Constitution.

All organisations, associations and corporations conduct meetings, and P&Cs are no exception. P&C Associations use regular meetings to exchange information, solve problems, make decisions, share concerns and explain issues. P&C meetings are open to all members and visitors. Only current members of the P&C can vote on decisions.

There are two critical roles at any meeting — the Chair (President) and the Secretary. The Chair manages the meeting. The Secretary prepares the agenda, takes the minutes, makes a note of motions and records the actions required from motions.

The P&C's Constitution will define the quorum for each meeting. A quorum is the minimum number of members required to be present for the meeting to go ahead. If a quorum is not present, the meeting must adjourn and the officers should set another meeting date. If a quorum lapses during a meeting, the meeting must close, with any unfinished business placed on the agenda for the next meeting and any urgent matters considered by the Executive Committee. The Constitution will define the quorum for each type of meeting.

## Annual General Meetings

AGMs are described in Clause 18.3 of the Constitution.

An AGM must be held no later than 3 months after the end of the P&C's financial year. All P&Cs operate a January to December financial year, so the AGM must be held by the end of March. The P&C Secretary must provide at least 14 days' notice of when and where the AGM is to be held.

The date for the AGM is usually determined at the last general meeting of the financial year.

The AGM agenda is described in clause 18.3.9 of the Constitution, and the order must be strictly followed. For instance, annual audited financial reports must be tabled before the election of officers can take place. If there is no audit tabled at the stage required on the agenda, the meeting will need to be adjourned until a later date when the audit is available. See [Meeting agendas](#) section of this Guide for more information.

## General meetings

General meetings of the P&C are described in Clause 18.4 of the Constitution.

P&Cs are required to conduct a minimum of three general meetings each semester. Most P&Cs hold a meeting every month, on the same day of the month and in the same location (e.g. the P&C may meet on the third Tuesday each month at 7.00pm in the school library).

The dates, time and location of general meetings are included in the AGM general business section and approved for the upcoming year. Any variation to approved meeting dates/venues (perhaps due to school holidays or public holidays) must be advised to the school community at least seven days prior to the changed arrangement.

See [Meeting agendas](#) section of this Guide for more information.

## Special meetings

Special meetings of the P&C are described in Clause 18.5 of the Constitution.

Special meetings are held for a specific purpose. The P&C Secretary must give seven days' notice of any special meeting – to each P&C member and by notice in the school newsletter and/or local newspaper. The notice must state the date, time, place and items to be discussed. Only the items listed in the notice of meeting can be discussed at the special meeting.

A special meeting may be convened for the following reasons:

- tabling actions of the Executive Committee in dealing with matters of urgency
- proposed amendments to the Constitution
- proposed removal of a member of the P&C
- proposed removal of an officer of the P&C
- proposed dissolution of the P&C
- business determined by a resolution of the P&C members at a general meeting to be dealt with at a special meeting
- business determined by the officers of the P&C to be dealt with at a special meeting
- business determined by written request to the Secretary of a majority of P&C members to be dealt with at a special meeting.

A resolution passed at a special meeting is not invalid because a member of the P&C did not receive notice of the meeting.

See [Meeting agendas](#) section of this Guide for more information.

## Executive Committee meetings

Executive Committee meetings of the P&C are described in Clause 14.3 of the Constitution.

Executive Committee meetings are held when a **matter of urgency** needs to be addressed before the next general meeting.

Executive Committee meetings must be held at a time and place that suits the majority of the Executive Officers. An alternative to a face-to-face meeting is to conduct the meeting by email, using “reply all” for each message and making the email trail the record of the meeting.

All officers of the Executive Committee who are present at the meeting (or part of the group email) have an equal vote at Executive Committee meetings. Decisions are made by a majority vote.

Full details of any decisions made and actions taken must be tabled at the next scheduled general meeting of the P&C or at a special meeting called for that purpose.

Executive Officers may choose to meet for an informal executive meeting between general meetings to plan the general meeting and discuss any upcoming issues. They can choose to include the Principal and/or other members in these meetings.

## Planning and Conducting Meetings

Successful meetings are well planned and efficiently managed to create an effective forum where members feel valued and the work of the P&C is accomplished.

### Voting at meetings

Only people who are listed as current members in the P&C's membership register are entitled to vote.

Regardless of the type of meeting, decisions are made by voting on motions, with the result decided by the majority of votes of the members physically present at the meeting.

Voting by proxy is not permitted under the Constitution.

### Minutes of meetings

The minutes (record) of the meeting should be complete but concise. Minutes record the facts of the meeting, not the Secretary's interpretation or opinion. All resolutions of the meeting must be recorded in the minutes.

Meeting minutes are initially written in draft form, to be endorsed as a true and correct record at a following meeting. Once endorsed, they may be distributed publicly. The endorsed minutes of P&C meetings are public documents, accessible to any member of the school community on request.

Minutes should be recorded for all P&C meetings. Minutes should be recorded in enough detail to enable future committees to understand what was discussed, what was agreed, and why. This is particularly important for AGM minutes, as it will be a year before these minutes are read and endorsed.

Minutes should record the names of all movers and seconders, and the outcome of whether a motion was carried or lost. When voting for election of officer positions, the name of each nominee, their proposer and seconder should be noted in the minutes along with the outcome of the election.

The P&C Secretary may prefer that meetings be audio recorded to assist with ensuring the minutes are correct. Before audio recording the meeting, the Chair must ask permission from those attending. If the P&C members agree that the meeting can be recorded, the recording must only be used for the purpose for which the members have given consent.

Any decision requiring follow-up action should be recorded in the minutes and dealt with as soon as possible after the meeting. Notes about any action taken and copies of any correspondence should be retained for reporting to the next meeting.

Minutes are a permanent record of the P&C's work. The minutes should be stored in a safe place and retained indefinitely.

### Reports at meetings

The meeting agenda will include a series of reports from executives, subcommittees, officers and the Principal. Best practice is for these reports to be written, rather than verbal, and for the reports to be attached to the minutes. Written reports help to eliminate errors in recording. Recommendations from presented reports can be endorsed as part of the whole report or can be dealt with individually. Dealing with recommendations individually is helpful when a recommendation is contentious. It's possible for the P&C to endorse a report with the exception of one recommendation, and then deal with that recommendation separately either before or after the endorsement of the overall report.

## Meeting agendas

All P&C meetings should follow an agenda as provided in the Constitution. The agenda should be prepared by the Secretary, in consultation with the President, before each meeting. Different types of meetings have different agendas.

### Annual general meeting agenda

The agenda required for an AGM is described in Clause 18.3.9 of the Constitution.

The AGM has a specific purpose that is different from a general meeting and some specific procedures that must be followed.

The agenda for the AGM is included in the Constitution and must be followed. The standard agenda helps to ensure that important annual decisions are not overlooked and the Association's constitutional requirements are met.

The Secretary prepares the AGM's agenda, and distributes the agenda to members with the minutes of the previous AGM and any related reports.

All P&Cs operate with the same financial year – from 1 January to 31 December. The AGM must be held by 31 March of the following year. This means that all financial information should be sent to the auditor as soon as possible following the end of the year, so that the audit is complete before the AGM. NO AUDIT = NO AGM. It is the Treasurer's responsibility to ensure that the audit is completed on time.

The Secretary is responsible for recording the minutes at the AGM. The accuracy of AGM minutes is particularly important, as it is generally 12 months before the minutes are endorsed. The Secretary should carefully note all motions, movers, seconders, and whether a motion is carried or defeated.

### General meeting agenda

The agenda required for a general meeting is described in Clause 18.4.9 of the Constitution.

