



## **SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTIONS – INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES**

### **WHAT IS A SCHOOL COUNCIL AND WHAT DOES IT DO?**

All government schools in Victoria have a school council. They are legally constituted bodies that are given powers to set the key directions of a school within statewide guidelines. In doing this, a school council is able to directly influence the quality of education that the school provides for its students.

### **WHO IS ON THE SCHOOL COUNCIL?**

For most primary school councils, there are several possible categories of membership:

- **A mandated elected parent member category** – more than one-third of the total members must be from this category. Department employees can be parent members at their child's school as long as they are not engaged in work at the school.
  - **A mandated elected school employee member category** – members of this category may make up no more than one-third of the total membership of the school council. The principal of the school is automatically one of these members.
  - **An optional community member category** – members are co-opted by a decision of the council because of their special skills, interests or experiences. Department employees are not eligible to be community members.
- Generally, the term of office for all members is two years. The term of office of half the members expires each year, creating vacancies for the annual school council elections.

### **WHY IS PARENT MEMBERSHIP SO IMPORTANT?**

Parents on school councils provide important viewpoints and have valuable skills that can help inform and shape the direction of the school. Many parents who become active on a school council find their involvement satisfying and may also find that their children feel a greater sense of belonging.

### **DO I NEED SPECIAL EXPERIENCE TO BE ON SCHOOL COUNCIL?**

Each member brings their own valuable life skills and knowledge to the role, councilors may need to develop skills and acquire knowledge in areas that are unfamiliar to them. What you do need is an interest in your child's school and the desire to work in partnership with others to help shape the school's future... and a bit of spare time!

### **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SCHOOL COUNCILORS**

School councils in Victoria are public entities as defined by the *Public Administration Act 2004*.

School councilors must abide by the Code of Conduct for Directors of Victorian Public Entities issued by the Victorian Public Sector Commission. The Code of Conduct is based on the Victorian public sector values and requires councilors to:

- **act with honesty and integrity** – be truthful, open and clear about their motives and declare any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest and duty
- **act in good faith in the best interests of the school** – work cooperatively with other councilors and the school community, be reasonable, and make all decisions with the best interests of students foremost in their minds
- **act fairly and impartially** – consider all relevant facts of an issue before making a decision, seek to have a balanced view, never give special treatment to a person or group and never act from self-interest
- **use information appropriately** – respect confidentiality and use information for the purpose for which it was made available
- **exercise due care, diligence and skill** – accept responsibility for decisions and do what is best for the school
- **use the position appropriately** – not use the position as a councilor to gain an advantage
- **act in a financially responsible manner** – observe all the above principles when making financial decisions
- **comply with relevant legislation and policies** – know what legislation and policies are relevant for which decisions and obey the law
- **demonstrate leadership and stewardship** – set a good example, encourage a culture of accountability, manage risks effectively, exercise care and responsibility to keep the school strong and sustainable.

### **INDEMNITY FOR SCHOOL COUNCILORS**

School councilors are indemnified against any liability in respect of any loss or damage suffered by the council or any other person in respect of anything necessarily or reasonably done, or omitted to be done by the councilor in good faith in:

- a. the exercise of a power or the performance of a function of a councilor, or
- b. the reasonable belief that the act or omission was in the exercise of a power or the performance of a function of a councilor.

In other words, school councilors are not legally liable for any loss or damage suffered by council or others as a result of reasonable actions taken in good faith.



**HOW CAN YOU BECOME INVOLVED?**

The most obvious way is to vote in the school council elections, which are held in Term 1 each year. However, ballots are only held if more people nominate as candidates than there are positions vacant.

In view of this, you might consider:

- Standing for election as a member of the school council
- Encouraging another person to stand for election

If you are interested in hearing more details about what is involved in being a member of the school council, current members are available to provide insight on our processes, directions and the level of involvement required.

**WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO STAND FOR ELECTION?**

All school council elections must follow the timeline that has been set by the Minister. If you decide to stand for election, you can arrange for someone to nominate you as a candidate or you can nominate yourself in the Parent category. DET employees whose child is enrolled in a school in which they are not engaged in work, are eligible to nominate for parent membership of the school council at that school.

Once the nomination form is completed, return it to the principal within the time stated on the Notice of Election. You will receive a Nomination Form Receipt via email following the receipt of your completed nomination.

Generally, if there are more nominations received than there are vacancies on council, a ballot will be conducted during the two weeks after the call for nominations has closed.

**SCHOOL COUNCIL ELECTION PROCESS AND TIMETABLE**

**Please Note:** The timeline of school council elections is directed by legislation and as a result, exceptions and late admissions cannot be accepted.

	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>DATE</b>
a)	Notice of election and call for nominations	Monday 13 February 2023
b)	Closing date for nominations	Monday 27 February - 4pm
c)	Date by which the list of candidates and nominators will be posted	Monday 6 March 2023*
d)	Date by which ballot papers will be prepared and distributed	On or before Monday 20 March 2023*
e)	Close of ballot	Monday 27 March 2023* - 4pm
f)	Vote count	Friday, 31 March 2023*
g)	Declaration of poll/membership	Monday 6 March 2023 (if no ballot required) Monday 3 April 2023*
h)	First council meeting to elect office bearers (the principal will preside)	Thursday, 18 May 2023

*\*if the number of nominations exceeds the number of available positions.*