

	<h2>Parent Payments and Refunds</h2>	School Council: September 2020
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PARENT PAYMENTS and REFUNDS

RATIONALE

The Victorian community shares a vision to build an education system that champions excellence and ensures that every child and young person has access to the opportunities to succeed in life, regardless of their background or circumstances. Corryong College will endeavour to ensure that all students can access a broad range of learning opportunities that support their expectations and promote their aspirations as they move through the education system. Parent contribution, in all forms, assists schools to provide an enriched learning and teaching program for every student and is highly valued by our school community.

Council recognises that it is Government Policy (Executive Memorandum No. 2005/29, Circular S300-2008) that it is not appropriate for schools to charge parents for the normal educational program. However, Government Policy also acknowledges that additional funds raised from parents may enhance the delivery of education to students and therefore permits School Councils to authorise the collection of such funds, as explained below. Where parents are asked to contribute to particular materials or services, school councils must ensure that:

- that charges are kept to a minimum
- payment requests are clearly itemised under the three parent payment categories (see below)
- items that students consume or take possession of are accurately costed
- the charge does not exceed the cost of providing those materials or services to the student
- parents are given the option of providing materials and requisites, where appropriate
- sensitivity is shown to the differing circumstances of individual students and families, with alternative payment arrangements being investigated for those who do not have an immediate capacity to contribute
- no student will be treated differently, denied access or refused instruction to the standard curriculum program for not making a payment or voluntary contribution
- access to enrolment or advancement to the next year level will not be withheld as a condition of payment for any of the three categories.

PARENT PAYMENT CHARGES

The Education and Training Reform Act 2006 provides for instruction in the standard curriculum program to be free to all students in government schools. School councils are responsible for developing and approving school-level parent payment charges and can request payments from parents / guardians under three categories only- Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Financial Contributions.

Essential Student Learning Items are those items, activities or services that are essential to support student learning of the standard curriculum. These are items that the school considers essential for all students and which students take possession of. Parents may choose to provide the items themselves or buy the items from the school where practical and appropriate. Examples are text books, stationary, articles produced or consumed in technology, textiles, home economics etc.

Optional Items are those items, activities or services that are offered in addition to or support instruction in the standard curriculum program. These are provided on a user-pays basis so that if parents choose to access them for students, they are required to pay for them. Examples are fees for extra-curricular programs such as instrumental music, guest speakers, optional camps and excursions and items students purchase or hire such as school magazine and text books.

Voluntary Financial Contributions

Parents can be invited to make a donation to the school for a general or specific purpose, e.g. school grounds projects, library fund or for new equipment. Only some Voluntary Financial Contributions are tax-deductible.

The attached diagram "Understanding Parent Payment Categories" provides examples of items and materials under each category.

It is common for some secondary school subjects to levy for materials used or kept by students (eg. Home Economics). However it is Council's preference not to levy students for materials on a weekly basis. Where possible such costs are incorporated into fees and levies charged at the beginning of the year (note that this may make fees for certain subjects higher – Council wishes to ensure that such legitimate extra costs are known in advance by parents).

Where families are not able to pay fees (or where they choose not to do so) this information is not to be used to repeatedly remind families to make payments. Staff must ensure that students have access to core programs and materials offered within the College - students may not be prevented from participating in the College's core curriculum due to the non-payment of fees. The exception to this is optional educational activities and materials such as most camps, excursions and technology models that students may take from the school. If needed, staff should structure learning programs so as to not disadvantage students who do not pay fees or the costs of optional programs.

Payment of fees may be made to the school once booklists have been provided to parents and students have chosen their preferred course of study but may not be required from parents prior to the start of the new school year.

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

Parents and guardians will be provided with early notice of payment requests for essential items, optional extras and voluntary financial contributions (e.g. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year).

To assist parents with payments, four payment options have been developed:

- Option A Full amount at the beginning of Term 1
- Option B Payment at the beginning of each Term
- Option C Half yearly payment (beginning of Term 1 & 3)
- Option D Alternative payment arrangements agreed to by the College (Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the College (Principal and / or Business Manager) to discuss circumstances and available options).

Payments may be requested but not required prior to the commencement of the year in which the materials and services are to be used.

Payment requests to parents will be itemised and the category each item falls under will be clearly identified as an essential education item, optional education item or voluntary financial contribution.

Receipts will be issued to parents immediately upon making payment.

Reminders for unpaid essential items or optional extra items will be generated and distributed on a regular basis to parents, but not more than once per month.

Only the initial invitation for voluntary financial contributions and one reminder notice will be issued per year to parents and guardians.

All records of payments or contributions and any outstanding payments by parents and guardians are kept confidential.

PAYMENT SUPPORT OPTIONS

State Schools Relief Committee

The College appreciates that families may sometimes experience financial difficulties in meeting requests for payments and contributions. A range of support options are available to assist eligible parents, including access to State Schools Relief Committee support via the Director of Student Services which can assist with clothing / uniforms.

Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF)

Schools are required to use the Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund (CSEF) payment for expenses relating to camps, sport and / or excursions for the benefit of the eligible student. Some common examples of school-organised programs for which the CSEF payment may be used include; school camps, swimming and other school-organised sporting programs, outdoor education programs and excursion / incursions.

Parents and guardians, who hold a valid means-tested concession card or are a temporary foster parent, may be eligible for CSEF. This allowance is paid to the school to use towards expenses relating to camps, excursions or sporting activities for the benefit of your children.

The total CSEF amount per student will be allocated in consultation with parents/carers.

Distance Education

The college will allow students' normal use of school facilities in cases where they are enrolled in distance education programs – school phones systems, copiers, computers etc. However, where charges apply from the Distance Education School the families of students concerned will be expected to pay those costs since the College does not receive funding for students enrolled therein.

TAFE

Where students elect to undertake vocational studies through TAFE and the college incurs costs associated with the organisation and administration of their enrolment therein the college will be entitled to impose a charge to offset those costs.

CONSIDERATION OF HARDSHIP

Families may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. Principals and school councils exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of students and their families when considering parent payment fees. There are a range of support options available to support and assist parents. These can be accessed through **“Cost support for families.”**

Consideration to hardship arrangements in respect to payment requests is provided to families experiencing long term hardship or short term crisis on a confidential, case by case basis. All schools have written hardship arrangements that include a proactive approach to providing support for parents experiencing financial difficulty.

All parents experiencing hardship should contact the principal and / or the business manager to discuss payment arrangements.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

The Parent Payments policy will be published on the school website as downloadable copies and a printed copy can be made available through the General Office.

MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

Corryong College will monitor the effectiveness and impact of the implementation of this policy at least annually as part of its ongoing improvement and report back to the school community.

REFUNDS

Corryong College will consider requests for partial or full refunds of payments made by parents on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individual circumstances. Generally we will not be able to refund payments made for items purchased or costs that have already been paid where those funds have already been transferred to a third party. For example, camp costs when a child becomes unwell and cannot attend in circumstances where the payment has already been made or committed to a third party and no refund is available to the school. Where possible, we will make this clear to parents at the time of payment.