General meetings are intended to manage the ongoing business of the P&C. At each meeting, the P&C acknowledges incoming and outgoing correspondence, receives reports from Executive Officers and subcommittees, receives a report from the school Principal, and makes decisions on emerging issues.

The Secretary is responsible for preparing the agenda and distributing the notice of meeting. The agenda should be distributed to members along with the minutes of the previous meeting and any relevant reports.

### Special meeting agenda

The agenda for special meetings is described in Clause 18.5.7 of the Constitution.

The Constitution outlines some of the reasons for calling a special meeting. Regardless of the reason and even though a special meeting may address only one or two issues, it is still important to use an agenda.

[Click here for the info place to access a breakdown of each meeting's agenda](#)

## Chairing meetings

Every meeting needs a chairperson who ensures that proceedings are conducted in a proper and orderly manner. The President chairs all meetings of the P&C. If the President is absent, the Vice-President occupies the Chair. If both the President and Vice-President are absent, the P&C members present may elect a Chair from the members present.

The Chair should be familiar with the Constitution and any standing orders (standing orders are meeting procedures or rules a P&C may adopt that are additional to those required under the Constitution).

The four most important attributes of a chairperson are impartiality, tact, firmness and common sense. The Chairperson's job is to facilitate the meeting so that:

- time is used effectively
- decisions are made
- everyone has a say and feels heard
- dominant personalities are managed.

The Chairperson helps to set the tone of the meeting. A good Chair can encourage enthusiasm, create a sense of belonging and develop a team spirit that keeps everyone working towards identified goals.

P&C members can support their Chairperson by being attentive to the issues being discussed, putting across their point of view clearly and providing carefully worded motions. Members who wish to raise an issue should do so in way that is respectful and informed. More information about moving motions is included in the [Motions](#) section of this Guide.

### Chairperson's role before the meeting

- Supervise the preparation of the agenda and any background papers for distribution at the meeting.
- Check that any notice of the meeting is sent out within the required notice period.
- Verify the accuracy of any minutes to be presented to the meeting for confirmation.
- Become familiar with any correspondence, reports or other material to be presented.
- Talk to any member who is expected to cause difficulties at the meeting (with a view to reconciling differences in advance).

### Chairperson's role during the meeting

- Formally declare the meeting open after ascertaining that a quorum is present; introduce self as chair; welcome any guest speakers or visitors; welcome any new members; if appropriate, explain the procedure to be followed during the meeting.
- Preside over and control the meeting, conducting it impartially and according to the rules to ensure the smooth passage of the meeting's business.
- Introduce each new item of business; run the meeting in the order provided on the agenda.
- Call for motions and seconders (note that the Chair cannot move or second motions); the Chair can assist members with wording motions to ensure they are precisely worded and accurately reflect their intent.
- Manage the discussion of issues and motions; manage voting on motions (note that the Chair has a deliberate (normal member's) vote and a casting vote in the event of a tie).
- At all times, ascertain that a quorum is present; adjourn the meeting if the quorum lapses.
- Sign minutes of meetings as correct, once they have been confirmed by the meeting.
- Present any relevant reports (e.g. President's report and any report for a subcommittee chaired by the President).
- Introduce guest speakers and arrange for votes of thanks to them.
- In the case of elections, ensure the appointment of a returning officer and invite the officer to declare the result at the appropriate time.



The Chair protects free speech and ensures that debates are conducted in the correct manner. In managing motions, debate and voting, this means the Chair ensures that:

- motions and amendments are respectfully worded and unambiguous, consistent with the Constitution and the standing orders
- there is a seconder for all motions and amendments (if there is no seconder to a motion or amendment, then the motion or amendment lapses; note, however, an amendment can be accepted by the mover and seconder of the original motion and is then called a friendly amendment)
- speakers are called one at a time and in an appropriate sequence, following the order of speakers set out in the standing orders
- no person, other than a mover in reply, speaks more than once to any question
- no member, other than the mover, speaks on a motion or amendment which has not been seconded
- any motion, amendment or foreshadowed amendment is read out when requested by the Chair and before taking a vote
- motions and amendments are provided in writing in appropriate circumstances
- a vote is taken when the mover of a motion has replied or when otherwise necessary, ensuring that only votes from current members are accepted and the Chair's deliberative vote is cast before the result is known
- where a tie of votes is counted, and the Chair has given their deliberate vote, give a casting vote if necessary (a Chair can use a second vote to decide the fate of the motion)
- results of all votes are declared, and all decisions are clearly announced
- only people entitled to be present are admitted to the meeting
- the meeting is adjourned and formally declared closed when a motion to that effect is carried; the meeting should close when all business is concluded or if the meeting becomes excessively disorderly or the quorum lapses.

If the debate becomes heated or convoluted, it is the Chair's responsibility to ensure that:

- no person is unreasonably denied an opportunity to be heard
- excessive heckling is prevented with tolerance of reasonable interjections
- order is preserved and, if necessary, offending members are named
- irrelevant remarks, tedious repetition and objectionable language are prevented
- discussions that are going nowhere are stopped; the Chair should insist that at all times, motions are put before the Chair and all remarks are addressed to the Chair
- rulings are provided on points of order and other questions of procedure; these rulings should be given patience and courtesy, and with explanations where appropriate (see following examples explaining motions for more information)
- any discretionary powers in accepting or refusing to accept procedural motions are used in the best interests of the meeting.

To improve the quality of debate and decision making, a good Chair will:

- encourage new, shy or inexperienced members to express their views to the meeting
- discourage any talkative members from monopolising or unduly dominating any discussion
- in appropriate circumstances, invite a motion or an amendment to a motion
- help members who offer ideas to express these in proper motion form
- watch out for ambiguities in motions and help to remove ambiguities
- invite or personally put questions that are designed to elicit relevant facts
- act as a resource person and information provider for others at the meeting
- confine the discussion to ideas and issues (and ensure that the discussion does not move to personalities)
- stop any private discussions by small groups within the meeting while a speaker officially has the floor
- ensure that all decisions are properly recorded in a form that facilitates their implementation.

## Chair vacated

The Vice-President becomes the Chair in the President's absence, be it temporarily or for the duration of the meeting. If a Vice-President is not available, nominations from the floor can be called to let the meeting choose a replacement Chair.

A Chairperson may leave the Chair temporarily for reasons such as when:

- there is a conflict of interest with an item on the agenda
- the Chair would personally like to move a motion.

While the temporary Chair is in place, the President participates as a normal member, and has the same speaking and voting rights as any other member. When the discussion requiring a temporary Chair has been completed, the temporary Chair must step down and hand the Chair back to the permanent Chair (the President).

## Motions

At P&C meetings, decisions are made through motions, which are verbal and/or written formal proposals made to the meeting to elicit a decision.

One member moves a motion, another member seconds the motion then all members may discuss and vote on the motion. The following explains common terms used, processes and specific issues that P&Cs may face when discussing and voting on motions.

### *General discussion*

It is quite normal for a meeting to discuss a matter without a motion being proposed. After a period of free discussion, the Chair should suggest that one of the members moves that a motion be put forward.

### *Propose a motion*

Ideally, the proposer of the motion should stand and say: "Mister/Madam Chair. I move that ..." (stating the motion and the reasons for it in one sentence). The Secretary needs to record the motion in the minutes, so it is helpful if the mover provides a written copy. For important decisions, copies of motions to be discussed should be distributed to members before the meeting begins.

Success in getting a motion passed depends on preparation, clear explanations and arranging for a seconder. At times it makes sense to brief people before the meeting to gauge support for the idea and to encourage support.

