Introduction to School Council: a guide for prospective members
What is a school council?

• Is a legally formed body that is given powers to set the key directions of a school
• Is the major governing body of the school
• Plays an important role in school accountability and improvement processes
• Endorses the key school planning, evaluation and reporting documents
Legal framework

• *Education and Training Reform Act* 2006
• *Education and Training Reform Regulations* 2007
• Individual school council's constituting order

All school council decision-making takes place within a framework of legislated powers, Ministerial Orders, directions, guidelines and DEECD policy.
Objectives of school council

- Assist in the efficient governance of the school
- Ensure students’ best interests are primary
- Enhance the educational opportunities for students
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and regulations
What is the function of school council?

- Establish the broad direction and vision of the school within the school's community
- Participate in the development and monitoring of the school strategic plan
- Develop, review and update school policies
- Develop, review and monitor the Student Engagement Policy and the School Dress Code
- Raise funds for school-related purposes
- Approve the annual budget and monitor expenditure
- Maintain the school’s grounds and facilities
- Enter into contracts (e.g. cleaning, construction work)
- Report annually to the school community and to DEECD
- Generally stimulate interest in the school in the wider community
School council does not...

• Manage the school
• Employ ongoing teaching staff with no fixed date for termination
• Represent sectional interests
• Renew the principal's contract or hire and fire the school principal
• Determine class allocations
• Discuss individual issues between teachers and students and/or parents
• Purchase land or buildings
• Enter into hire purchase agreements or obtain credit or loan facilities, unless authorised by the Minister
Key partnerships

- Principal and school council president
- President and subcommittee convenors
- Council members
- Staff and parents and school council
- School council and DEECD
Who is on school council?

• There are 3 categories of membership:
  • Parent members
  • DEECD employee members
  • Community (co-opted) members (optional)

• School councillors are elected for a two-year term

• Terms, rights and responsibilities of community members are the same as those of elected councillors
School council subcommittees

- School councillors would normally sit on at least one subcommittee

- Sub-committees might include:
  - Finance
  - Environment/grounds/facilities/buildings
  - Educational policy
  - Community liaison/community building/community relations
  - Other – e.g. outside school hours care, canteen
What is the role of school council members?

- All school councillors need to respect other members’ opinions AND support and uphold all council decisions.
- Parent members bring expertise and views to council on behalf of the whole school community.
- DEECD members bring educational expertise and views to council on behalf of the whole school community.
- Community representatives tend to bring individual expertise to assist council in specific decisions.
Do I have what it takes to be on school council?

• You need to be keen, but you don’t need to be an expert

• You need to like people and be able to work in a team

• You do need to be prepared to commit the time needed to ensure the work of council gets done

• School councils work best when they have people from a variety of backgrounds and have different experiences
Why would I want to be on school council?

• It’s a great way to get involved and have a real say in what your school is doing for its students

• It’s a very good way to help present and future students of the school

• Your children may feel a greater sense of belonging with the school
What is the workload?

- School council must meet at least 8 times in each year, and at least once per school term
- Meetings should be restricted to approximately 2.5 hours duration at most
- In many schools, all school councillors are expected to sit on at least one subcommittee
- Subcommittees generally meet at least twice each term
What about the elections?

• The principal arranges and conducts the elections

• These are held in February or March each year

• If you decide to stand for election, you can arrange for someone to nominate you as a candidate or you can nominate yourself

• Your nomination form needs to be returned within the time stated on the Notice of Election and Call for Nominations

• Ballots are only held if more people nominate as candidates than there are positions to fill

• Make sure you vote and encourage other parents to do the same
Where can I find out more?

- The principal
- The school council president
- Past and present school councillors
- Community and Stakeholder Relations Branch (DEECD)
- Volunteer for a subcommittee that interests you
Professional development available for school councillors

- Online professional development packages and information sheets
- Regional workshops and seminars
- Professional development provided by peak school council organisations (e.g. VICCSO, ASCIV)
For more information