

School Council Standing Orders

Northcote High School Vision and Values

Our Vision: At Northcote High School Learning is for us all. It equips young people to realise and enhance their talents. We are an inclusive community whose positive relationships allow us to challenge ourselves and each other. The paths we each follow will take us out into the world, changed and confident.

Our Values: Northcote High School is a proud public school who works with our local community to provide an excellent education. We provide a learning model that positions our students for success in a complex global environment while imparting the traditions and values in which we take pride.

We value: Achievement, Curiosity, Humanity, Fairness

1. Purpose of school council

School council is the legally formed body that is given powers to set the key directions of a school. It is the major governing body of the school that, within guidelines from Department of Education Victoria (**DE**), decides the future directions for the school and oversees the school's operation.

1.1. The legislative framework

School councils operate under a framework provided by the:

- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (the Act)
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017 (the Regulations)
- Ministerial Order no 52 – School Council Composition and Elections Order

School councillors are subject to the Director's Code of Conduct under the Public Administration Act 2004.

These standing orders inform us how school council meetings will be run and how decisions will be made.

1.2. Function of school council

School council:

- is a legally formed body that is given powers to set the key directions of a school
- is the major governing body of the school
- plays an important role in school accountability and improvement processes
- endorses the key school planning, evaluation and reporting documents

Its functions include:

- establishing the broad direction and vision of the school within the school's community
- participating in the development and monitoring of the school strategic plan
- developing, reviewing and updating school policies
- raising funds for school-related purposes
- approving the annual budget and monitoring expenditure
- maintaining the school's grounds and facilities



- entering into contracts (e.g. cleaning, construction work)
- reporting annually to the school community and to DE
- generally stimulating interest in the school in the wider community
- supporting the school in its ability to educate students both on site and remotely
- supporting the school to foster good mental health and respectful relationships

1.3. Roles and responsibilities of school councillors

Members of school council:

- act with integrity
- maintain confidentiality in relation to matters discussed at meetings and information provided to councillors in writing
- value and encourage diverse opinions and views
- apply an independent mind to decision making
- aim to enhance the educational opportunities for students and ensure that students' best interests are the primary basis for decisions of council

1.4. School council principles

School councillors will at all times behave in a civil and respectful manner.

Councillors will promote:

- respectful partnerships
- clear and honest two-way communication
- transparent processes
- democratic, informed decision-making
- personal and professional integrity
- Northcote High School's vision and its values

1.5. Structure of school council

The Constituting Order of Northcote High School states the composition of the school council is:

- Two (2) elected student members
- six (6) elected parent members, who represent more than one third of school councillors
- five (5) elected DE employee members. The principal who is executive officer is included in this number
- up to four (4) community members. It should be noted that community membership is optional and that these positions are co-opted, rather than elected. DE employees are not eligible for co-option to this category

Community members have the same voting rights as elected members. Northcote High school will consider issues of diversity and inclusion in co-opting community members.

1.6. Casual vacancies

Should a casual vacancy occur on council, this vacancy is filled by council co-opting a person from the appropriate category who then completes the rest of the term of office of the retiring member.

1.7. Office bearers

School council will have the following office bearer positions:

- president
- vice president
- convenor of the finance sub-committee
- executive officer
- minutes secretary

1.8. Election and roles of office bearers

All members of school council will vote to elect office bearers (with the exception of executive officer and minutes secretary where that appointment is not held by a school councillor).

The **school council president** is elected by all members of school council and may not be a DE employee. It is recommended that the office of president of school council should not be open to the same person for more than four consecutive years.

The president's key role is to chair school council meetings and to facilitate discussion or debate.

The president will endeavour to see that the meeting operates so that:

- all members who wish to comment are given a reasonable opportunity to do so
- any new members or visitors are aware of the issue being discussed
- new members and student members have the necessary background to an issue explained to them (prior to the meeting, if necessary)
- time spent discussing issues are proportionate to their importance and relevance and discussion is pertinent to the issue under consideration
- reports are presented in writing and councillors have the opportunity to discuss options and proposals within them
- issues and topics of discussion more relevant to a particular sub-committee are referred to it for recommendation and summary information/headlines
- opportunity is given to those not on school council for input on an issue where appropriate (see section 2.12)
- proposed points of agreement are reiterated to assist the minute secretary

The position of **executive officer** is filled by the school principal. The principal is a full member of council with the same voting rights as other councillors.

