

Information Sheet No.11

The roles and responsibilities of subcommittees

Most P&C associations set up sub-committees at one time or another for specific planning and/or management tasks on behalf of the Association. A sub-committee is one which has a particular duty; this can be for a specific period of time or ongoing from year to year as, for example, the canteen committee. The P&C association should decide how the sub-committee will operate. These operational guidelines should be recorded and should be made available whenever requested.

What is the relationship between sub-committees and the Association?

Sub-committees have delegated authority and are fully accountable to the Association. Each sub-committee must operate within the terms of reference or rules set for it by the Association. Sometimes a sub-committee may write its own rules but these must be properly endorsed by the Association before the sub-committee begins its work.

A proper sub-committee must:

be elected by the Association

conform to the rules of operation drawn up or endorsed by the Association

report regularly to the Association

hand over any profits which may have resulted from the sub-committee's activities, after all operational costs have been met.

A sub-committee does not have a constitution separate from the Association's, nor a separate set of office bearers. The head of the sub-committee is known as the convenor or chairperson.

Your P&C must take an active role in ensuring regular communication as you are ultimately accountable for the actions of each sub-committee. You need to be familiar with the work of any sub-committees particularly if you are responsible for employing staff. P&C office-bearers should be involved in the recruitment and selection of employees. Problems can arise if a sub-committee does not report regularly to the P&C.

Sub-committees should therefore report to the P&C general meeting on a regular basis, preferably in writing. **Problems can arise if a sub-committee does not report regularly to the P&C. The sub-committee must understand that it is answerable to the P&C.**

Membership of sub-committees

Members of a sub-committee are elected at the AGM or at the time the committee is formed. The P&C President is automatically a member of all sub-committees. It is advisable to have a

second member of the P&C Executive Committee on each sub-committee. Paid employees of the sub-committees, for example, canteen staff, can participate as observers only; they should not have voting rights on the committee. If the P&C wishes the Principal to be on a sub-committee, s/he can be elected or made an ex-officio member.

Operation of sub-committees

After the committee is formed, it may elect its own convenor, secretary and treasurer. The sub-committee determines its meeting times; at least one P&C office-bearer should attend these meetings.

Continued →

Information Sheet No.11

The roles and responsibilities of subcommittees (continued)

How can the P&C association handle the issue of sub-committees acting outside of their operational guidelines?

It is important that all sub-committees of the P&C association have guidelines that the P&C sets for the operation of the committee. These guidelines should provide the sub-committee with a clear understanding of its responsibilities.

If a sub-committee continues to ignore its responsibilities, the P&C may have no choice but to disband the committee. The Executive committee would then take over the running of the business that the sub-committee was operating.

Can sub-committees hold and operate separate bank accounts?

Yes but each sub-committee's books must be submitted for audit when the Association itself undergoes its annual audit. Further, a sub-committee has no discretion to commit funds, beyond meeting operational costs, for the purchase of school resources.

Since the treasurer of the P&C is responsible for all funds received and expended by any sub-committee, the accounts of a sub-committee must be accessible to the P&C treasurer. A sub-committee may make recommendations to the P&C about the expenditure of its profits but the ultimate decision rests with the P&C association and such expenditure should be approved by a general meeting of the P&C association.

Are sub-committees covered by P&C Association insurance?

All P&C Association insurance extends to subcommittees provided the four characteristics of a proper subcommittee are met (see above). This is essential to limit an Association's overall exposure to risk.

What is the role of the school principal on sub-committees?

The principal is ex officio a member of the Association and its sub-committees. Ex officio members do not have a right of veto or the right to gag Association or sub-committee discussions. However, it is incumbent on the principal to highlight disparities between Association/subcommittee discussions and Department policies. Ex officio members must be given notice of every Association and sub-committee meeting but their inability to attend is not adequate grounds to postpone or cancel any Association/sub-committee meeting.

[Council gratefully acknowledges that some information included on this page relevant to the ACT was sourced from the NSW Federation of Parents & Citizens Associations Inc. http://www.pandc.org.au/fs_03subcommittees.asp]★