



PETERSHAM PUBLIC SCHOOL P&C ASSOCIATION

Policy Title	PPS P&C Code of Conduct & Complaints Handling
Effective Date	July 3 2018
Review Date	<i>October 2019</i>

Policy Statement

1. The Code of Conduct and policy to handle complaints, grievances and disputes applies to all financial members, volunteers ('members') of Petersham Public School Parents & Citizens Association (PPS P&C) and PPS P&C contractors while undertaking any role or activity related to the *Petersham Public School P&C Association*.

Working with Children

2. The PPS P&C adheres to the government's Child Protection Act & Regulation (Working with Children Check) legislation and relevant procedures.
3. This extends to vigilance and reporting of concerns, suspicion or belief that may arise associated with P&C activities that a child is at risk of significant harm, through the Petersham PS School Principle or directly to external authorities (police).
4. The P&C will develop detailed child protection policies to support effective child protection in all P&C activities.

Principles

5. The Code of Conduct is based on the following fundamental ethical principles:

a) Respect for the Law

6. *PPS P&C* members, in common with all citizens, are under the jurisdiction of the laws of the State and the Commonwealth and are obliged to observe such laws.

b) Respect for all Persons

7. *PPS P&C* members are expected to treat students, school staff, and all members of the community equitably with dignity and respect. This involves, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Tolerance of the views held by others which are different from your own

- Courtesy and responsiveness in dealing with others
- Fairness in dealing with other P&C members
- Making decisions that are procedurally fair to all people according to the principles of natural justice
- Not discriminating on grounds such as age, disability, race, cultural background, sex, intersex status, gender identity and sexual orientation religious status or marital status
- An awareness and respect for cultural difference
- Engaging in rational and respectful debate allowing for alternative points of view to be expressed
- Not engaging in behaviour that might reasonably be perceived as harassment, bullying or intimidation

c) Integrity

8. *PPS P&C* members shall be honest in carrying out their duties and avoid conflicts between their private interests and their P&C Association roles and responsibilities with respect to:

- Personal relationships
- Financial relationships
- Receipt of gifts
- Employment
- Use of confidential information obtained in the course of P&C Association duties
- External activities and public comment

d) Diligence

9. *PPS P&C* members shall carry out their duties in a professional and conscientious manner. This involves:

- Carrying out P&C decisions and policies faithfully and impartially
- Exercising care for others in P&C Association related activities
- Ensuring outside interests do not interfere with a P&C Association member's duties or responsibilities
- Reporting concerns, suspicion or belief that may arise associated with P&C activities that a child is at risk of significant harm, through the Petersham PS School Principle or directly to external authorities (police)
- reporting suspicion of fraud or corrupt conduct to an Office Bearer of the Petersham PS P&C Association and/or external authorities (police)

Conflict of Interest

10. P&C Association members must declare interests which a conflict, either perceived or actual, with P&C Association duties and activities that might benefit the private interest of a members of the PPS P&C Association.
11. P&C Association members must always act in the best interest of the PPS P&C Association and adopt a process to disclose and address the potential conflicts.

12. A conflict of interest may include, but is not limited to, existing individual interests or a benefit, professional ethics, personal or professional relationships, financial or proprietary interests. A few examples of Conflict of Interest:

Example 1

Personal or Financial Interest: Jo, an Office Bearer of a PPS P&C owns the Building & Construction Company (B&C Co). During the PPS P&C meeting, she recommends B&C Co for an upcoming building work the Petersham PS P&C Association is considering to undertake as she believes he can offer the best competitive price being in the building business. However, she does not disclose the ownership of the company and is partly involved in vetting tenders received. Does Jo has a conflict of interest?

Yes, there is a conflict of interest. It is Jo's duty to act in the best interest of the Petersham PS P&C Association and not her own interests. To promote the profit interest of B&C Co and receive remuneration is contrary to his role and responsibilities as an Office Bearer of a P&C Association. There is clear conflict of interest as Jo failed to disclose his personal business interests for gaining an undisclosed profit. The failure to disclose the conflict of interest upfront assists consideration of how to manage it within P&C decision making.

Example 2

Non-Financial Interest involving some close relationships (not limited to partners, family and friends): Noel, a Treasurer of the PPS P&C, suggested at a P&C meeting, an online fresh fruits and vegetables vendor he knew could offer a more competitive price than the existing supplier. He discloses that his son works as a delivery driver for the vendor. Is there a conflict of interest?

Yes. Indirect and or direct employment of an immediate family member, friend or a close acquaintance leads to a conflict of interest. In this case, there is an indirect financial gain as her son will benefit from the extra work. Disclosing the potential conflict of interest upfront assists consideration of how to manage it within P&C decision making.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

13. Where a Conflict of Interest has been identified, it is expected that the conflict must be brought to the attention of the Office Bearers and the members, and be disclosed or addressed in a meeting.
14. Transparent and up-front disclosure of potential and actual conflicts of interest is crucial and failure to be transparent should be taken into account by the P&C in its decision making.

How to deal with a Conflict of Interest

15. Identified Conflict of Interest must be carefully managed by impartial decision-makers, who are not involved in the conflict.
16. Minutes of meetings should reflect how the conflict was raised, addressed and managed; and the outcome be disclosed to all members.
17. Management of the conflict of interest does not necessarily mean that the P&C cannot continue a financial relationship, etc with the person or their associates.

