

What is a P&C Association?

A Parents and Citizens' Association (P&C Association) is a school-based organisation consisting of parents, teachers and interested citizens. P&C Associations exist in almost every Public School in NSW. They are created to bring the school and the community into close cooperation.

Parent-school organisations have existed for 150 years in one form or another. They are a great tradition and have long been recognised by Act of Parliament as the representative voice of parents with children in Public Schools. They are supported at a state level by the Federation of P&C Associations of NSW and nationally by the Australian Council of State School Organisations.

Whether it is called a P&C Association or any other name, these parent-school groups play a vital role in:

- Facilitating cooperation between the students, teachers and community;
- Providing facilities and equipment for the school;
- Encouraging parent participation in curriculum and other education issues;
- Sharing information to benefit the school community;
- Advocating for local educational improvements; and
- Promoting Public Education.

The reason P&C Associations have continued to thrive in Public Schools is because parents have seen how joining the P&C Association at their children's school makes a significant difference to educational outcomes.

Why should I join the P&C?

Recent research has shown that the vital ingredient for students' engagement and learning is parental participation.

Schooling is a complex process and student disengagement from learning is happening as early as primary school at increasing rates. Children need help and support from their parents to succeed at school. Parents cannot fully understand the changes that have taken place in education in the last few decades unless they see it in action. Parents are encouraged to become involved in identifying and advocating for educational improvements through participation in their local P&C.

In Public Schools there are legislated guarantees for parent participation. Parents are entitled to receive complete information about their children's progress as well as the courses and educational programs on offer at the school. They also have a right to know and participate in the development of plans and policies for the running of the school. These include the school's approach to student welfare and discipline, finance, excursions and many others. These rights exist because the government has recognised the importance of parental involvement and understanding in the educational process. However, on their own,

many parents do not know their rights or understand how to use them effectively. Active involvement and information sharing are available to every parent who joins their local P&C. Not only do P&Cs support the school as a whole, but they are a great support for the parents who get involved.

How much time does it take?

P&C Associations are made up of busy and committed parents. The role of the P&C is unique to every school and is determined by the parents who attend meetings. Most P&C Associations meet once a month. As decisions can only be made by the agreement of a majority of members, meetings are an important part of P&C procedures. Members do not need to attend every meeting, however, regular attendance is the best way to find out what is happening. It will also ensure that decisions are carried out and funds are spent according to the wishes of the majority.

In addition to attending meetings, parents can participate in activities such as covering books for the library, help with reading programs, support with sporting functions and excursions, school finance and many more. The P&C hosts these activities and creates openings for parent participation in a school.

Many associations are establishing electronic communications networks, email news groups and telephone trees for those who can't attend meetings. These, together with the regular newsletter, ensure that parents are fully informed and their opinions are heard.