



Chair

Roles and Responsibilities

School Representative Body

NORTHERN TERRITORY COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT SCHOOL ORGANISATIONS

Table of Contents

1. Role of the Chair
2. Knowing the job
3. Managing relationships
4. The public face of the School Representative Body
5. Putting decisions into action
6. Keeping your school community informed
7. Being prepared for Meetings
8. Chairing Meetings
9. Stepping down from the Chair to speak at a meeting
10. Training

1. Role of the Chair

The Chair is elected from the parent members of the School Representative Body.

The Chair has to be a judge, referee and tactical thinker who understands meeting procedure and is friendly, confident, consistent, patient, impartial and objective.

An effective Chair leads by example, not by directing the other members, and her or his most important skill is to get the members to work effectively together to reach the School Representative Body's goals.

2. Knowing the job

The Chair can't work effectively without a good knowledge of what a School Representative Body is supposed to do and how your particular Body does it. That means:

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

3. Managing relationships

With the Principal

A key element in the Chair's role is developing a constructive working relationship with the School 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 at their best when everyone feels free to make a contribution and is satisfied that they have had their say.

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

4. The public face of the School Representative Body

A Chair is the School Representative Body's only spokesperson, unless she or he delegates the task to another member.

Any statements the Chair or delegate makes have to follow the Constitution and any decisions the School Representative Body has made. They should not reflect personal opinions. The Chair can also be expected to make occasional appearances at school assemblies and will usually be asked to welcome guests and speak at the End of Year Assembly. She or he will also welcome guests to meetings.

5. Putting decisions into action

The School Representative Body can direct the Chair to follow-up on a resolution, for example by writing or signing a letter to the Minister or DoE, interviewing a contractor, and representing the School Representative Body on an interview panel.

The Chair will also sign any documents that need an official School Representative Body signature.

6. Keeping your school community informed

There are two aspects to this area of a Chair's responsibility:

- see to it that all members have the information they need to make their contribution to the meeting
- keep the broader school community informed about what the School Representative Body is doing through the school newsletter or regular messages to parents.

7. Being prepared for Meetings

The Chair should:

- meet the Secretary before every School Representative Body meeting to set the agenda for the meeting and discuss any correspondence that needs dealing with
- read the correspondence and any reports or other information coming in so she or he is familiar with the content of the agenda.

8. Chairing meetings

To be an effective Chair who can make meetings truly effective, the Chair should:

- make sure that there is a quorum before starting the meeting
- start the meeting on time
- allow time for members to read the Minutes of the previous meeting and then ask for them to confirm the Minutes
- be impartial and avoid leading the meeting (e.g. the Chair should not propose a resolution nor make it obvious how she or he wants a resolution to be framed)
- include all members in the decision-making process
- keep discussion short and to the point
- sum up any discussion and make sure members understand a resolution before going ahead with a vote
- introduce guest speakers and ask for a vote of thanks for them when they've made their presentation
- close the meeting.

9. Stepping down from the Chair to speak at a meeting

Being Chair does not stop you from speaking on an issue you feel strongly about. But you first have to step down for the length of the discussion and ask someone else to take the chair and run the meeting for you.

You don't speak from the Chair if you want to make a contribution. And if you are 'in the Chair' you have a deliberate vote.

A deliberative vote is a vote given to a person because they are a member. The term is usually applied to people who chair the meeting. The Chair does not have a casting vote in the event of a tie.

10. Training

Training Officers are available to come to your School Representative Body meetings to talk to your members.

If you would like further training for your School Representative Body please contact the NT COGSO office.

NT COGSO offers training in:

- Understanding Governance
- Structure, Leadership and Management
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Effective Meetings
- Finance
- Rules and Policies
- Disputes and Conflicts
- Partnerships and Relationships
- Culture, Community and Governance.

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