

## PARENT PAYMENT POLICY

Ratified by School Council: February 2020

Date of review: February 2021

### Purpose

To enable Carwatha College P -12 to obtain the funds for delivery of curriculum and extra-curricular activities to students in compliance with DE & T requirements and in a manner sensitive to the circumstances of families and to ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and that all children have access to the standard curriculum.

### Rationale

Carwatha College P -12 needs to collect payments from parents for the funding of certain consumables and other requisites for the delivery of curriculum and extra-curricular activities to students. This policy aims to offer a framework for the collection of such moneys from parents in a way that offers maximal opportunity for the college to obtain the moneys it requires balanced against considerations of the individual circumstances of families. Its basis is in the DE & T document *Parent Payment Policy*. The full *Parent Payment Policy* is available from the DE & T [School Policy and Advisory Guide](#). Answers to the most commonly asked questions about school costs for parents see: [Frequently Asked Questions – For Parents](#).

### Guidelines

- Payments may be sought from parents in the categories of essential student learning items, optional items and voluntary financial contributions at times referred to in DE & T documents.
- Communication with parents about the need to make payment shall take the form approved by DE & T guidelines and occur at times stipulated in said guidelines.
- Information about payments shall be provided to parents in the form required by CASES21 Finance procedures and DE & T requirements and at times and intervals permitted by the DE & T.
- A non-coercive system allowing parents to use their CSEF or other government entitlements to offset payments due to the school shall be in place.
- Students shall not, in the event of non-payment for essential student learning items, be treated differently or denied access to the standard curriculum programme or otherwise have their entitlements associated with the standard curriculum programme reduced.
- In the event of non-payment for optional items, students shall not participate in the activity or have access to the resources contemplated by the optional items. However, these students shall, in respect of certain optional items, be provided with alternative occupation for the appropriate duration.
- Information pertaining to the status of payments and any associated information shall be kept confidential in accordance with DE & T requirements.
- Only DE & T-authorized means of obtaining outstanding payments from parents may be used.

## Implementation

### *Principles*

In implementing this policy, Carwatha College P -12 shall adhere to the following principles:

- Educational value: Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when Carwatha College P -12 determine their parent payments practices
- Access, equity and inclusion: All students have access to the standard curriculum program and participation of all students to the full school program is facilitated
- Affordability: Cost to parents is kept to a minimum and is affordable for most families
- Engagement and Support: Early identification and engagement strategies by the Carwatha College P -12 ensure parents are well informed of the payment options and supports available for those experiencing hardship
- Respect and Confidentiality: Parents and students experiencing hardship are treated with respect, dignity, sensitivity and without judgement and the identity and personal information of all parents and students are kept confidential in respect to parent payments
- Transparency and Accountability: Carwatha College P -12 parent payment practices are well communicated, clear and transparent and their impact on student programs and families are reviewed by school councils.

### *Payments that may be sought from parents*

- The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides for instruction in the standard curriculum program to be free to all students in government schools. Parents may be asked to make payments for essential student learning items, optional items and voluntary financial contributions.
- The amount payable for essential student learning items is to comprise the accurately determined cost to the school of providing, where it to provide, items, activities or services used in the course of instruction in the standard curriculum programme. These include, though this list is not to be taken as being exhaustive:
  - Items that will enter the temporary or permanent possession of individual students, including stationery, activity books, student ID cards
  - Materials for teaching and learning where the student will take possession of a product created using the materials by the transformation of the materials, including art requisites, technology projects
  - Services extraneous to the standard curriculum programme, but associated with it, including excursions which are compulsory for all students
- Parents shall be offered the option of independently acquiring essential items, except where this is not feasible due to their nature. In the event that parents seek to exercise this option, the

school shall provide to parents the specifications of the required items, who may obtain these from any source of their choosing.

