

Information Sheet No.21

Collection of Voluntary Contributions by P&Cs

Funding for ACT government schools is provided by the ACT and Commonwealth Governments and administered by the ACT Department of Education, Youth and Family Services. Schools wanting to do more than provide a good basic education for students, depend upon the financial contribution made by parents to meet the expectations which parents have in regard to their children's education.

School boards have a significant level of responsibility in the use of resources in schools. Section 27 of the *Education Act 2004* provides for the school board of a government school to ask the parents of a child enrolled at the school to make a voluntary financial contribution to the school. Most schools ask parents to make contributions towards the cost of additional resources such as computers, library books, sporting equipment and other materials. The amounts parents are asked to contribute are decided by school boards and vary from school to school.

Schools ask for a financial contribution as a way of seeking support from parents while recognising that those who are not in a position to contribute financially are not expected to do so. Voluntary financial assistance may be requested from parents as an annual general purpose payment and/or specific purpose payments to provide additional resources for student learning programs.

If your P&C association is responsible for the collection of the parental contributions, you need to be aware that there is no legal basis for levying parents any compulsory financial contribution for public education. It is important therefore, when you are requesting the parental contribution, that you follow appropriate guidelines. These include:

- stressing the benefit of increased resources to both students and parents;
- be as specific as possible about what the voluntary contribution will be used for;
- informing parents in your communication with them of the voluntary nature of
- contributions, whether for general contributions or for specific purposes such as
- subject materials;
- offering parents the opportunity to pay voluntary contributions by installments where possible.

There should be no financial disincentive in paying by installments

- ensuring that individual records of parent contributions are confidential and
- access to them is limited to those administering the collection and accounting of
- contributions and

• being aware that, if parents/guardians decline to make a financial contribution, the school is unable to:

deprive the student of any curriculum program
discriminate against or embarrass students or
refuse to issue a reference, report or ID card.

As a result of the deliberations of a Departmental Working Party, which included representatives from P&C Council, a definitive statement on financial contributions from parents was issued. It is available on the Department's website at <http://www.decs.act.gov.au/policies/policies.htm>

If you have any questions or concerns relating to voluntary contributions please contact P&C Council on 6241 5759.★