

Parents and Citizens' (P&C) Associations and School Boards

What is the difference between a Parents & Citizens' (P&C) Association and an Independent Public School (IPS) School Board?

Both P&Cs and School Boards have valued, but different, roles within public schools.

The Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C) of a school is an associated incorporation under the Associations Incorporation Act 1987. Its purpose is to promote the interests of the school through co-operation between parents, teachers, students and members of the general community; assist in the provision of resources, facilities and amenities for the school; and foster community interest in educational matters.

- The P&C provides parents with opportunities to meet together to determine the needs and aspirations of the school community; share information and views; learn about, help shape school policies and programs; and help raise funds to provide extra resources.
- As an incorporated association, the P&C can obtain funds for the benefit of the school, employ staff other than Department of Education employees, and manage or operate facilities at the school (such as the canteen, swimming pool, residential accommodation for students, or a school farm or horticultural centre).

- The P&C operates within the requirements legislated in the *School Education Act 1999*, the *School Education Regulations 2000*, the *Associations Incorporation Act 1987*, and its P&C Constitution.
- Incorporated associations are a legal entity in their own right, separate from individual members and from the school. As such, they have different and specific reporting requirements, and are bound by the *Associations Incorporation Act 1987*.

The School Board (Council) works in a consultative and decision-making capacity with the school to achieve the best outcomes for students.

- An unincorporated School Board is separate from school management and from the P&C, and is created, and operates, according to requirements legislated in the *School Education Act 1999*, the *School Education Regulations 2000*, and its Terms of Reference.
- The majority of IPS School Boards are unincorporated boards, but can apply to become an incorporated board if they wish to take on higher levels of obligations and powers, additional to those of an unincorporated board. Once incorporated, the principal and the Director General are responsible for the board, which becomes a

separate legal entity to the school, with separate insurance cover requirements. Incorporated boards operate within the requirements legislated in the *School Education Act 1999*, the *School Education Regulations 2000*, the *Associations Incorporations Act 1987* and their Constitution.

- Specifically, the P&C and an incorporated board are separate legal entities to the school, whereas an unincorporated board is not.

What is different about the functions of the P&C and School Board?

P&C members:

- promote the interests of the school through cooperation between parents, teachers, students and members of the general community;
- assist in the provision of resources, facilities and amenities for the school;
- foster community interest in educational matters;
- organise or conduct fundraising or other benefits for the benefit of the school; and
- seek voluntary contributions for the provision of a resource, facility or amenity for the school from parents of students at the school.

School Board members:

- endorse the Delivery and Performance Agreement (DPA);
- endorse and regularly review the school's one-line school budget and business plan;

- review the school's performance through receiving regular reports and data on student achievement;
- determine satisfaction levels of parents, staff and students during the life of the DPA, with results reported in the annual school report;
- endorse the annual school report;
- formulate codes of conduct for students at the school; and
- review general policy directions.

They approve:

- charges and contributions for the provision of certain materials, services and facilities;
- extra cost optional components of educational programs; and
- items to be supplied by a student for use in an educational program, and any agreements or arrangements for advertising or sponsorship in relation to the school.

They also provide advice to the principal of the school:

- on general policy concerning the use in school activities of prayers, songs and material based on religious, spiritual or moral values;
- on the implementation of special religious education; and
- with the approval of the Director General or her delegate take part in the selection process of, but not the appointment of, the school principal or any other member of the teaching staff.

Who can be a member of the P&C?

The P&C Association office bearers include the President, Vice President, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer. The Executive Committee,

which is elected at the Annual General Meeting, consists of these office bearers, the Principal, and at least three financial members for a large school (of more than 100 students), or at least two for a small school (of less than 100 students).

Parents and members of the community are able to attend P&C meetings. They can become financial members on payment of a small fee. *Only* financial members have voting rights at P&C meetings.

Who can be a member of the School Board?

School Board office bearers include the Chair, Principal, and staff, parent and community members. The number of members that will be on the board is a school decision made in accordance with the *School Education Act 1999* and the *School Education Regulations 2000*. The Principal puts in place an Expression of Interest process.

If there are more nominations than places available in the three categories (staff, parents and community members), the Principal conducts an election for *parents/guardians*; and *staff* (any staff member on the school staffing list).

- Staff members are elected from, and by, staff at the school (the Principal is automatically included on the board, in the staff member category).
- Parents are elected from, and by, parents.

- Community members are appointed by the board. The board *appoints* suitably qualified persons from the list of community nominations, by vote, in a meeting. Strong community and business/industry representation is encouraged, to ensure that the School Board makes a significant contribution to the development of the school.
- Students 15 years and over (secondary schools) or students over the age of 18 years (senior colleges) may be elected or co-opted onto the board. Students are elected from, and by, student members.
- Additional community and industry members who have skills, experience or qualifications that will enable them to make a contribution to the board's functions can be co-opted onto the board for a specific time period. Co-opted members are not full members of the board, and they do not have a vote.