- The amount payable for optional items is to comprise the cost to the school of providing, were it to provide, extras offered in addition to the standard curriculum programme to all students on a user-pays basis. These include, though this list is not to be taken as being exhaustive:
  - Instructional support material, resources and administration outside of the scope of the provision of the standard curriculum programme. An example is printing for personal use
  - Extra-curricular programmes, activities or events offered additionally to the standard curriculum programme. These include the study of musical instruments and optional school-based events.
  - Materials and services additional to the standard curriculum programme. These include a school magazine, class photos, student accident insurance
- Voluntary financial contributions may be determined by the School Council from time to time from within the scope of collections that are permissible according to the DE & T. Examples of voluntary contributions sought by Carwatha College P -12 Council include:
  - Contributions to the College Building Fund
  - Contributions to the College Site Improvement fund
- Voluntary financial contributions must be sought in compliance with special requirements listed in *Communication requirements*.
- Clear specification of the Items, description and costs within the three payment categories is attached to the *Parent Payment Policy*.
- All parent payments and subject charges are used for the provision of resources and materials to be used in classrooms to provide best possible student outcomes.

#### ***Communication requirements***

- Parents shall be given at least six (6) weeks of notice prior to the end of the school year of the payments being requested for the subsequent year.
- Payments may be requested to be made before the commencement of the subsequent year, but this may not be required.
- The aforementioned notice shall take the shape of a letter signed by the Principal and College Council President explaining the rationale behind and components of the charges and contributions being requested and a statement printed from CASES21.
- Subsequent statements shall be sent at no greater than monthly frequency.
- Payment requests and/or letters to parents shall be itemised and the items identified as essential student learning items, optional items or voluntary financial contributions.
- One request and one reminder notice only are to be issued in any one school year for voluntary financial contributions.
- In the event of non-payment by parents, invoices shall be produced in CASES21 Finance and supplied to parents regularly, but with no greater frequency than monthly.

- In circumstances where it is deemed appropriate, the Principal or a delegated person may contact parents by telephone or letter in the event of non-payment for an optional items elected to be taken by the student, if the relevant items is impending and payment remains outstanding.
- Parents may raise any issues, make general inquiries about charges by telephoning on (03)97955848.

### ***Payment arrangement and non-payment***

- Payments from parents must be received in accordance with the *Collection & Processing of Money Policy*.
- Full payments from parents are not required until the start of the school year.
- Parents have two option to pay:
  - Full amount payment due by the start of the school year
  - Installment plan:
    - Installment 1 due one week prior to the end the current school year (first half)
    - Installment 2 due second last week of February of the next school year (second half).
- In the event of non-payment by parents, a student shall not be treated differently in respect of the standard curriculum programme. A student shall not be denied access to said programme, prevented from enrolment or advancement or singled out in any other way within the scope of the standard curriculum programme.
- In the event of non-payment for an optional item, a student shall not be afforded access to any resources, activities or any other entitlement contemplated by the extra.
- Where the optional extra is an excursion, camp or some other activity of a similar character, the student shall be provided with an alternative option for the duration of school hours covered by the excursion, camp or some other activity of a similar character.
- No coercive means, entailing harassment or collections methods outside of those permitted by the DE & T and this policy may be used to obtain payment.
- All records of payments and non-payments shall be kept confidential, including imposing appropriate access restrictions to the information.

### ***Special circumstances***

- Parents who experience difficulties in making payments shall contact the Student Wellbeing Coordinator to discuss alternative arrangements.
- The Student Wellbeing Coordinator may offer parents a range of payment options depending on the individual circumstances of the family. The Student Wellbeing Coordinator shall also inform parents of support options available to them. These include:
  - A uniform shop that sells both new and second-hand items
  - Online platforms, such as:
    - [State Schools' Relief clk2sell app](#)
    - [www.sustainable-schoolshop.com.au](http://www.sustainable-schoolshop.com.au).

- Parents shall be offered the option of using their CSEF payment, if they are entitled to a CSEF payment, for payments to the school for camps, sport activities and excursions/incursions. However, this shall be non-coercive and left to the discretion of parents.

### **Refund**

- Parents will be refunded in accordance with the *Collection & Processing of Money Policy*.

### **Monitoring and review of the implementation**

- Carwatha College P -12 Council shall monitor the implementation of the *Parent Payment Policy*.
- PCO (Principal Class Officer) team shall advise parents how the school's learning and teaching program is enhanced by the parent payment charges being requested and how parent payments are specifically utilized to support improved outcomes for students.
- Parents shall use existing communication channels to enable a range of viewpoints to be represented.