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19. Management of the conflict of interest may include ensuring that person(s) with the Conflict of Interest may be restricted to access confidential information and sensitive documents relating to decisions regarding the conflict of interest.
20. In managing P&C business for which a member or office holder may have a conflict of interest, the person(s) with the Conflict of Interest may be refrained from participating in all formal or informal discussion, debate and voting; and their duties be re-assigned until a resolution has been found.
21. Breaching and/or violating the Conflict of Interest may result in removal from the Petersham PS P&C Association or other actions in line with Code of Conduct policy.
22. In the event where a Conflict of Interest is very significant and prevents the person(s) with the Conflict of Interest to perform their role and responsibilities, the Petersham PS P&C Association may ask that the person(s) involved with the conflict relinquish their personal interest that creates the conflict and/or resign from their P&C Association role.

Privacy and Confidentiality

23. P&C Association must adhere to the Australian Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act of 1988.
24. P&C Association must recognise that the privacy of any individual's personal identifiable information must not be divulged or shared under any circumstances without the individual's written consent within or outside the Petersham PS P&C Association, unless there is a lawful authority for its disclosure.
25. P&C Association must take all reasonable steps to ensure confidential data, documents and personal information of any individual is protected from misuse, loss and unauthorised access, and/or disclosure.
26. All personal and sensitive information must not be viewed, shared or distributed to any person/s other than the Office Bearer/s who have responsibility of such information of the Petersham PS P&C Association.
27. All personal and sensitive information when no longer required must be disposed of securely.
28. Confidential information of a P&C Association must not be used, disclosed, copied, published or removed by any member of the Petersham PS P&C Association.

Grievances, Complaints and Procedures

29. Breaches of this Code of Conduct or other policies of the Petersham PS P&C Association will be addressed by way of the Grievances, Complaints and Procedures Policy included at **Annex A**. Violations may result in removal from the *Petersham Public School P&C Association* or other actions set out in that policy.

Grievance, Complaints & Disputes Procedures

1. The Petersham PS P&C Association is committed to providing an environment where all P&C Association members, volunteers to the Petersham PS P&C Association, employees or contractors of the Petersham PS P&C Association, staff of Department of Education and students enrolled at Petersham PS concerns are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner.
2. A grievance or complaint may be received by the Petersham PS P&C Association in relation to a fellow member, volunteer, contractor, vendor or sponsor engaged by the Petersham PS P&C Association employee. Where a complaint relates to a Department of Education employee or student the complaint should be lodged directly to the Principal in accordance with the policies of the Department of Education.
3. A grievance is a complaint about any situation, which is considered by the complainant to be wrong, mistaken, unjust or discriminatory.

Principles:

4. * Complainants should not instigate grievances that are frivolous, vexatious or malicious.
5. * Grievances and information arising from the handling of the grievance must be treated confidentially.
6. * Concerns should be raised as early as possible after the incident relating to the complaint has occurred.
7. * The principles of natural justice will be observed throughout. This means before a decision is made the person who has been implicated has the right to be informed about the nature and content of the grievance, have the right to be heard by an unbiased decision maker and have the right to have a witness present.
8. In some cases provisional actions may be taken whereby parties to the grievance temporarily step aside from P&C activities, pending resolution of the complaint handling process.

Procedures:

9. * Complainants should endeavour to resolve the issue themselves with the relevant parties face to face.
- 10.

Filing a complaint / grievance / dispute

11. If the grievance cannot be resolved informally, the complainant should provide written details of their concerns and the grounds for the grievance, to their immediate supervisor where they are a contractor to the Petersham PS P&C Association President or the Vice President where the complaint is about the President.
12. Where the complaint is about the Petersham PS P&C Association Executive it may be raised with an independent third party, for example P&C Federation, along with a copy of these procedures and all relevant policies.

Handling the complaint / grievance / dispute

13. The supervisor/President or person handling the complaint as described in these procedures will initiate an informal meeting with the complainant to discuss the grievance and may request further information which the complainant must provide.
- 14.* The complainant may have an independent witness attend any meetings.
- 15.* The supervisor/President or person handling the complaint as described in these procedures will provide written acknowledgement of the grievance being lodged within 7 days of receiving the grievance.
- 16.* If the matter pertains to another P&C Association, member, volunteer, contractor or other party, that person will also be informed, in writing, within 7 days of the grievance being lodged. The person against whom the complaint is made will not receive a copy of the complaint unless written permission is expressly given by the complainant to share the document.
- 17.* Grievances are to be resolved no later than six weeks after the complaint is lodged.
18. The outcomes of a formal grievance process may include (but not limited to): recommendation to amend policies, recommendation to alter practices, agreement by parties regarding interactions, consideration of winding up of sponsorship agreements or terminating contracts. In some cases outcomes may including requiring office holders to resign from their P&C Association role or volunteers to step down from .
19. Where a person disagrees with an outcome of a complaint they may lodge an appeal or further grievance with any relevant government agency or to P&C Federation where the matters involve volunteers.
20. This grievance, complaints and disputes procedures policy was adopted by the Petersham P&C Association general meeting on July 3 2018.