### *Second the motion*

When the mover has stated their motion and given their basic reasons for it, the Chair should ask, "Do I have a seconder for the motion?". If there is no seconder, the motion lapses and discussion stops (note that in some situations a seconder is not required; see below for more information). Once the motion has been seconded, the mover can provide more information. The seconder may speak in support of the motion at this stage, or may state that they reserve their right to speak later. If they do neither, they cannot speak in the discussion that follows. Sometimes, people second motions purely to allow discussion, even though they may vote against the motion which is valid.

### *Discuss the motion*

Each member can speak to the motion only once.

At this stage, the Chair can save time by starting the discussion by asking if anyone wishes to speak against the motion. If no one speaks against the motion, the Chair can immediately put the motion to a vote.

If there is a speaker against the motion, the Chair gives that person time to speak, and then invites a speaker for the motion to present new material. The Chair should alternate the speakers between those who are against and those who are for the motion, and insist that each speaker raises new points or challenges the opposition. Each speaker can speak only once to the motion.

In some cases, members will expect the Chair (usually the President) to speak to a motion. However, it is better that the Chair stays out of the debate. If they wish to speak, they should hand the Chair to the Vice-President temporarily.

If the mover, seconder and everybody else agree that the motion be withdrawn, it can be. If one person disagrees, the motion must be put to the vote.

### *Discussion closed*

At an appropriate time, the Chair should say, "I believe there has been sufficient discussion and I will put forward the motion". If the meeting is not ready to vote, someone should move a dissent motion (see below for more information).

### *Right of reply*

The mover of the motion has the right to reply to arguments against the motion. New material must not be introduced.

### *Vote*

At this point, the Chair asks the Secretary to read the motion. This ensures that members know what they are voting for. Any dispute on the exact wording of the motion must be settled now.

The Chair chooses a method of voting appropriate to the issue (e.g. verbal vote, raising of hands or secret ballot). It makes sense to use a verbal vote if there is little opposition, a show of hands if there was much discussion, and a secret ballot if voter confidentiality is important.

The Chair calls for the vote: for a verbal vote say, "All those in favour say aye (raise one hand)" — pause — "those against say no (raise one hand)" — pause — "I think the ayes (nos) have it" — pause — "I declare the motion carried (lost)". In the last pause, a member can request a show of hands. In big meetings, the Chair should get the assistance of the Secretary or appoint scrutineers to count, with one person counting the "ayes" and one person counting the "nos".

In a secret ballot, the Chair must describe how members are to record their vote on the ballot paper. Scrutineers distribute ballot papers to the members eligible to vote. The Chair declares the ballot open and asks eligible members to record their vote. The Chair then declares the ballot closed and instructs scrutineers to collect papers. When all ballot papers are collected, the Chair instructs the scrutineers to count the papers and present the results in writing.

Whatever voting method is used, the Chair must declare the result of the ballot.

### *Amended motions*

An amendment is a change to the detail of the original motion. It must not alter the basic purpose of the motion. If an amendment would have the same effect as voting NO to the original motion, the Chair should not accept it.

### *Moving an amendment*

Any member can move an amendment (except the mover and seconder of the original motion). If the subject matter of the motion and amendment is detailed or complex, it is best to present the amendment in writing to the Secretary. If possible, the amendment should be provided in writing before the motion is moved.

### *Seconding and amendment*

An amendment should be seconded. No seconder = no discussion.

### *Discuss the amendment*

Follow the same processes in discussing the amendment as used in discussing the original motion. Members who spoke on the original motion may speak again. As with the original discussion, the Chair should alternate speakers for and against the amendment. Each member should speak only once.

The Chair may need to remind the meeting that they are discussing the amendment, NOT the motion. Ensure that the discussion stays focused on the amendment.

The mover of the original motion may speak for or against the amendment. If they do speak now they still have the right of reply at the close of debate on the original motion with or without amendments.

The mover of the amendment has no right to reply.

### ***Put amendment to the vote***

The Chair must ensure that members realise they are voting on the amendment not the original motion. The Chair should explain how the amendment will affect the motion. The Chair calls for the vote using the same processes described for ordinary motions.

After voting, the Chair must say, "I declare the amendment carried (or lost). We will now resume discussion on the amended (or original) motion."

### ***Discussion resumes***

The meeting returns to discussing the original motion, with or without the amendment. The amendment may have changed the original motion, but the amendment does not 'become' the motion. Further amendments are permitted.

### ***Point of order***

A point of order occurs when a member suggests that the rules of the meeting are not being followed.

A point of order can be raised at any time. A member can interrupt saying, "Mister/Madam Chair: Point of Order". The Chair must ask the member to explain the point of order. The Chair then gives a ruling and takes any necessary action.

### ***Dissent from Chair's ruling***

During the meeting, the Chair makes many decisions about the way the meeting is conducted.

If a member disagrees with a decision made by the Chair (a ruling), that member must immediately say "Mister/Madam Chair, I move dissent from your ruling". In this situation, the Chair must immediately explain why the ruling was made, and then call for a seconder to the dissent. If the dissent is seconded, the Chair should allow debate followed by a vote (using the process for motions).

It's important to note that the dissent is about the ruling made by the Chair, not about the Chairperson individually. The Chair is not vacated during discussion about the dissent.

It's a good idea to deal with a dissent motion quickly and fairly. If the Chair fails to accept a dissent motion when it's seconded, the meeting can fall into chaos.

### ***Be no longer heard***

Sometimes a member can irritate other members and obstruct the progress of the meeting. Anyone may interrupt and move that the person “be no longer heard”.

If the Chair thinks the motion is reasonable, the Chair calls for a seconder and the motion can be debated. If passed, the person cannot speak again in this debate.

### *Out of order*

When the Chair considers that a speaker is out of order (such as trying to speak twice to a motion), the Chair should say (standing up if necessary), “X, please sit down, you are out of order because ...”. The Chair should give a clear reason why the person is out of order and be ready for a dissent motion.

When the Chair speaks or stands, everyone ought to be seated and silent.

### *No confidence motion*

A member can propose a no-confidence motion against the Chair. This is most likely to happen if the Chair has made several unpopular rulings or statements. In this situation, the best choice for the Chair is to accept the motion with good grace. If the motion is seconded, the Chairperson should vacate the Chair and allow debate. After conducting a quick election to choose a Chair, the original Chair can speak during the debate.

A motion of: “that the Chair vacate the Chair” has the same meaning and effect as a no-confidence motion.

### *Closure of debate (gag)*

A member can close (gag) debate by calling “that the motion (or amendment) be now put”. This is a call for a vote, without further debate. The call for a closure to the debate can be moved at any time during the debate on a motion or amendment. It need not be seconded. The call cannot be moved by anyone who has spoken on the motion or amendment.

There is no debate on this closure motion. It must be put forth immediately.

If the call for closure is carried on an amendment then the amendment is put forth immediately. Debate on the motion — original or amended — then resumes.

If the gag is carried on a motion, then debate stops. A right of reply is given and then the motion is presented.

### *Debate be adjourned*

Debate on a particular matter can be adjourned to a specific date, time and place. A member can put forward a motion for a matter to be adjourned. The adjournment motion can then be debated using the normal processes.

### *Questions lie on the table*

A member can move that a question ‘lie on the table’. This motion does not need to be seconded. If the motion is passed, debate on the topic ceases. Later — either at this or a subsequent meeting — the matter can be raised from the table and debate can continue.

### *Proceed to next business*

A member can move that the meeting proceed to the next item of business. This motion does not need to be seconded. If the motion is passed, discussion on the motion ceases for the remainder of meeting. This motion can be used to avoid spending any more time on a motion. If lost, debate on original motion continues.