### **Definitions**

*DE&T* is the Department of Education and Training

*CSEF* is the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund provided by the State Government to eligible students to attend camps, sports and excursions.

*Essential student learning items* are items, activities or services that the school deems essential to student learning in the standard curriculum. Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the school or provide their own.

*Optional items* are items or services that are optional and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum. Students may access these on a user pays basis.

Parent in the policy has the same meaning as in the Education and Training Reform Act 2006, which is: 'parent', in relation to a child, includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for the child including parental responsibility under the Family Law Act 1975 of the Commonwealth and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

*Payments* include payments and fees from the categories of essential items, optional extras and voluntary contributions, unless one or more of said categories is mentioned specifically in the relevant portion of this policy, in which case *payments* means only payments and fees associated with that category.

*Refund* is a family payment.

*Voluntary financial contributions* are financial contributions which parents are invited to make at the discretion of the School Council, from within the scope of voluntary financial contributions that are permitted to be sought by the DE&T.

# Understanding Parent Payment Categories

## Schools

### What does the legislation say?

The Education and Training Reform Act (2006) provides for free instruction in the standard curriculum program to all students in government schools. The Act also empowers school councils to charge fees to parents for goods and services provided by the school to a child.

In the Act, a 'Parent' includes a guardian and every person who has parental responsibility for a child including parental responsibility under the Commonwealth Family Law Act 1975 and any person with whom a child normally or regularly resides.

### What do schools pay for as part of 'free instruction'?



Free instruction is the teaching staff, administration and the provision of facilities in connection with the instruction of the standard curriculum program, including reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

The standard curriculum for Years F-10 means implementation of the Victorian Curriculum F-10.

The standard curriculum for senior secondary schools means a program that enables a student to be awarded a VCE or VCAL qualification.

### What principles govern parent payment practice?

Educational Value | Access, Equity & Inclusion | Affordability  
 Engagement & Support | Respect & Confidentiality | Transparency & Accountability

## Parents

### What may parents be asked to pay for?

#### Schools can request payment for Essential Student Learning Items



These are items, activities or services that the school deems **essential** to student learning of the standard curriculum.

Where practical and appropriate, parents may choose to purchase items through the school or provide their own.

These may also be either:

#### Items the student takes temporary or permanent possession of

- e.g.
- textbooks, activity books, exercise books
  - stationery, book bags
  - student ID cards, locks
  - cooking ingredients students will consume
  - materials for final products that students take home (technology projects, build-your-own kits, dioramas)
  - Picture Exchange Communication Systems

#### Activities associated with instruction that all students are expected to attend

- i.e. travel, entry fees or accommodation
- e.g.
- excursions
  - incursions
  - school sports
  - work placements

Parents can be asked to pay for items, activities and services in the three Parent Payment Categories:

Essential Student Learning Items,  
 Optional Items and  
 Voluntary Financial Contributions.

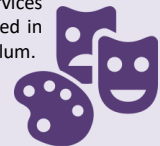
Schools determine how items, activities and services are classified within these categories based on the learning and teaching program of their school.

#### Schools can request payment for Optional Items

These are items, activities or services that are **optional** and are offered in addition to the standard curriculum.

Students may access these on a user-pays basis.

These may be either:



#### Items the student purchases or hires

- e.g.
- school magazines, class photos
  - functions, formals, graduation dinners
  - materials for extra curricular programs
  - student accident insurance

#### Activities the student purchases

- e.g.
- fees for extra curricular programs or activities, such as instrumental music tuition
  - fees for guest speakers
  - camps, excursions, incursions, sports
  - entry fees for school run performances

#### Items and/or materials that are more expensive than required to meet the standard curriculum

- e.g.
- use of silver in metal work instead of copper
  - supplementary exam revision guides

Support for families experiencing hardship is available at every school and each school has a parent payment contact person. See your school's policy for more information.

For more information on Parent Payments and Personal Devices, visit the DET website at: [www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)

Schools can invite **Voluntary Financial Contributions** for



- e.g.
- Building or Library fund (Tax deductible)
  - Voluntary contributions for a specific purpose, such as equipment, materials, services.
  - General voluntary contributions