The **vice president** is elected by all members of school council. As the vice president may need to chair a meeting in the absence of the president, it is recommended this position should be filled by a non DE parent member or community member.

The **convenor of the finance sub-committee** is appointed by school council. It is recommended this position be held by a non DE parent member or a community member. This position should not be filled by the office manager / bursar.

The **minute secretary** may be either an elected member of school council or a person appointed to this role who is not a member of school council and is therefore a silent observer with no voting rights.

2. Operating Procedures

The following is an agreed process by which school council shall operate.

2.1. Meeting preparation and agenda

At least ten (10) days before the school council meeting the school council executive will consult to formulate and confirm the agenda.

In order to prepare the agenda, the principal requires:

- all sub-committee Reports
- items of Correspondence
- all items for discussion

The school council executive will order the meeting agenda on the basis of logical sequence and importance of items and, where appropriate, will indicate a suggested time allocation and/or process of discussion for each item. Unless councillors deem otherwise, only agenda items will be discussed at meetings.

The agenda, minutes from the previous meeting and any notes for the meeting, such as sub-committee minutes, president's report and principal's report, will be distributed to all councillors no less than one week before the meeting.

Business arising from previous minutes and all sub-committee recommendations will be itemised in the agenda.

School council members should read all material prior to the meeting.

2.2. Correspondence

All correspondence to and from the Council, as sent or received since the previous school council meeting, will be listed with the agenda.

Late or urgent items of correspondence may be dealt with under general business at the discretion of the president/chairperson.

Correspondence will be available to all school councillors at each meeting. Correspondence requiring discussion or decisions will be distributed with the agenda or otherwise made available prior to the meeting.

2.3. Quorum

A quorum requires not less than one half of school council members currently holding office to be present at the meeting with a majority of members present who are not DE employees. Any parent members on school council who also work for the Department are counted as DE employees for the purpose of a quorum.

A member of the school council may be present in person or by video conferencing or teleconferencing.

If at the end of 30 minutes after the appointed time for a meeting of school council, there is no quorum present, the meeting will stand adjourned to a time and place determined by the school council members present.

2.4. Acknowledgment of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country statement is to be read at the beginning of meetings. The form of Acknowledgement of Country may be changed to the speaker's preference, the following is a guide: :

*“Ngarrgma Wurundjeri Woi wurrung guljin gurringanyinu bik wenerop Darebin dharri.
Ngarri yana ngarnga bik, baan ba ngarrgu.
Gahgook-al nanggit bambuth, yalingbu ba gama-dji”*

“I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people who are the traditional owners and custodians of this land.

*I recognise their continuing connection to land, water and culture.
I to pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging.”*

2.5. Decisions and voting

Decisions of school council will be by a majority of those eligible to vote and, subject to the provisions of clauses 2.8 and 2.9, below, who are present at the meeting.

School councillors need to ensure their vote is based on the best interests of the students. Northcote High School values diversity and inclusion. School Councillors will consider the interests of all students in casting their vote, especially those whose voices may not be represented on Council including, but not limited to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, international students and students with a disability.

School council will try to reach decisions by consensus and a count will be taken with the number for and against recorded in the minutes.

Voting will normally be by a show of hands, but a secret ballot may be used for particular issues at the discretion of the chairperson.

Once a vote has passed, decisions are always the decisions of the whole council.

All decisions of school council, the motions as well as the name of the person that moved the motion and the seconder, should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

All members shall endeavour to assist the president by:

- co-operating with the president on the above points

- valuing other members' opinions
- being prepared to express their own opinion.

2.6. Tied votes

When a vote is tied (i.e. an even number of people are for and against the decision), the president or elected chair of a particular meeting has the casting or deciding vote. It is therefore important that when the president offers a personal opinion on an issue, this is clearly stated. Councillors need to be able to clearly distinguish between the president's personal views and when a ruling is made as president of school council.

As an alternative, at the president's discretion, matters can be deferred to the next school council meeting (in order to attempt to resolve the deadlock) rather than be decided on by the president's casting vote.

2.7. Moving of motions – in meeting

All school council members are entitled to move a motion(s) during the course of a meeting.

