The Board

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Welcome to the Lyneham Primary School Board

Thank you for volunteering your time to be a member of the Lyneham Primary School Board. The Board is an integral part of the operation of the school and your contributions to the Board are valued by the school community.

Purpose
The purpose of this Handbook is to provide you with an easy reference guide to your roles and responsibilities on the Board as well as information on how the Board operates. While some of the Board ‘procedures’ may seem unnecessarily bureaucratic they do assist the Board to operate smoothly, particularly when some of the issues being discussed may be contentious.

The Board Handbook is under continual evaluation and therefore if you believe something needs changing, improving, or clarifying, please bring it up at a Board meeting. If the issue is minor, simply notify the Board Secretary.

Again, welcome and I hope that your time on the Board will be rewarding.

David Vernon
Board Chair 2008 - 2010
The Law

School Boards are established under ACT law. Section 39(1) of the *Education Act 2004* Act details the functions of a board of a public school:

- to establish strategic direction and priorities for the school;
- to monitor and review school performance and to report on it to the Chief Executive, parents of students at the school and staff;
- to develop, maintain and review curriculum for the school;
- to develop and review education policies at the school;
- to establish budgetary policies for the school and approve the school budget;
- to establish policies for the efficient and effective use of school assets and the management of financial risk;
- to develop relationships between the school and the community and between the school and community organisations;
- to make recommendations to the Chief Executive on issues affecting the school and to give effect to the Chief Executive’s directions;
- to encourage parent participation in their children’s learning; and
- to exercise any other function given to the board under the Act or any other Territory law.

The ACT School Board Manual further elaborates on these points.

Members
Section 41 of the *Act* outlines the membership of the School Board. At Lyneham Primary, our Board is made up of the following people:

(a) the Principal of the school;
(b) a person appointed by the Chief Executive of the Department of Education;
(c) two school staff members elected by the staff;
(d) three parent/carer members elected by parents/carers; and
(e) from time to time the Board can temporarily appoint additional members who serve for no more than twelve months.
Who do I represent? Anybody?

The fact that the Board is elected by various ‘groups’ can give rise to the view that the member elected by the group actually ‘represents’ that group on the Board. This is not correct. The Board Member actually does not represent anybody. The Board Member’s task is to act ethically, responsibly and to promote what is best for the School Community as a whole, and not just the group that elected the member.

“The role of Board Members is a strategic one and requires them to act in what they consider to be the best interests of the school, irrespective of their constituent base. It is not a question of "representation" but rather one of a broader strategic view on any given issue.”

— Marty Ashford, Manager, Governance Unit
ACT Department of Education and Training, 2008

The Board provides a strategic vision, the Principal manages the day-to-day operations

The role of the Board and the role of the Principal are clearly expressed in the Education Act 2004. The Principal is responsible for the “educational leadership and management” of the School and the Board is responsible for establishing “strategic direction” among other priorities (see page 3).

“The Board role is an oversight role rather than an operational role. Operational matters are the responsibility of the principal.”

— School Board Manual, 2008, p6
Some of the issues that the Board considers are difficult and contentious. Because Board members are passionately interested in education, sometimes emotion can get in the way of frank, fearless and respectful discussion. To assist the Board to work together, the Board Members use the following values statement to guide our work:

**The Board’s work is guided by the following values:**

- Applying evidence to everything we do.
- Working cooperatively with external and internal groups and respecting their role and interaction.
- Listening, hearing, discussing and passing the agreed message on.
- Protecting those who are not present and talking to the source.
- Treating each other in a respectful manner at all times.
- Respecting a person’s right to have a different opinion.
- Being open to new ideas and understand that there may be another way and that many things are possible.
- Striving for continuous improvement.
Board Operations

Meetings
Board meetings are required to be held four times per year. Our Board usually meets at least twice a term. Additional meetings are held if the Board considers it necessary.

Length
Board Meetings usually run for 90 - 120 minutes, but may be lengthened if the Board considers it necessary.

Attendance
All Board Members are expected to attend all meetings. However, if you cannot attend a particular meeting please let the Secretary know as soon as possible prior to the meeting. If you miss three meetings in a row without reasonable excuse or the leave of the Board, your appointment can be terminated.

Setting the Agenda
Any member can place business on the Board Agenda. As the Board’s Agenda is invariably very full, before items are placed upon the Agenda members must consider if the item is a strategic issue that should be considered by the Board or an operational matter, better handled by the School Principal. If in doubt, discuss the matter with the Board Chair before proposing it as an Agenda item.

To place a strategic item on the Agenda, email the agenda item and any supporting documents to the Board Secretary at least ten working days before the meeting. The Secretary will then place it on the Board Agenda. If an item is urgent and the ten day deadline cannot be met, then the item can be placed on the agenda with the agreement of the Board Chair.

Once the Secretary has a complete draft Agenda, the Secretary, Board Chair and School Principal will work out the order for business to ensure that the most important matters are given adequate space on the Agenda. The Agenda and papers will then be sent to all Board members at least five days before the meeting.
**Correspondence**

To ensure that the Board fulfills its responsibilities under the *Education Act* and that correspondence is handled efficiently the following processes apply.

