

FACT SHEET 11: VOLUNTARY SCHOOL CONTRIBUTIONS AND SUBJECT FEES

NSW Government policy enables all schools to request contributions from parents to enhance their educational and sporting programs.

Towards the end of each school year Principals review their budgetary requirements for the following year. The level of voluntary contributions and subject contributions is made by the Principal in consultation with the school community through structures such as the Finance Committee, P&C Association and School Council.

Ken Dixon, Department of Education and Training, 28 March 2008 writes:

“School contribution levels will be capped in 2008. Those schools which, in 2007, set their voluntary contributions at or below the earlier assessed state-wide averages of \$80 for secondary schools and \$37 for primary schools are permitted to increase contribution levels to \$82 and \$38 respectively. All other schools are permitted to increase their voluntary contributions by a maximum of 2.7% on 2007 levels.”

P&C Federation is committed to a free public education system which is open to all irrespective of socio-economic status. It is therefore fundamental that parents are advised by the Principal that school contributions and subject fees are entirely voluntary and payment is a matter for decision by parents.

The collection of parental contributions is governed by the Department's Code of Practice which was issued to schools in 1995 which states that Principals must ensure that no student or family suffers any discrimination or embarrassment over failure to make a contribution.

Fees that may exist in schools are:

- Voluntary contributions – a contribution paid to the school by parents.
- Subject fees – a fee covering the costs of a particular subject, usually an elective subject in secondary schools.
- Educational Support – a fee covering resources such as books and other equipment.

Schools may request from parents a payment to cover the purchase of materials used in particular elective subjects that go beyond the minimum requirements of the curriculum. These payments are also voluntary. However, parents who are unable to pay these fees because of financial hardship may be eligible for assistance from the Student Assistance Scheme or other appropriate sources and are able to speak to the Principal about this.

Voluntary School Contributions should not be confused with membership fees or voluntary contributions made to a P&C Association. The School Voluntary Contribution payment goes to the school, not to the P&C Association.