Can a P&C member be a member of the School Board?

- Yes. The P&C is entitled to nominate one of its members to be considered for membership of the board in the category of *parent* or *general community* member, as is relevant to the nominee.
- If the P&C nominates a representative for the *parent* category, their nomination is treated the same as any other parent nomination. If there are more nominations than places in

the parent category, an election takes place.

- If the P&C nominates a representative for the *general community* category, their name is put forward for consideration. The board appoints its community members from the list of nominations.
- *School Education Act 1999 (127, (1a, 1b); School Education Regulations 2000 (107 (3)); 108 (2a, 2b).*

Do members represent stakeholder groups once they are on the board?

- School Board members represent the school community. They share the same focus – to ensure that all students achieve to the best of their ability. They do not represent the views or interests of individual stakeholder groups at board meetings. They may, however, be asked to provide input about aspects specific to their area of knowledge or expertise, where relevant.
- Board decisions are recorded in formally endorsed minutes. These should, through the principal, be made available to staff, parents, community members, the P&C, and other key stakeholders.

Can a school board member be a member of the P&C?

- Yes. School Board members are elected or appointed to the board. There is no reason why a board member could not also be a member of the P&C, or elected to the Executive of that P&C. A

School Board member who is also on the P&C does not represent the School Board when attending P&C meetings. Conversely, a P&C member who is also a member of the School Board does not represent the P&C when attending board meetings

Can a parent remain on the P&C or the School Board once their child/children leave the school?

- If a parent representative on the School Board no longer has children attending the school, they relinquish their position on the board. Nominations can be sought for a replacement in the parent category for the residual tenure. The same parent is entitled to nominate for a position on the board in the category of community member, should nominations be sought for a position in that category.
- If a parent representative on the P&C no longer has children attending the school, they can remain on the P&C, but revert to community member status.

Subcommittees

P&C

- Members of the school community can nominate to be on sub-committees that have Terms of Reference specific to that committee. The President is always an ex-officio member of all committees, and all committees must include at least one member of the Executive Committee.

School Boards

- Members can be co-opted onto sub-committees (e.g. buildings and grounds, finance, teaching and learning, community liaison, school promotion), or join board-endorsed working parties to consider short-term issues (uniform, new buildings, road realignment, web page construction). Advice or recommendations are provided to the board. The full board makes final decisions for matters which are part of its responsibility.

What is the relationship between an IPS Principal, the P&C and the School Board?

- As senior Department of Education representative, the Principal is responsible for the educational leadership, operation and management of the school. He/she works closely with the P&C President, as well as the School Board Chair.
- The P&C and School Board are valuable, but separate entities. Members of the School Board and the P&C may work separately, collaboratively, or as part of a bigger school group on school sub-committees, working parties, or projects.

Are P&C and school board meetings open to the public?

All P&C and School Board meetings are open to any member of the school community. However, non-members may not speak unless the Chair gives

them permission to do so. Both hold a formal Annual General Meeting. Seven (P&C) to fourteen days notice (School Boards) must be given before the meetings, which must be publicly advertised. It is customary for the President of the P&C or the School Board Chair to present a comprehensive report of their activities and financial records at the Annual General Meeting

What actions can be taken to ensure the accountability of School Boards and P&Cs?

P&C

- According to the *School Education Act, 1999*, the Director General can, at any time, order the closure or abolition of any resource, facility or amenity provided by a P&C association on school property if it has not been properly established, is not managed properly, is no longer required, or is not operated in a way that is consistent with the ethos of the public education system.
- A P&C that breaches the *School Education Act 1999* or the *Associations Incorporation Act 1987* can be wound up, on application by the Minister, in the Supreme Court.

School Boards

- If a School Board member becomes ineligible to hold office, resigns in writing to the board, or is removed from office by the Director General of Education, their position on the board becomes vacant.

- The board can remove a member if he/she neglects his/her duty, misbehaves, is incompetent, suffers from a mental or physical incapacity other than temporary illness that impairs the performance of their functions as a member, or has been absent without leave or reasonable excuse from three consecutive meetings, of which they have had notice.
- If the conduct of an unincorporated board is incompetent, inadequate or improper, or is in breach of the *School Education Act, 1999*, the Minister can give written notice to the board requiring the situation be remedied within a specified timeline. If the board does not comply with that notice, the Minister can dismiss the board and make provisions that will have minimal impact on students, parents and staff of the school.