All motions should be preceded by appropriate and thorough discussion. Motions made on items not on the agenda, which have been put to a meeting for the first time and don't have the unanimous support of the school council, should be deferred for the next meeting of school council.

2.8. Moving of motions –electronic circular

When there is a need for school council to make a decision that is time critical and cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting, the motion may be put to council members via emessaging (e.g. MSTeams) or email (electronic circular).

Motions via electronic circular must contain a full explanation of the motion and attach copies of any associated documentation. Sufficient time must be allowed for councillors to read and understand the motion, and ask any questions that they may have. All votes are to be returned to the president and are to be treated as unrestricted to other councillors unless a secret ballot has been specifically requested.

The motion may be declared by the president by electronic communication to all school councillors once votes from a majority of those eligible to vote are received and the president is satisfied that all active debate is finalised and all members of council have had sufficient opportunity to review and address the motion. Ideally, the president will wait until all councillors have returned a vote, however the simple majority voting requirements will also apply to any electronic circular.

Any councillor may call for an extraordinary meeting of school council to debate and determine the motion at any point prior to the president's declaration. If called before the president has declared the motion, all votes received at that time are deemed void and the president will schedule the extraordinary meeting to address the motion.

The motion, result and any debate is to be minuted in the president's report at the next scheduled meeting of school council.



2.9. Proxies and voting procedures

Subject to the provisions as set out in this clause 2.9 and in clause 2.8 above, eligible members of council must be present at a meeting to be part of the decision making process. There is no provision in either the Act or the Regulations for proxies. Therefore, if someone is unable to attend a meeting, another person cannot attend and vote on their behalf.

However, in the event that sufficient information regarding the motion has been circulated prior to the meeting together with copies of any associated documentation, then a direct vote via email from a member who is eligible to vote that is received by the president prior to the relevant meeting is acceptable.

2.10. If the president is absent

In the absence of the president, the vice president must chair the school council meeting. If neither the president nor vice president is present, councillors may elect a member to chair the meeting. This person should be a non DE employee.

2.11. School council meetings

Unless otherwise decided, school council meetings will be held twice a term on the third Thursday of the month, from 6 – 8pm.

If members are unable to attend a meeting, they are expected to send their apology prior to the meeting.

School council must also hold at least **one public meeting** each year to:

- report to the school community on its activities
- present a statement of the school's income and expenditure for the previous calendar year
- encourage discussion and input on the school's general direction, policies and priorities

An **extraordinary meeting** may be held at any time decided by council, provided all members are given prior notice of the date, time, place and purpose of the meeting. At least one week's notice is preferable if an extraordinary meeting is to be held. The president, or in his/her absence, the school principal must call an extraordinary meeting of school council if either of them receives a written request to do so from four members of council. The business of any extraordinary meeting will be confined to the issue or matter for which it was convened.

2.12. Open and closed meetings

While all school council meetings are expected to be open to the school community, there may be times when the council meeting, or part of the meeting needs to be closed to protect confidentiality or privacy or for another valid reason. Should this occur, school council will need to pass a motion to go into a "closed" session. School council should then go back into open session once the topic under discussion has been concluded.

Visitors or observers are welcome to attend open meetings, but they must direct all their comments through the chairperson. Visitors have no voting rights.

2.13. Agenda items from the community

Generally, a member of the school community who is not a member of the school council will raise matters of concern through their elected representatives. Alternatively, any member of the school community may raise an issue for school council's consideration via a letter to the president of the school council.

It is also acceptable for members of the school community to propose items for the school council agenda. This should be done by lodging written notification with the Northcote High School principal or the school council president, at least 10 working days prior to the school council meeting. This gives an opportunity to discuss the matter with the principal or school council president, and to seek advice as to whether the matter is appropriate for school council discussion or is an operational matter that is best dealt with by the principal or other school personnel. This procedure also gives councillors background information and prior notice of issues that require informed discussion.

The item will normally be placed on the agenda under the heading of general business, and dealt with in order according to its placement on the agenda.

If a non-council visitor has placed an item on the agenda, the visitor may be invited by the chairperson to address the matter. The visitor shall be given an appropriately allocated amount of time to address the school council.

Following the visitor's address, on the Chairperson's invitation, the matter will be declared open for discussion by the members of the school council and, if applicable, any motions of council will be recorded in the minutes.