### *The previous question*

This is a motion to drop the present topic under debate, which is put to prevent a vote. This motion enables the meeting to avoid committing itself either way, especially if the result could be embarrassing or misleading. If carried, the matter can be dealt with at a future meeting. If lost, the procedure is as if a closure of debate (gag) had been carried.

### *Meeting be adjourned*

Sometimes it becomes clear that a meeting has insufficient information to make a decision or has not completed a fair debate on a major issue. In these situations, an adjournment motion is appropriate. A member can move that the meeting be adjourned to a specific date, time and place. If the motion is passed, the meeting is adjourned.

## Meeting problems

Sometimes members or visitors attending a meeting can create a disturbance, intentional or otherwise. The Chair is responsible for addressing disturbances. The Chair may choose to:

- persuade the people involved to stop – perhaps by promising an opportunity to speak later, offering to have a committee investigate their concerns, or inviting them to serve on a subcommittee
- order a short adjournment (either a short break, or adjourning to another date)
- name the people involved and ask them to discontinue with the disturbance (this is recorded in the minutes)
- invite a motion that the people involved be removed from the meeting (such a motion, if carried, would strengthen the Chair's hand if it becomes necessary to call the police).



## Irregular conduct by a Chair

Sometimes the Chairperson denies those attending the meeting some of their democratic rights – either through ignorance of the correct procedure or simply because they want to control the agenda. For example, the Chairperson may:

- refuse to accept or rule on a legitimate point of order
- refuse to accept motions of dissent from their rulings
- refuse a motion of no confidence in the Chair
- refuse to put to the vote any motion put and seconded by P&C members.

If this happens, the members who are concerned about the Chair's behaviour will have to consider their own position and their best course of action. They could:

- seek the school Principal's support (as the Minister's representative the Principal is responsible for ensuring the P&C works within the legislation)
- contact P&Cs Qld for specific advice
- seek election at the next AGM.

## Heated meetings

Sometimes members will know in advance that a meeting is likely to become heated because of the emotional or contentious nature of the issues to be debated. These situations can be very challenging for a Chair.

To prepare for and manage a heated meeting, the Chair should:

- know as much as possible about the issue
- keep the meeting focused on the issue at hand, without digressing to side issues
- stress that the required outcome is the one that is best for the school and its students
- set clear ground rules at the beginning of the meeting:
  - no discussion without a motion being moved and seconded
  - discussion to alternate between speakers for and against the motion
  - no speaker to speak twice on the same motion unless they introduce new information pertinent to the issue
  - all speakers to speak through the Chair (this means that speakers should look at the Chair while they are speaking and address their comments to the Chair; this helps to break down personality clashes and reduces the possibility of someone overriding the Chair's authority)
  - the mover closes the debate when they speak to the motion a second time
  - secret ballot vote, giving members a true conscience vote without peer pressure.

Always remember that P&C meetings are public meetings that should be conducted in a professional manner by a professional association.

## Avoiding common meeting problems

Meetings can be difficult, and most people have left a meeting feeling unhappy about some part of the proceedings. Most people choose to grumble about meetings with people who were not present. This doesn't solve anything and doesn't contribute to making the meetings more effective. One way to improve meetings is to conduct a brief review at the end of each meeting: ask people how they felt about the meeting so that the next one can be better. By conducting a brief meeting evaluation, the group can learn from its successes and mistakes and give feedback to the people who had specific roles in the meeting.

### *People who are long winded or dominating*

In this situation, the Chair can:

- introduce time limits and stick to them
- ask for contributions from people who have not said anything
- ask the group if they are comfortable with the direction that the discussion is taking
- ask questions like: "Did we go over this before?"; "Do we need to repeat this?"; "Is it time to give someone else a chance to speak?"

### *People who are silent*

When some people are silent, the Chair could ask everyone to give an opinion, one by one, before discussing or evaluating the ideas further.

### *People who monopolise the discussion*

When one or more people monopolise the discussion, the Chair can:

- refocus the conversation away from those people
- involve others by asking: "What does that mean to the rest of us?"; "How does that help us to solve the problem?"
- summarise the conversation: "Is this what you two seem to be saying?"
- bring others into the discussion: "What do the rest of us think about this?"
- extend the discussion: "You seem to have overlooked ...".

### *Members who distract others*

If some members are distracting (*by talking, shuffling papers, tapping pens etc*), the Chair may:

- ask them if they are interested in the discussion
- ask why they don't seem to be interested
- tell them they're making it hard for the group to get through the agenda
- take a short break.

### *Latecomers and early leavers*

For latecomers, the Chair may briefly summarise the important business the person has missed, point to the record of the meeting or ask someone to fill them in quickly. For early leavers, the Chair can check whether anyone will need to leave the meeting early and if so, whether there will still be a quorum in place.

### *People who get bored*

Chairs can take action to prevent boredom by varying the meeting procedure from time to time (for example, by having occasional presentations or a local community speaker). It's also possible to introduce small-group tasks, where people

have more contact with each other. For example, ask small groups to work on a task for 10 minutes then report back to the whole meeting. Lead the group through a structured process that introduces a new skill or a new way of working.

### *Tension and/or negative feelings*

If the Chair senses tension or negative feelings, the Chair may choose to bring the issue into the open and have a quick “gripe” session, take a short break, or adjourn the meeting so that specific hostilities can be dealt with by the individuals concerned and not imposed on the whole group.

### *Discussing too many issues at once*

If the meeting is unfocused and many issues are under discussion, the Chair may want to:

- list the concrete achievements of the group
- redefine the issue at hand and set parameters on the discussion
- record off-topic issues and put them aside for later discussion
- check whether individuals still agree on the goals of the discussion
- introduce a structured process to focus the discussion.

### *Group cannot agree or decide*

If the group cannot agree or make a decision, the Chair could:

- summarise the discussion to the present point
- remind people of the goals or criteria for deciding
- restate the issues or question
- ask if people are ready to make a decision
- postpone the decision until the next meeting
- take a short break.

### *People get confused or lost*

If participants seem confused or lost, the Chair could:

- review the agenda to give a brief explanation of each topic to be covered at the meeting
- state what has happened so far in the meeting
- wrap up each agenda item with a call for final questions
- summarise the discussion
- clearly state any decisions made.

### *Stacking of meetings*

When a contentious issue is to be discussed at a P&C meeting, it is not uncommon for attendance to increase. People may attend in the hope of influencing the outcomes of the discussion. The stacking of a meeting involves one member inviting extra people to attend and support their position. Under the legislation, only current members of the Association may vote at meetings. To help prevent stacking, the legislation states that new members can only be accepted at the end of a general meeting. This means that people who are not members can attend and contribute to the discussion, but cannot vote on motions. At an AGM, stacking of the meeting can occur as membership is accepted before the election of Executive Officers.

## Policies and procedures

Policies and procedures help to guide the P&C's approach to work and areas of interest. Clear policies and procedures can help to ensure that issues are dealt with consistently. They also assist in the transition to a new Executive Committee by providing a framework for the P&C's activities.

Policy is a set of decisions about an issue or area of interest. It states the way the P&C will address issues and helps to ensure that questions are addressed consistently. Procedures describe the way the P&C's work will be conducted.

It's a good idea for the P&C to put in place policies that ensure consistent management of its operations. These policies may need to be reviewed and endorsed each year. Comprehensive policies ensure consistency from year to year, regardless of changes to the P&C Executive, subcommittees, convenors and volunteers.

Policies and procedures give clear information about the roles and responsibilities of Executive Officers, subcommittees, employees, volunteers and general members. Ideally, the P&C's policies and procedures will be included in a manual that is easily available to employees, members and volunteers.

Policies and procedures are particularly helpful for new committees and when work needs to be done when someone is absent. For example, the tuckshop policy and procedures ensure that the tuckshop runs successfully when the tuckshop convenor is absent.

