

Information Sheet No.14

Voting Rights

Who is eligible to vote at a P&C Association meeting?

Membership eligibility is prescribed in the Association's constitution. All members of an Association are entitled to vote. In the ACT membership of the P&C is usually open to "all parents of students enrolled at the school", and a membership fee is not levied. [In the constitution, the fee may be set at \$0.00].

The Office of Regulatory Services (formerly the Registrar General's Office) requires that all Associations (including P&C associations) should maintain current lists of members so that any disputes about voting eligibility can be settled immediately and accurately. In practice, this is difficult because for privacy reasons P&Cs do not have access to lists of all the parents with children enrolled at the school. One way around this, is to include on the Annual Return that the Principal has the list of parents of students at the school, and if anyone has a reason to see the register of members of the P&C, he/she should see the Principal.

Life Members (unless they satisfy an Association's constitutional requirements for membership) and observers do not vote.

What does *ex officio* mean?

Often, chief executives are said to serve as *ex officio* members of their board, meaning that they attend board meetings "by reason of their office," rather than through elections. Therefore, a school principal often attends P&C meetings *because* of the position he/she holds.

Can a principal as an *ex officio* member vote?

Ex officio members enjoy full voting rights unless an Association's constitution specifically states otherwise.

There is often a misconception that *ex officio* board members are automatically without voting rights. In reality, the term has nothing to do with voting. Therefore, it is important to clarify in the bylaws whether or not these members of the board have the right to vote. An *ex officio* member is not eligible to stand for election. ★

(Based on information from NSW Federation of P&C Associations)