2.14. Extensions of meeting times

If business has not been concluded by the scheduled closing time for the meeting, the chair should ask councillors whether they wish to defer the rest of the business until the next meeting or to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.

A motion is necessary if council wants to extend the meeting for that evening. If members are in agreement, there may be a maximum of 2 periods of extended time.

2.15. Conflict of interest

There may be times where an agenda item is, has the potential, or may be perceived to be in conflict with a school council member's professional, associated or personal interests.

If a school councillor or a member of his or her immediate family has a conflict of interest (including a financial interest) in a subject or matter under discussion or being considered before school council, that councillor must:

- declare the conflict of interest
- not be present during the discussion unless invited to do so by the person presiding at the meeting
- not be present when a vote is taken on the matter

A member's temporary absence for this purpose does not affect the quorum for that meeting.

2.16. Minutes

All decisions of council shall be recorded as minutes.

Also included in the minutes are:

- the dates and times of the meeting
- those present and apologies
- an overview of key discussions
- any actions to be taken in relation to decisions made and the person/s responsible for those actions.

When school council minutes are submitted for confirmation, only questions regarding their accuracy as a record of the meeting are to be raised.

Once the minutes have been accepted as a true and accurate record of the meeting, they are to be signed by the school council president or the person who chaired the meeting.

Business arising from the minutes is dealt with after the minutes have been confirmed.

Minutes of school **council** are not published.

3. School council sub-committees and working groups

3.1. Sub-committee functions and structure

Sub-committees and working groups:

- assist council with specific work that needs to be done and/or
- may be responsible for particular delegated tasks.

They report regularly at school council meetings, provide advice and make written recommendations to council, which has the final responsibility for decisions.

Sub-committees **cannot** make decisions for school council, rather they make recommendations to council.

All school councillors are expected to play an active role in at least one sub-committee. Generally a school councillor will be the convenor of a sub-committee or working group.

Convenors of sub-committees are appointed by motion of the school council for a term of one year, coinciding with each new school council election, and are eligible for re-appointment.

Additional members of sub-committees are appointed for a term of one year, coinciding with each new school council election, in accordance with the terms of reference, charter or rules of the relevant sub-committee.

3.2. Northcote High School sub-committees and working groups

School council sub-committees that have been, or are intended to be, established to assist school council include the following:

- Finance
- Governance
- Buildings and Facilities

- Community Making and Fundraising
- Northcote Giving

School council will issue terms of reference or a charter for each of the sub-committees and working groups. Depending on the brief to a sub-committee or working group, additional specific rules or procedures may apply to the delegated group, and any such rules or procedures must be approved by school council.

Based on the then-current needs of the school, some sub-committees may meet more frequently than others.

A working group may be established by the school council in response to a specific short-term need.

Sub-committees and working groups of school council must consist of at least 3 members, one of whom must be a school council member and may include members of the school or broader community who are not school councillors.

These standing orders apply to all working groups and sub-committees.

3.3. Duties of a convener of a sub-committee or working group

The Convener of a Sub-Committee shall be responsible to:

- chair the meetings of the sub-committee
- prepare a brief agenda before the meeting
- ensure that the meeting proceedings and recommendations are recorded
- provide reports from the sub-committee to the school council executive one week before the next school council meeting so they may be presented to the school council members in the week prior to the school council meeting
- verbally clarify any points as required by school council
- ensure that workloads are shared among the sub-committee members

3.4. Sub-committee/working group reports

All reports should be in writing. Where school council is to make a decision as a result of a report, the proposed point of recommendation should be indicated in the report.

Where appropriate, school council should be given a:

- summary of any debate or alternative viewpoints put forward to the working group or sub-committee; and
- number of options with the relative advantages and disadvantages of each listed in the report.

4. Vacancies on school council

4.1. Extended leave of school council member

A member of a School Council may apply in writing to the president for extended leave of up to three consecutive meetings. If leave is granted to a member, his/her membership is excluded in determining the requirement for a quorum.

4.2. Casual vacancies on school council

If a casual vacancy occurs School Council will determine if they wish to co-opt an eligible person to the relevant category.

5. Review of standing orders

Standing orders should be reviewed by each new school council or otherwise as required. Amended or updated standing orders will be adopted by a vote of school council.

These Standing Orders were ratified by school council on May 13 2024