The P&C should develop policies and procedures for each of its operations in consultation with the school community and particularly with those who are most affected (such as the tuckshop convenor for the tuckshop policy).

Policies and procedures should outline the workplace health and safety requirements of the operation and include a documented process for reporting and recording an incident.

Examples of the policies and procedures relevant for a P&C may include: Fundraising Policy, Volunteers Policy, Cake Stall Procedure, Alcohol Policy, Tuckshop Policy, Tuckshop Operations Procedure (please note that these are examples, and this is not intended to be an exhaustive list).

The Department provides policies and procedures that can assist and/or direct P&C operations – see [Procedure – Parents and Citizens Associations](#).

Following are some policies that the Department provide:

- when using social media [P&C Social Media Guide](#)
- when purchasing goods and services (to determine the appropriate method and minimum requirements) [Purchasing Policies and Procedures for P&C Associations](#)
- to identify the roles and obligations of volunteers and P&C employees towards students while conducting business within the school [2018 Student Protection Risk Management Strategy](#)
- when developing food choices for the tuckshop [Smart Choices Policy](#)
- when using school facilities [Community Use of School Facilities](#)

## Business operations

P&Cs can run services and operations that benefit the school community. The Regulation and the Constitution state that a P&C may conduct a tuckshop, uniform shop or other operation that benefits the school community. Examples of other operations include a bookshop, swim club, or Outside School Hours Care. These operations can be conducted at the school's premises.

In any business operation, the P&C needs to consider whether it wants to prioritise maximum profit or be a community service. An operation that prioritises profit can raise funds to support the P&C's objectives. An operation that prioritises community service can offer low-cost services for the school's families. Regardless of the business purpose, the P&C must comply with the Accounting Manual in all its operations and ensure that profits are sufficient to cover costs.

P&C business operations will need to purchase goods and services to achieve their objectives. When purchasing within a P&C business, it is recommended the P&C follow the Department's Purchasing Policies and Procedures for P&C Associations and engage a supplier listed in the Department's Procurement Standing Offer Arrangements (SOAs). SOAs are established with preferred suppliers to ensure cost-effectiveness, security and efficiency when buying for a P&C. Because the suppliers with SOAs have been pre-approved by the Department, the P&C can contact them directly for a quote (quoting the SOA number). While it's advisable to use SOA suppliers for all P&C purchases, it is mandatory to use an SOA supplier for online ordering.

[Department of Education Standing Offer Arrangements List](#)

[Department of Education Purchasing Policies and Procedures for P&C Associations](#)

P&Cs must retain responsibility for their own business operations. A P&C **cannot sublet** any of its businesses to a third party. If the P&C chooses not to operate the tuckshop or OSHC (as examples), the P&C does not have any authority to outsource the business, rather the operation becomes the school's responsibility. The Principal decides whether the school or a third party will manage the business. If the Principal decides to outsource the business to a third party, the funds for leasing the operation form part of the school's accounting system. If the Principal decides that the school will operate the business, the school is responsible for the business, not the P&C.

### Fair trading

P&Cs are subject to the same fair trading rules as all government bodies, organisations and individuals. These rules apply equally to profit-making and non-profit organisations.

P&Cs may compete vigorously in markets using pricing, standard of service, product benefits and other ethical means. They must not engage in illegal, anti-competitive practices. These tips will help ensure the P&C complies with fair competition rules.

- Comply with the Purchasing Policy and Procedures for P&Cs when acquiring goods and services.
- Do not enter into any contract, arrangement or understanding that would:
  - restrict a customer from handling the products of a competitor
  - require a customer to purchase a product or service as a condition of buying another product or service
  - require a customer to deal exclusively with the P&C or buy all requirements for a particular product from the P&C
  - restrict the territories, markets or types of customers that a customer may resell to.
- Be very careful in making decisions regarding competition in markets where the P&C has a large market share.
- Do not enter agreements with any competitors that limit the P&C's market behaviour in anyway.  
Do not participate in discussions with competitors about matters that are the subject of competition between you and a competitor (such as prices, discounts, terms or conditions of sale, profits, costs, market share, sales territories, distribution practices, or selection of customers). Do not exchange competitive information with competitors.

It is acceptable for P&Cs to independently research market conditions and the prices of suppliers or competitors, and then set their prices independently.

## Tuckshop

The school tuckshop is a common activity for P&Cs. Tuckshops can:

- provide an important service to the school community
- promote healthy eating habits for children
- provide a variety of nutritious and attractively presented foods and drinks at reasonable prices
- operate at a reasonable profit, bringing income to the P&C and creating benefit to the school and, in turn, each child.

### *Smart Choices Policy*

The Queensland Government's Smart Choices Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy guides the food and drink choices for school tuckshops in Queensland. The strategy is designed to promote healthy foods and drinks for children. Under the strategy, school tuckshops are required to offer a range of healthy food and drinks, consistent with the Australian Dietary Guidelines for Children and Adolescents. Foods and drinks that lack nutritional value, are high in saturated fat, are high in added sugar, and/or salt may only be supplied by schools on two designated (red) occasions per term.

The Tuckshops page in [the info place](#) provides many links and documents to assist P&Cs with their tuckshop operations.



## Uniform and book shops

Many P&Cs operate a school uniform shop. The lack of overheads and possible volunteer labour mean that P&C-run uniform shops can offer quality uniforms at reasonable prices. P&Cs assist schools in setting and reviewing their uniform policies.

[Department of Education Student Dress Code](#)

All Queensland state schools are required to have a sun safety strategy. P&Cs are required to follow this strategy when ordering uniform supplies.

[Department of Education Sun Safety Strategy](#)

P&Cs often operate a book/stationery shop to make book purchasing more convenient for school families. For some schools, it is not economical to operate a bookshop all year round, so the P&C may operate this service at peak times only.

Each year, schools provide parents with book and stationery lists for the year to come. Many P&Cs offer book packs for families, which can be prepared by the P&C or a local supplier.

## Swim club

Swim clubs generally provide swimming lessons and most provide competitive club events. When swim clubs are run by P&Cs, the swim coach may be the only paid person, with all other positions filled by volunteers (e.g. timekeepers, judges, starters, race callers and starting block marshals).

Swim clubs earn most of their income from entry fees and lessons. Merchandise and canteen sales can provide additional funds. As a subcommittee they are not able to charge membership fees.

Swim Clubs must follow the [Smart Choices - Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Qld Schools](#) .

Swim clubs usually involve parents and caregivers from across the community, not just from school families. For this reason, all members of the swim club and members of the P&C need to understand the club's organisational structure. It is best practice for a swim club to be managed by a subcommittee with clear operating guidelines.

As with the P&C, the swim club is required to adopt the [2018 Student Protection Risk Management Strategy](#) This strategy requires any volunteers to hold a Blue Card, except those volunteers who are parents of students attending the school.

## Outside School Hours Care

Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) offers care for school children outside the normal operating hours of the school – usually on school days before school begins and after school ends, and during school vacations. The primary purpose of an OSHC service is to provide a cost-effective and high-quality service to parents of students in the local community. This section provides an overview of P&C-operated OSHC services. More detailed information is available via the links included in this section.

The Department encourages and supports schools to engage a provider for OSHC services and makes available school premises for this purpose. Through Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), the Department licences OSHC services. ECEC officers are based at each Regional Office and are the first point of contact for information about an OSHC.

The first preference when offering an OSHC is to have the P&C operate the service. If the P&C does not wish to operate the OSHC, it is tendered out to a third-party provider by the school Principal with the assistance of the Procurement Branch of the Department.

