Parent Payments Policy

Rationale:

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 ensures the provision of free instruction in the standard curriculum program and empowers school councils to charge for goods and services used in the course of instruction and to raise funds. Free instruction includes learning and teaching, instructional supports, materials and resources, administration and facilities associated with the provision of the standard curriculum program.

School Councils can request payments from parents for student materials and services charges and for voluntary financial contributions. Payments requested from parents must be kept to a minimum and must not exceed the cost of the relevant materials or services to the student. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development [DEECD] provides funding to schools through the Student Resource Package [SRP] and various programs. This includes funding for the standard curriculum program and associated education items, equipment and operational costs which are an integral part of the SRP.

General Statement:

- Parent payments fall into three categories:
  1. **Essential Education Items:** which parents and guardians are required to provide or pay the school to provide for their child. These items include:
     * materials that the student takes possession of, including text books and student stationery.
     * materials for learning and teaching where the student consumes or takes possession of the finalised articles.
     * school uniform.
     * essential services associated with, but not considered to be part of, instruction in the standard curriculum program, such as costs associated with camps and excursions which all students are expected to attend.

  2. **Optional Extras:** which are offered on a user pays basis and which parents and guardians may choose whether their child accesses or participates. These items include:
     * instructional support material, resources and administration beyond the provision of the standard curriculum program. [personal student computer printing and internet usage, religious education]
     * extra-curricular programs or activities offered in addition to the standard curriculum program [instrumental music tuition]
     * school based performances, productions or events.
     * materials, where the payment sought is the difference between the basic material/service required and the higher cost alternative. [use of more expensive materials]
     * materials and services offered in addition to the standard curriculum program. [school magazines]
*school facilities and equipment not associated with provision of the standard
curriculum program, and not else provided for through the SRP.

3. **Voluntary Financial Contributions:** which parents and guardians may be
invited to donate to the school.

These items include:
*contributions to an approved building and grounds beautification trust fund
or contributions to an approved library trust fund. [Tax deductible]
*contributions for a specific purpose identified by the school. [e.g. equipment,
materials or services] in addition to those funded through the SRP. This may
include additional computers or student related services.
*general voluntary financial contributions or donations.

- Payment requests must be accompanied by the following information:
  a. Parent/Guardians are required to provide essential education items for
     their children, and they have the option of purchasing these through the
     school or an alternative supplier where appropriate.
  b. The availability of alternative payment options and an invitation to
     contact the Principal [or nominee] if the parent wishes to discuss these.
  c. Details of how the payments or contributions will be spent by the
     school.
  d. The availability of prepaying excursions at the commencement of each
     year [Value $100-]
  e. The Parents Payments policy is available on request.

**IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES:**
- Ensure all communication with parents regarding requests for payment is fair and
  reasonable.
- Provide parents and guardians with a minimum of six weeks notice of payment
  request.
- Payment may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in
  which the materials and services are to be used.
- Payment arrangements to coincide with the timing availability of Education
  Maintenance Allowance. [where possible]
- Not withhold access to enrolment or advancement as a condition of payment.
- Ensure the status and details of any payments or non-payments are confidential.
- School Councils must not issue more than one request for voluntary financial
  contributions and one reminder notice.
- School Councils must not send invoices for unpaid essential education items or
  optional items accepted by parents more than once a month.
- School Councils must not coerce or harass parents or guardians for payment or use
  collection agencies or debt collectors.
- Parents who have difficulty paying for essential items can access a range of support
  options including: Education Maintenance Allowance [EMA], Payment Plans,
  Centrepay and Bpay.
- Payment plans must be completed within the year the amount outstanding relates to
  thus instalments will be calculated accordingly.
EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING:

- Copies of this policy are available to parents on request.