

Parents' Club Operations – Frequently Asked Questions

Parent Clubs are not part of School Councils. Neither the Principal nor the School Council President has the authority to dissolve or remodel the Parent Club. The information pertaining to Parent Club operations on the DET website is compulsory for all clubs and schools to follow.

1. Is the Parent Club operation information on the DET website compulsory for schools?

Yes. Schools are required to follow the Department's policy regarding the establishment, operation and dissolution of Victorian government school parents' clubs. Schools can find this information in the School Policy and Advisory Guide at:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/parentclubs.aspx>

2. Why do Parent Clubs have to be constituted if they are not recognised as a public entity?

Regulation 51 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 requires that a parents' club for a Victorian government school must be formed in accordance with Part 4, Division 7 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017. This means that a parents' club can only be formed in accordance with the regulations.

The model constitution for parents' clubs provides a sound governance framework for a parents' club to operate and function efficiently and effectively, by setting out clear and transparent procedures for matters such as financial management, elections, meetings, record keeping and removing members from office. This plays a valuable role in managing potential issues (such as conflicts or disputes) within the club. It also ensures that funds are dealt with appropriately and transparently. Part 4, Division 7 sets out specific requirements for the establishment of a parents' club, including the club's constitution. In particular, regulation 53(1)(4) requires that the constitution for a parents' club must be consistent with the model constitution published by the Secretary from time to time.

3. How often and in what format are schools expected to report (i.e. financial statement) to Parent Clubs?

Principals and Business Managers are encouraged to work closely with parents' clubs and on request (usually once per month), provide the club with a copy of the sub-program's CASES21 Variance Report and Transaction Report. *

4. If my school is not complying with DET policy re PC operations after I have raised it with them directly, who do I contact?

Parents' clubs are encouraged to first raise any issues with the school's Principal. If the parents' club is not satisfied that the issue(s) have been resolved, the club is encouraged to contact the School Operations and Governance Unit, Department of Education and Training on 9637 3124 or at: community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au

5. What happens if the school refuses to discuss with the parent club re the spending of the parent group raised funds?

If the Principal has indicated they are unable to provide the parents' club with a copy of the CASES21 Variance Report and Transaction Report and/or the school council has indicated they are unable to discuss with the club the spending of the club's funds, the club can contact the School Operations and Governance Unit on 9637 3124 or at: community.stakeholders@edumail.vic.gov.au. *

6. Can a former PC member (past President) chair the election of our office bearers? (i.e. DET references a Principal, teacher or SRO chairing the election. Why not a past PC President)

Under regulation 53(4) of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017, the constitution of a parents' club must be consistent with the model constitution published by the Secretary from time to time.

Section 5 of the model constitution sets out requirements for the election of office bearers. It states that *"Elections shall be conducted by an independent person, such as the Principal, a teacher at the school or a senior regional officer of the Department of Education and Training (none of which are current members or are nominated for office). . ."*

The purpose of this requirement is to protect the integrity of the election process, by ensuring that elections are conducted fairly and without the risk of actual or apprehended bias. Generally speaking, a past President of a parents' club would not be an "independent person" as required under the model constitution. This is because a past President would have direct previous involvement with the parents' club, and may have personal knowledge of or opinions about the members nominated for election, or particular issues affecting the club. *

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7. Do we need a Treasurer if we are under Option A? Or can the school just supply the PC with the financial reports so the parent club can discuss at a parent club meeting?

Under the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017, parents' clubs are no longer permitted to operate an Option B bank account. It is mandatory for all parents' clubs to operate an Option A bank account

Under the current model constitution, a parents' club must have a Treasurer. All parents' clubs must comply with this requirement.

8. Would DET advise Parent Clubs to be incorporated? If not, why not?

Parents' clubs in Victorian government schools cannot be incorporated. Under regulation 51, a parents' club for a Victorian government school may only be formed in accordance with the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017. The Regulations do not provide for parents' clubs to incorporate.

9. How much money can be held in a parent club / school account?

The regulations do not limit the amount of money that can be held in a parents' club/school account. However, all funds in a parents' club subprogram must be managed strictly in accordance with the regulations.

The Department does not consider it best practice for large unallocated sums of money to sit in a club's sub-program. If funds are raised for a particular purpose, they should be allocated and expended for that purpose. If funds were raised under Section 58(1)(a) of the Regulations, the use of these funds is at the discretion of the council. The Department considers it best practice that the council discuss early on with the club what the funds will be used for, thus allocating the money to a particular project and detailing this as a line item in CASES21.

While a Club may have a large balance sitting in its sub-program, the majority of this money should be allocated against the purpose which was agreed upon by both the club and the council (Section 58(1)(b) of the Regulations) and not for any undisclosed and undecided "future project". *
For further information, please see regulation 54 (general requirements regarding funds) and regulations 58 and 59 (fundraising).

10. How should a school allow parent club volunteers to access petty cash funds?

The Department notes that there is nothing which precludes the operation of petty cash for a parents' club. Schools are required to establish and operate a petty cash advance under the conditions outlined in Section 11.10 the Finance Manual for Victorian Government Schools. The limit on any one payment through petty cash is \$200.

11. Why do members have to pay a fee to join a Parent Club?

Per the model constitution all members must pay an Annual Membership Fee. Upon paying the Annual Membership Fee, a person becomes a Financial Member of the Club for one school year. Only Financial Members are eligible to vote at any Club meeting or for election to any office in the Club.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/community/Pages/parentclubs.aspx>

12. What should happen if a School Council rejects a Parent Club's request for prior approval to expend funds raised, on a particular item/s?

The school council must not reject any proposed fundraising activity until it has considered a recommendation by a committee consisting of:

- the president of the school council or the president's nominee, who must be the chairperson; and
- one other representative of the school council elected for the purpose by the school council; and
- two representatives of the club; and
- the principal.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/Pages/parentclub.aspx#link3>

13. Can a Parent Club still have it's own bank account? (Refer Q 7)

Under the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017, parent clubs are no longer permitted to operate an Option B bank account. It is mandatory for all parents' clubs to operate an Option A bank account.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/Pages/parentclub.aspx#link20>

14. Do we need to have our books audited?

No, the club's finances will be audited along with those of the school.

15. If we raise in excess of \$10K per annum, do we need to register with Consumer Affairs Victoria?

No. Due to the removal of Option B financial arrangement there is no longer a requirement.

16. Have the rules around School Raffles changed?

If a club plans to raise funds by means of a raffle or bingo or other minor gambling activities, permission and instructions must be obtained from the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation, see: Community and Charitable Gaming Application Process and Requirements.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/Pages/parentclub.aspx#link3>