### Operating an OSHC

If the P&C chooses to operate the OSHC, the P&C Executive becomes the Approved Provider. As the Approved Provider, the P&C Executive require service approval to operate the service for their school. The P&C President, as delegated Executive Officer, is the supervisor for the OSHC program and the employer of OSHC staff. Any issues (such as compliance matters) must be reported to the P&C President. Although the school Principal has authority relating to establishing an occupancy agreement for the OSHC, the Principal is not responsible for operating the OSHC.

All members of the P&C Executive Committee must hold a Business Blue Card (this does not include the executive members of an OSHC subcommittee). The blue card business application form is different to the Volunteer blue card application form. The declaration on page 3 needs to be signed by a prescribed person i.e. Justice of the Peace, Commissioner for Declarations, Lawyer or Police Officer – [Click here for the Blue Card Business Application Form](#). The fee for this blue card business application is \$84.25, however Blue Card Services will waive this fee provided a 'Waive Fee Statutory Declaration' is provided together with the blue card business application form – [Click here for the Waive Fee Statutory Declaration Form](#).

If any of the P&C Executive already have a Blue Card, please contact P&Cs Qld for further assistance.

More information about the operation of an OSHC is available from:

- [Queensland Children's Activities Network](#)
- [Australian Children's Activities Network](#)
- [ECEC](#)

Members of the P&C's OSHC subcommittee should subscribe to the Department's e-newsletter, A to Z of Early Childhood, to keep up-to-date with the latest developments.

### What legislation applies to an OSHC service

In Queensland, the legislation that applies to an OSHC depends on the type of service operated. Most OSHC services are regulated under the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2011 (National Law). OSHC services must be regulated under this legislation if the service wants to offer Australian Government Child Care subsidies to offer fee reduction for families. A limited number of OSHC services are regulated under the Education and Care Services Act 2013, because they were previously funded under a budget-based model.

If the P&C is an approved provider of an OSHC service, members of the P&C Executive have responsibilities and obligations as individuals under the National Law. These responsibilities and obligations cannot be shifted nor delegated. The National

Law describes the practices, requirements, documentation, materials, information and policies that must be developed and maintained by OSHC services.

OSHC services operate under the National Quality Framework (NQF), which focuses on the outcomes for children attending the services and prioritises continuous quality improvement. The NQF is designed to ensure that families have access to transparent information relating to the quality of education and care provided by the OSHC. All OSHC services must document a Quality Improvement Plan that is updated at least annually and is developed through self-assessment of service practices.

[Education and Care Services National Law \(Queensland\) Act 2011](#)

[Education and Care Services Act 2013](#)

[National Quality Framework](#)

## Who regulates an OSHC service

All education and care services in Queensland, including OSHC services, are approved and regulated by ECEC.

ECEC maintains contact information for the Approved Providers of education and care services. Any change of P&C Executive Officers means a change in Approved Providers of the OSHC. These changes must be reported to ECEC within 14 days of that change occurring.

## OSHC subcommittee

Should the P&C appoint an OSHC subcommittee, it will need to be established with clear operating guidelines.

The main responsibility of an OSHC subcommittee is to ensure that the service has a sustainable, well-thought-out strategic plan, which will carry the business successfully into the future. The strategic plan should be developed and reviewed in consultation with the families who use the service.

As with any subcommittee, all motions passed at an OSHC subcommittee meeting must be presented to the P&C for endorsement and ratification at a general meeting.

See section headed [Subcommittees of the P&C](#) for more information on operating a subcommittee.

## Nominated supervisor and responsible person in charge

The National Law requires that the P&C, as the Approved Provider, must have a responsible person present at all times when children are being educated and cared for by the OSHC service. The responsible person can be someone with management responsibility or control of the service (such as a member of the Executive Committee who has responsibility for managing the delivery of the service), a Nominated Supervisor or a responsible person who has been placed in day-to-day charge of the service (such as an OSHC employee).

A Nominated Supervisor is a person who has consented to be responsible for the day-to-day operations of the service. The Nominated Supervisor will have day-to-day management responsibility and will control the service in the absence of the Approved Provider. The service can appoint more than one Nominated Supervisor. The P&C President is responsible for appointing an appropriately qualified Nominated Supervisor (the OSHC Coordinator or Director).

The Nominated Supervisor and educators (staff) at the service are responsible for providing education and care in accordance with the National Quality Standard, working with the subcommittee. ECEC maintains information about the Nominated Supervisors at each OSHC service and requires evidence that the Nominated Supervisor consents to fulfil the

role. ECEC must be informed of any changes to the Nominated Supervisor at the service. Educators must consent in writing to be a Nominated Supervisor.

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will appoint a suitability qualified and experienced Educational Leader, who is responsible for the service's program. Depending on the size of the service, the Nominated Supervisor may also be the Educational Leader.

Further information about Nominated Supervisors and responsible persons in charge is available from QCAN or ACECQA.

## Policies and procedures

The OSHC coordinator/director and the OSHC educators (staff) are responsible for ensuring that all policies and procedures of the service are carried out efficiently. The coordinator/director and educators are also responsible for carrying out any P&C-approved directions of the subcommittee.

The coordinator/director and staff cannot be members of the OSHC subcommittee. However, they have a key role in informing and advising the members of the subcommittee about the progress of the service and any issues it faces. The subcommittee should draw on the expertise of the coordinator/director and educators.

It is best practice for the P&C to develop OSHC policies and procedures to ensure consistent management of the OSHC regardless of changes to the P&C Executive, subcommittee, coordinators, staff or volunteers. Written policies and procedures provide clear information to the subcommittee, employees and volunteers on their roles and responsibilities to the P&C and its clients.

There is a minimum set of regulated policies and procedures required for lawful operation; however, it is likely that a P&C will develop additional policies relevant to its local context.

These issues should be included in the OSHC policies and procedures:

- philosophy and goals of the service – detailing the intentions and beliefs of the service, based on the community's wants and needs
- administrative issues – such as insurance, maintenance of records and reporting to the P&C
- facilities – such as space requirements, storage facilities, toilets and hand basins, and processes for maintenance and repairs
- staffing – including staff-student ratios, staff qualifications and training, minimum staff numbers and requirements for working with children
- health and safety – including procedures for infectious diseases, illness, accidents, first aid, food supply, drinking water, building cleanliness, health of staff and children, animals at the service, emergency procedures and transportation of children
- child protection – detailing the process that must be followed in reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to the P&C Executive and the Department of Child Safety Services and ensuring educators and staff are aware of their role and responsibility to identify and respond to every child at risk
- functions – such as participation of and access by parents and carers
- service procedures – including hours of operation, collection of children, fees, program development, equipment, excursions, reporting of child abuse, behaviour management, exclusion, grievance process and cancellation policy.

## Financial Management

The OSHC subcommittee should report to the P&C at each general meeting. The report should cover the OSHC activities and financial position, and provide P&C members with an opportunity to detect any inconsistencies or trends that may require attention.

The Federal Government requires all OSHC services to use software that is compliant with Child Care Management System in order for the service to provide fee reductions for families. This software requirement should be considered when preparing budgets, accounting systems and reporting processes.

The P&C should maintain a transparent approach to setting fees for the service, taking into account the projected costs of operating the service (identified in the budget), strategic plans and future facilities requirements. Annual fee increases are recommended, taking into account the increases to childcare subsidies.

## The P&C as an employer

While most of the work performed by a P&C is voluntary, P&Cs often employ staff to assist with their operations. The P&C Association is the employer of any staff working for it, and the decision to employ staff must be approved by the Association. The Executive Committee is responsible for managing staff and ensuring the P&C meets the legislative requirements of an employer.

