

Frequently asked questions for school associations

Membership and Committee

Q: Is it essential to have student representatives on the Committee?

It is mandatory for Colleges, recommended for High Schools, and as decided by the association for Primary Schools. See [instructions 3.3](#).

Q: What does "ex-officio" mean? Is the Principal a non-voting member, or a full member of the Committee like the rest?

It means, "By virtue of an office or position". The Principal is a full member with full voting rights.

Q: If half the Committee members must retire after one year, what will happen if no-one else volunteers, or is nominated, for these roles?

There is nothing to stop these same members re-nominating for these roles - it just ensures that there is an annual opportunity for people to stand for election.

Q: If a parent of, say, a grade 6 student, is elected to the Committee, can they continue after the child has moved on to grade 7 at another school, or is there a need for them to resign?

The elected person may stay on until the AGM. Your Association can decide how it wants to handle this.

Q: Won't it take weeks for someone to draw up the register of members?

No. The only names which need to be recorded are those of parents, students or staff who wish to "opt out", and members of the general community whose membership has been approved by the Association. See [Instructions 3.1](#). There is a suggested model register on this web site.

Q: How do we appoint a life member of our Association?

An Association would have to amend its Constitution to appoint life members.

Q: Our school has a co-principal. Can that person be a member of the Committee?

A co-principal can be a voting member of the Committee. They must be one of the "Staff members" as defined in the Constitution although they do not need to be elected from staff.

The total number of parent and community members must at least equal the total number of staff members (including the co-principal) plus the principal.

Q: One of our Committee office bearers is away. Can we appoint a replacement until they return?

The Committee may make an acting appointment from within the Committee. If that person is an acting treasurer they would also need to be a Bank account signatory.

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Parent Input

Q: How is the parent voice heard in the school?

School Associations should make arrangements for committees that accommodate the needs of the community.

Each School Association is required by the Instructions to provide a parent forum. The form that this takes will vary from school to school. It may be that the P&F becomes a committee of the School Association that represents the parent voice to the school association, or provides a forum for parent discussion of policy issues to be debated within the school, or it may be that the open meetings of the School Association provide a place for parent discussion.

Q: Where does parent representation come from?

Each group within the school community, including the parent body, elect members from nominated members of that group. Within the requirements of the Instructions for School Associations, each School

Association can select the processes for election to suit the size and formality of its school community.

Q: How is the spending of money from fundraising committees to be decided?

This is a matter to be decided in each school community. It is reasonable that any fundraising committee should be able to recommend the ways in which it would prefer monies raised to be used.

Processes for making decisions relating to the expenditure of funds raised are the sorts of issues that would be discussed with school groups during the process of documenting their terms of reference (see below).

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Sub Committee and Working Groups

Q: What are Terms of Reference?

The Instructions, at [section 2.5](#), require that sub-committees and working groups operate according to documented terms of reference. These detail the tasks required and clarify the powers and responsibilities of the committee or working group. A [template](#) [Word 46KB] is available that includes a detailed explanation.

Q: Can our Parents and Friends be a sub-committee or working group?

Yes, if the P&F is not incorporated.

An incorporated body cannot be a sub-committee or working group of an incorporated or unincorporated Association.

If the P&F is incorporated both organisations can work together to achieve common goals.

Q: Who controls the Bank Account?

If the P&F is incorporated it would be a separate legal entity and would have its own separate bank account. In this situation the P&F can not be a sub-committee or working group of the Association.

If an unincorporated P&F or other unincorporated body is a sub-committee or working group, the Bank Account must be changed to the name of the School Association but may include extra reference to a sub-committee or working group. For example, "The Summerhill School Association P&F sub-committee".

The policy concerning Banking can be found on the [Policy](#) page.

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Incorporation

Q: How do we know if our association is incorporated?

If your association incorporated it will have 'Inc' at the end of its name. See also the next question.

Q: We can't find any letters from Consumer Affairs to confirm that our incorporation was actually registered? We may have missed this final step!

You can search the National Names Index at <http://www.search.asic.gov.au/gns001.html> or check with Consumer Affairs on 03 6233 3450.

Q: Should our association become incorporated?

There is no requirement that an association become incorporated although it is recommended, especially where there are monies or trading involved. The reason is that if the association is an incorporated association, individual members cannot be held liable for the debts and liabilities of the association, beyond the extent specified in the Constitution of the association.

Q: Our association wishes to become incorporated, how do we do that?

You will need to transfer the current constitution to a new incorporated constitution template. Templates and checklists are available on this web site.

When you have filled out the details on the template, follow the steps in the question under the heading 'Constitution Changes', below.

Q: Our Parents and Friends is incorporated. What steps should we take if we want the Association to be the sole incorporated body?

If the School Association is not incorporated the P&F can simply transfer its incorporation to the Association. There is no charge for this. (The association constitution will need to be changed as per the steps under the heading 'Constitution Changes'.)

If the Association is already incorporated the P&F can relinquish its incorporation.

In either case the P&F is then able to legally become a sub-committee of the School Association and both bodies will have the benefits of incorporation.

Q: How do we find out more information about incorporation?

Incorporation of community groups is managed by the Office of Consumer Affairs and fair Trading, which offers advice either by phone contact or on its [website](#).

Requirements for incorporated associations are all covered on the website. It includes appointing an auditor, annual returns, changing the name of an incorporated body and changing the body which is the incorporated body, and made easy by the [forms](#) and information provided.

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Constitution Changes

Q: How do we change our constitution?

All constitution changes must be approved by the Minister. These are the steps:

1. Send an electronic draft of the proposed constitution to the Manager, Business Development at rob.dalton@education.tas.gov.au who will check it for compliance with the Secretary's Instructions. (This may save time later as problems can be fixed before the next step.)
2. Hold a Special Meeting of the School Association to approve the changes. See Section 6 of your Constitution for the procedures.

3. After the meeting send an electronic draft to the Manager, Business Development and confirm that a Special Meeting has passed the constitutional changes.

4. When checked it will be forwarded to the Minister of Education for approval. The Minister will send you a letter saying whether or not the Constitution is approved and any next steps.

5. If approved, incorporated associations will need to lodge the changes with Consumer Affairs. (If you are also transferring a P&F incorporation to your Association, do that at the same time.)

Other

Q: Can the school assist an Association which has no funds and no income?

Schools are permitted to provide financial assistance if an association has no funds.