



# Chair

## Roles and Responsibilities

School Representative Body

Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations

# Overview

As an elected Parent Member<sup>1</sup> and Office Bearer of the School Representative Body, the Chair will need to develop a good working relationship with the Principal and members to ensure effective and efficient governance.<sup>2</sup> The Chair must be a Parent Member and cannot be a Principal or teacher of any NT Government school. It is also helpful to develop a good relationship with the school administration staff to assist with the practicalities of the role.

The most important attribute of a Chair is their passion and commitment to achieving the best possible outcomes for all the children of the school, balanced by respect, fairness and understanding.

This may require the Chair to be a tactical thinker who understands meeting procedure and is friendly, confident, consistent, patient, impartial and objective. An effective Chair has the skill to coordinate the members to work effectively together to reach the School Representative Body's agreed goals.

The Chair cannot work effectively without a good knowledge of what a School Representative Body's purpose, objectives, functions and structure are. These are outlined in the School Constitution.

This means:

- having a good understanding of the Constitution, and the roles, responsibilities and rights of members and Office Bearers and;
- being able to manage meeting procedure to support productive discussion among members and meet legal requirements.

<sup>1</sup> Education Regulations, Clause 24 (1).

<sup>2</sup> DoE Guidelines: School Council, page 2.

# Managing Relationships

The Chair provides leadership<sup>3</sup> to the School Representative Body. They must develop good working relationships to be an effective leader.

## With the Principal

A key element of the Chair's role is to develop a constructive working relationship with the Principal, which may mean putting personalities aside and agreeing to work for the good of the school; it is however, generally a very simple and agreeable task.

The success of the relationship is critical to the effective operation of the School Representative Body and the school.

## Within the School Representative Body

It is equally important for the Chair to manage relationships within the School Representative Body. School Representative Bodies are most effective when all members feel free to contribute and are satisfied that they have been provided with the opportunity to be actively involved in the discussion and decision-making process.

An effective Chair is both facilitator and mentor to inexperienced members and manager of the more vocal members.

## Within the School Community

The Chair should be available to the wider school community. It is important though to not be drawn into school management issues. Departmental guidelines provide the following direction:

"A complaint about a teacher, staff and/or principal must be managed according to the department's Complaints Management (Schools) policy and guidelines.

A complaint about a School Representative Body member that is not a department staff member must be directed to the School Representative Body Chair. A School Representative Body must have an established process to manage complaints about members."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> DoE Guidelines: School Council, Appendix D, page 19.

<sup>4</sup> DoE Guidelines: School Council, page 3.

# The Public Face

“Public statements made on behalf of the School Representative Body shall only be made by the Chair or Principal or such other person specifically chosen by the School Representative Body and provided that such statements reflect the agreed policy or true intent of the School Representative Body.”<sup>5</sup>

The Chair keeps the school community informed of School Representative Body decisions and activities<sup>6</sup> through the schools usual methods of communication. Common mediums include school newsletters, social media, website, noticeboard or digital applications.

It is the Chair who signs documents that require official endorsement on behalf of the School Representative Body. Examples of these include amendments to the Constitution, Audited Financial Statements, Annual Improvement Plans and grant applications.

At the **Annual General Meeting** the Chair reports on the activities and decisions of the School Representative Body in the prior year.

The Chair may also be requested to make appearances at school assemblies, welcome guests and speak at the end of year Assembly/Concert.

<sup>5</sup> Education Act: Section 108 (4), Model Constitution, Clause 15.3.

<sup>6</sup> DoE Guidelines: School Council, Appendix D, page 19.

# Meeting preparation

The Chair shall:

- meet with the Secretary prior to each School Representative Body meeting to set the Agenda for the meeting and discuss any correspondence that needs actioning. It is good practice to include the Principal in these discussions to ensure common understanding, build respect and create transparency
- call the General Meetings. The dates and times of regular School Representative Body Meetings must be advertised at least seven days in advance to reach and inform the school community.<sup>7</sup> It is best practice to include the length of the meeting as this encourages better participation
- work with the School Representative Body to establish the most suitable meeting dates, time and venue. It is best practice to establish a forward planner of meeting dates. This can then form part of the useful communication with the wider school community, inviting them to attend meetings as guests
- read the correspondence and any reports or other information coming in so they are familiar with the content of the agenda<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Model Constitution, Clause 11.2 and 11.10.

<sup>8</sup> DoE Guidelines: School Council; Appendix D page 19.

# Chairing Meetings

For meetings to be effective, the Chair shall:

- ensure that there is a quorum before starting the meeting<sup>9</sup> and start the meeting on time
- be a time keeper and ensure that the meeting does not go longer than the allocated time
- ensure that all members have the information they need to make their contribution to the meeting
- allow time for members to read the minutes of the previous meeting and then ask for them to confirm the minutes. (The best practice approach is to encourage all members to review their papers prior to the meeting)
- include all members in the decision-making process
- keep discussion short and to the point whilst ensuring all members have the opportunity to contribute
- be impartial and avoid leading the meeting.<sup>10</sup> For example, the Chair should not propose a resolution nor make it obvious how they want a resolution to be framed. This is distinct from the Chair summing up or paraphrasing the member's discussion.
- sum up discussion and make sure members understand a motion before going ahead with a vote
- ensure that only members vote on motions
- introduce Guest Speakers and ask for a vote of thanks to them when they've made their presentation
- close the meeting<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Education Regulations: Clause 27 (8).

<sup>10</sup> Education Regulations: Clause 27 (10).

<sup>11</sup> DoE Guidelines: School Council; Appendix D, page 19.

# Term of Office

The Chair's term of office is identical to that of their Parent Member position.

The term of office for a Parent Member is two years, with a maximum of 6 consecutive years (three terms).

On completion of the Chair's term in office they must hand over to the incoming Chair all electronic and hard copy documentation and property belonging to the School Representative Body. In the absence of an incoming Chair all documentation should be provided to the Principal.

*"The School Representative Body provides big picture strategic direction.*

*They ask the important questions.*

*They make the big decisions.*

*The Principal and Business Manager run the day to day operations of the school and manage the operational functions of the school.*

*An elected member ALWAYS acts in good faith and in the best interests of ALL students of the school.*

*Conflict of Interest (Perceived, Potential or Actual) is promptly declared and appropriately handled."*



Produced by:



**YOUR VOICE FOR NT PUBLIC EDUCATION**

Street address: Ethos House, 270 Trower Rd, Casuarina NT 0810

Postal address: PO Box 40520, Casuarina NT 0811

(08) 8999 3255 | [www.ntcogso.org.au](http://www.ntcogso.org.au)

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