P&C staff are employed under the [Parents and Citizens Associations Award – State 2016](#) (the Award) which brings together the Children’s Services Award, P&C Retail Award, and Health and Fitness Awards.

Employment by committee can be difficult for staff, so it is important that P&Cs establish clear reporting and accountability structures. The P&C also needs to establish clear, effective communication structures to ensure that staff know where to access information and who to ask for advice.

Remember that subcommittees of P&Cs are not legal entities and are not able to employ staff. While staff may report to a subcommittee for their day-to-day work, the P&C Association is the staff member’s employer. In the same way, the school Principal is not the employer of P&C staff. While the Principal can advise and support the P&C and its staff members, any employment issues should be directed to the P&C President.

The President has the authority to sign all employment agreements except where there is an identified conflict of interest.

Examples of positions where P&Cs may employ paid staff include:

- tuckshop convenor
- uniform shop convenor
- OSHC coordinator and educators
- school community liaison officer
- administration/financial assistant
- bookkeeper
- operations manager.

P&Cs Qld provides general advice to P&Cs but is not able to provide advice on industrial issues. We recommend your P&C seeks support and information from an employer support organisation.

## Governance and legal responsibilities

P&Cs are legal organisations with responsibilities that are set out by law. “Corporate governance” is the term used to describe the way that associations and organisations conduct their business within the context of their legal, financial and ethical obligations.

This section provides an overview of corporate governance issues relevant to P&Cs. It does not replace the need for professional advice about specific issues relevant to individual P&Cs. P&Cs Qld gratefully acknowledges the work of Chris Whitecross (Arrowdynamics Pty Ltd) and Bill McMillan (QCPCA Honorary Solicitor) for the information used in this section.

The officers of a P&C are in a fiduciary relationship with a fiduciary obligation to act honestly and in the best interests of the Association. This means that the officers are in a position of trust and have a duty to act with fidelity, trust and good faith for the benefit of others.

In practical terms, this means that P&C officers must:

- act honestly
- act in the best interests of the people they represent
- avoid conflicts of interests between their personal interests and their work for the P&C
- account for any benefit or gain received from their P&C work.



## Duty of care

P&C officers and members must show a duty of care in carrying out their duties, and fulfil their role with the same care and diligence that a reasonable person would show if they were the director or officer of a corporation.

P&C officers and members have a duty to act in good faith. This duty implies that any actions and decisions should be made in the best interests of the Association and for a proper purpose. It also means that members should assess the expected outcomes of their actions as they make decisions.

P&C officers and members must exercise care to ensure that all their actions fall within the law. The P&C should ensure that:

- anyone who steals from the Association or commits fraud against the Association attracts the full force of relevant criminal law
- legislation relating to alcohol sales, art unions, gaming, copyright, defamation, environment and local government regulations is followed
- there is no discrimination against others on the grounds of sex, impairment, age, race, marital or parental status.

## Making corporate governance work

P&C officers and members should follow clear and transparent processes to ensure that the Association's corporate governance is effective and efficient.

It is important to:

- Understand and adhere to relevant legislation
- Be familiar with the P&C Constitution and the Accounting Manual
- Abide by the Code of Conduct as provided in Schedule 2 of the Constitution
- Remain focused on the “big picture” – what the P&C seeks to achieve, why it exists and who it is there to benefit
- Remember the duty of care to act in good faith with honesty and integrity
- Lead by example and set appropriate standards
- Read legal documents before signing, and seek advice if necessary
- Be open, transparent and accountable in all P&C activities
- Ensure that officers maintain open and clear communication
- Do not hold nor promote secret meetings
- Keep accurate minutes
- Ensure that financial reporting is accurate, with correct processes adopted
- Ensure that no member with a financial or personal interest in an issue is involved in discussions about that issue
- Never sign blank cheques
- Ensure that all payments have a supporting invoice and account, and that all payments are addressed by a meeting resolution
- Have two or more people oversee the collection and counting of cash
- Develop a succession plan for officers and ensure that key information is shared with successors
- Take part in training and skills development (P&Cs Qld, for example, offers regular training for P&Cs)
- Act quickly if there is any evidence of poor or questionable practice
- Consider the ethical standards relevant for all actions
- Encourage officers to reflect on their individual performance
- Review the performance of subcommittees
- USE COMMON SENSE AT ALL TIMES.

## Defamation

At times, the P&C Executive may receive defamatory or vindictive messages – either as a written message or as part of a conversation (that is, messages that are intended to hurt or ridicule someone or messages intended as revenge).

There are three key elements to deciding whether a message is defamatory:

- There must be a defamatory matter (that is, it meets the definition of defamatory as material intended to injure the personal, professional, trade or business reputation of an individual or company, or expose them to ridicule, or cause people to avoid them)
- The defamatory matter must be passed on to a third party – either verbally or in print
- The material must identify the person being defamed (or be given in a way that makes their identity obvious).

If a document received by the P&C is defamatory, the document should be listed as incoming correspondence for the following meeting, but not made available. If the P&C Executive is in any doubt about their legal rights and responsibilities in cases of possible defamation, they should seek professional advice.

## Property ownership

Under the Act, any money or property acquired by a P&C is, in effect, owned by the State. Through the Accounting Manual, the Minister for Education directs P&Cs on its use of that money or property. If a P&C closes, all property in the name of the P&C and its funds must be dealt with by the Principal's supervisor, as directed by the Minister of Education.

## Financial responsibilities

The Accounting Manual contains the information required to ensure a P&C operates within its legislative requirements. The Accounting Manual is the primary reference document for the Treasurer and each member of the P&C Executive. It is essential that all financial practices in the manual are closely followed.

All the P&C Executive are responsible for ensuring that proper financial management procedures are followed by the P&C as a whole including its subcommittees. Proper accounting procedures create transparency. They prevent misappropriation, loss and fraud, and they reduce the possibility of unfounded accusations of financial misconduct. Proper accounting procedures also ensure that the P&C is able to make the best use of its funds.

While all P&C Executive Officers have financial accountability, the Treasurer is first in line for looking after the P&C's finances.

### *Discrepancies in the accounts*

If all the processes for monthly and annual reporting are followed, there should not be any discrepancies in the P&C accounts. However, if a discrepancy is discovered, it should be noted and brought to the attention of both the P&C and the auditor. The discrepancy must be explained, along with any action taken in response. If the auditor picks up a discrepancy, it should be highlighted in the auditor's report and discussed at the AGM.

If there is any concern that the discrepancy results from dishonest or fraudulent behaviour, follow the information below.

### *Prevention of fraud*

P&C Executives are responsible for ensuring that appropriate financial procedures are in place to prevent mismanagement, misappropriation, loss or fraud. These procedures are fully explained in the Accounting Manual and have two key purposes:

- to prevent loss and fraud – while you may trust everyone in the school community, correct accounting procedures provide transparency, remove temptation and make it easy to notice if something is wrong
- to protect the P&C Executive – good accounting practices protect the Executive against accusations of financial impropriety.

P&C fraud does occur, even though most P&C Associations are trustworthy. It is important that P&Cs never ignore best practice procedures and never ignore their concerns about financial mismanagement. It is particularly important to implement good procedures for handling cash and reconciling the bank account.

There are complex and sophisticated ways in which fraud can occur. Members of the Executive should always check the cashbook and bank statement, and be ready to ask questions. The simple step of examining bank reconciliations can prevent most problems. P&C Executive Officers should never hesitate to ask questions.

If there is any concern that money or goods have been misappropriated, the P&C must report it to the Principal. The Principal must then report to the Senior Internal Auditor of the appropriate Regional Office, who will investigate and involve the police if necessary.