The types of correspondence (hardcopy and emails) received by the Board fit into the following categories:

(a) **Legal documents and financial correspondence** from the Department of Education, and the Commonwealth Government;

(b) **Information circulars** from the Department of Education and other education providers;

(c) **Advertising** from a variety of people and organisations, seeking promotion of their product, process or idea; and

(d) **Correspondence** from parents, carers and members of the community.

Category (d) can usually be broken into:

i. Commentary about an existing school policy or need for a policy;

ii. Complaints about the content of an existing school policy;

iii. Complaints about the implementation of an existing school policy; and

iv. Complaints substantially about individual teachers, the Executive team or students.

When setting the Agenda for the Board meeting, the Chair will handle each category of correspondence in the following manner:

- Category (a) and (b) will be specifically tabled or included in the *Correspondence In* folder for Board members to consider.

- Category (c) material will be recycled unless of interest to particular Board activities and if so will be included in the *Correspondence In* folder.

- Category (d)(i) & (ii) material will be tabled or included in the *Correspondence In* folder for Board members to consider.
Category (d)(iii) material will be forwarded by the Chair to the Principal of the School for consideration if the author agrees. The Chair will also consider the correspondence to determine if the complaint indicates a problem with the school policy. If so, the substance of the correspondence should be tabled at the next Board meeting. Such correspondence will be handled under the Departmental Complaints Resolution Policy (CRP200601). The Chair will ask the author if they wish their correspondence to be forwarded to the Principal and forward it if the author agrees. If the correspondence relates to a decision taken by the Principal then the Chair will refer the author of the correspondence to the relevant person in the Department of Education. The Chair is to make it clear to the complainant that the Board is not a complaint handling body and has no legal power to handle operational matters in the School. The Chair is to respond within 21 days of receiving correspondence that falls into category (d) (iii).

Category (d)(iv) material will be forwarded by the Chair to the Principal of the School for consideration if the author agrees. Such correspondence will be handled under the Departmental Complaints Resolution Policy (CRP200601). The Chair will ask the author if they wish their correspondence to be forwarded to the Principal and forward it if the author agrees. If the correspondence relates to a decision taken by the Principal then the Chair will refer the author of the correspondence to the relevant person in the Department of Education. The Chair is to make it clear to the complainant that the Board is not a complaint handling body and has no legal power to handle operational matters in the School. The Chair is to respond within 21 days of receiving correspondence that falls into category (d) (iv).
A typical agenda — with commentary

1. Welcome
The Board Chair acknowledges the Ngunnawal People, the traditional owners of the land and welcomes attendees.

2. Attendance
The Secretary notes who is in attendance.

3. Apologies
The Secretary notes who has provided apologies.

4. Correspondence in
The Secretary advises of any correspondence of note and provides the correspondence file to members. Important correspondence is put on the Agenda for all Board discussion.

5. Correspondence out
The Secretary advises of any correspondence going out. Often this item is covered more fully in discussion relating to item 7.

6. Minutes of the previous meeting
The Board approve the previous minutes, or amend them to reflect previous discussions. Minor amendments are usually handled out of the session because draft minutes are circulated shortly after the previous meeting and minor amendments can be provided to the secretary prior to the current meeting. Therefore this item is usually procedural. A formal resolution is made to accept the minutes.

7. Business arising from previous meetings
The Board reviews actions agreed at previous meetings and discusses their progress.

8. Reports
   a) Principal’s Report — this is usually tabled at the meeting and consists of a verbal and written report of activities undertaken in the four learning domains since the last meeting. Board members are encouraged to ask questions.
   b) Chair’s Report — is a written document circulated prior to the meeting that outlines various issues that have been brought to the Chair’s attention. Board members are encouraged to ask questions.
   c) Finance Report — is a written document circulated prior to the meeting that shows the school’s progress in meeting its budget. Board members are encouraged to ask questions. This report must be formally accepted.
d) Staff Report — is a written document circulated prior to the meeting that shows staff activities undertaken in the four learning domains since the 1st meeting. Board members are encouraged to ask questions.

e) P&C Report — is a written or verbal report on P&C activities undertaken since the last meeting. A Board Member who attended the P&C meeting is invited to give it.

Reports are formally accepted.

9. General Business
Despite the name of this item, this is where most substantive policy issues are discussed. Formal motions are made for each substantive item.

10. Other Business
This is a catch-all segment where any pressing issues that Board Members wish to raise can be placed on the agenda, with the Chair’s agreement, at the time of the meeting. It is expected that any substantive issues that were known to the Member prior to the meeting would be placed under the General Business heading and provided to the Secretary at least ten days before the meeting.

Advice on Meeting Procedures
The School Board Manual, Department of Education and Training, 2008, provides further advice on meeting procedures. The notes above are consistent with the Manual.

Quick Reference Guide
A quorum consists of 3 members (one of whom must be a P&C member and one of whom must be a staff member). If the Chair is absent the Deputy Chair presides. If the Deputy is also absent, the remaining members choose a Presiding member.

Votes are rarely used. Consensus is the preferred model. However, if a vote is required then a simple majority decides the issue. In case of an equal vote, the member presiding has the casting vote.

Minutes must be kept and are recorded by the Board Secretary.
Subcommittees can be established and non-Board members appointed to it, as long as the Subcommittee has at least one Board member.