All suspected cases of fraud or theft must be reported to the school Principal. P&C members should not investigate their suspicions, as doing this could influence an official investigation. The Department's Internal Auditors will determine whether or not the matter needs to be referred to the police.

## Insurance

P&Cs Qld provide P&Cs insurance policy protection specifically designed to target the operational and business risks for P&Cs in the areas of assets, liabilities and volunteers.

It is a legislative requirement, as a condition of use of the school facilities, that P&C Associations have Liability and Personal Accident Insurances in place. Marsh Advantage Insurance (MAI) is the appointed Insurance Broker for P&Cs Qld.

P&Cs Qld may be able to provide general advice about insurance matters in [the info place](#). For more specific enquiries, P&Cs should contact Marsh by email [pandcsqld@marshadvantage.com](mailto:pandcsqld@marshadvantage.com) or phone 3115 4555.

## Ethical issues

P&C officers and members should always behave ethically and in the best interests of the Association. The Constitution defines some ethical issues that guide the financial management of the P&C.

- P&C funds are public funds, ultimately owned by the state. P&C funds should be used only to support the educational outcomes of students at the school.
- No portion of the P&C's funds, income or assets can be distributed, paid or transferred (directly or indirectly) to its members.
- P&C funds must not be used to purchase gifts nor provide entertainment (other than for exceptional, unpredicted, once-in-a-generation events as defined by the Accounting Manual) .
- P&C positions are honorary (and therefore unpaid). Under the Constitution, P&C officers and subcommittee members cannot be paid an honorarium. However, members can claim reimbursement of legitimate out-of-pocket expenses incurred as part of their duties.
- If any P&C member has a direct or indirect financial interest in an issue raised at a meeting, the member must disclose the nature of their interest and the disclosure must be recorded in the minutes. Unless the majority of P&C members decide otherwise, the disclosing member must not take any further part in the discussion about that issue.

## Issues with members/officers

The Code of Conduct requires all members to “promote and maintain the highest standard of ethical behaviour”. There may be times when new or current members do not observe these standards.

A new membership application may be refused if the majority of members vote for this at a meeting within two months of receiving the application - see Clause 12.2.7 of the Constitution. Equally, a current member may be removed if the majority of members decide at a meeting there are grounds to do so - see Section 17 of the Constitution.

Section 17 of the Constitution provides the grounds for refusing or removing a member if the P&C decides it is necessary. Any person who is refused or removed as a member has a right to appeal to the Education Minister regarding the decision. For more details on the process required for removal of a member, please contact P&Cs Qld.

Under Clause 13.2 of the Constitution, if an Executive Officer is absent for three consecutive meetings without reasonable excuse, the remaining Executive can declare their position vacant. With sufficient notice to the P&C and school community, an election to fill a vacated position may be held at a general meeting.



## Risk management

Many P&Cs are made up of a combination of paid workers and volunteers, with the contribution of volunteers recognised and equated with that of paid workers.

### Workplace health and safety

P&C Associations must pay attention to workplace health and safety processes and procedures. The P&C needs a workplace health and safety policy, with procedures relevant to all aspects of P&C operations and events. The procedures must include a process for recording and reporting any workplace health and safety incidents. The school Principal will be able to assist P&Cs in meeting the workplace health and safety requirements of the Department and Workplace Health and Safety Queensland.

### Student protection risk management strategy

P&Cs are required to endorse the Student Protection Risk Management Strategy, which identifies the roles and obligations of volunteers and P&C employees while conducting business relating to students of the school. The strategy is designed to support the P&C in identifying and assessing possible sources of harm, and take steps to prevent harm from occurring. It demonstrates the P&C's commitment to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of children at the school.

The strategy is based on relevant policies and legislation, and must not be altered (other than the indicated areas which are to be localised for the school). The strategy should be reviewed annually and endorsed at the AGM.

The strategy needs to be easily accessible (for example, on the school website). Relevant information from the strategy should be included in the P&C/school volunteer register.

[2018 Student Protection Risk Management Strategy](#)

### Volunteer register

P&Cs must keep a volunteer register, recording all people who volunteer at P&C activities, whether they are members of the P&C or not. Volunteers must sign in and out every time they volunteer. A designated person should maintain the register.

The volunteer register should include copies of the Student Protection Risk Management Strategy and the Student Protection Fact Sheet. A template for a volunteer register is provided on page 15 of the Student Protection Risk Management Strategy.

The volunteer register is an important part of meeting the P&C's insurance obligations.

### Event risk management

Where the P&C is responsible for an activity, the P&C must take reasonable care to avoid foreseeable risks of injury. For example, the P&C must make sure that:

- activities are safe and appropriate for attendees' ages and abilities
- there is proper instruction and preparation for activities
- required equipment is in a safe condition
- adequate supervision is available.

The P&C should implement a Risk Management Plan for all P&C-organised events. It is recommended the Plan be completed before the activity is endorsed at a P&C meeting. High risk activities should be discussed with the Principal and measures put in place to ensure risk is minimised. More information is available from the Department and P&Cs Qld via the links below

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/docs/healthsafety/managing-health-safety-fact-sheet.pdf>

<http://education.qld.gov.au/health/safety/managing/risk.html>

<http://www.pandcsqld.com.au/documents/2015/04/event-management-guide.pdf>

## Record retention and handover

P&C Associations must keep complete and accurate records of their decisions and practices. Records must be maintained in a safe and secure location, for the period required in the [Record Retention Schedule](#). Records can be destroyed after they have been kept for the required storage period. However, meeting minutes should be kept indefinitely as a historical and reference record.

All records should be kept at the school, in an agreed location. The Treasurer should have access to the records for the current financial year and the previous financial year. The Treasurer may take only minimal records home, and only for short periods of time.

Industrial relations legislation requires that all staff records are kept in a secure location on the school site, including tax file numbers, letters of appointment, emergency contact details and medical information.

Previous Executive members have a duty to transfer all records and accounts to their successors-in-office as soon as practicable. To ensure the smooth running and consistency of operations, the handover to new Executive Officers should include all relevant documents.

For all Executive Officers, the handover should include:

- current P&C-approved Constitution
- Accounting Manual
- roles and responsibilities for each position
- all P&C policies
- subcommittee operating guidelines and policies
- contact lists for assistance – including the Principal, Business Services Manager, P&Cs Qld, QAST, Industrial Relations or an Employers Union, ATO, Marsh Advantage Pty Ltd, the Department Regional Office and QCAN (if the P&C operates an OSHC).

For the President and/or Secretary, the handover should include:

- current employee letters of employment and details
- standing orders and/or meeting procedures
- register of P&C members
- register of life members
- minutes books, with minutes from all meetings since the P&C commenced
- motions register (keeping a motions register is a suggestion not a requirement, but it will help the new Executive to continue ongoing actions from past motions)
- templates for the agenda, minutes and financial reports
- meeting attendance book
- list of any important issues/projects to be followed up or continued by the new Executive
- any diary kept by the P&C on issues, events and/or invitations attended by the outgoing Executive
- building fund DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient) status letter from the ATO
- bank form for change of signatories for all P&C accounts.

For the Treasurer, the handover should include:

- books of accounts for current and previous year
- list of subcommittees
- registers for:
  - building fund DGR (Deductible Gift Recipient)
  - assets
  - accountable forms

- auditor's statements and reports for the past seven years, including the current year
- bank form for change of signatories for all P&C accounts.

When a Treasurer resigns during their term in office, the P&C is required to arrange an interim audit of the records and accounts of the P&C and its subcommittees. The outgoing Treasurer is therefore required to provide to their successor-in-office (or to another Executive Officer) all records and accounts of the P&C and any subcommittees as soon as practicable.