The primary right of parents to educate their children must be upheld in all forms of collaboration between parents, teachers and school authorities, and particularly in forms of participation designed to give citizens a voice in the functioning of schools and in the formulation and implementation of educational policies. (Article 5, Charter of the Rights of the Family)

The P&F Association has become the preferred structure for enabling parents to have a voice in their children’s education, though more recently, alternative structures have emerged offering parents different ways of participating.

In this document, the traditional P&F model is discussed as these are the dominant associations in the Maitland-Newcastle system of schools and together form the Federation of P&F Associations, the diocesan parent organisation.

P&F Management

The P&F Association is managed by the Executive members. It is the function of the Executive to plan, manage and organise the Association’s affairs. It is the responsibility of the Executive to call regular (preferably monthly) General Meetings where all parents, the principal, teachers and priest should be invited. Executive Meetings should be held prior to General Meetings to plan the agenda; look at issues that have been raised; finalise arrangements; and ensure the smooth running of the association. Such meetings should include the principal.

The Executive Team consists of:

 The President
 Secretary
 Treasurer

Also there are sometimes Ex-Officio members such as the Principal and the Parish Priest who may attend meetings. Note: Ex-officio members are members by right of their office held. They have the same voting rights as ordinary members, but they do not always choose to exercise these rights.
Roles and Responsibilities

President (Chairperson)
Successful meetings very much depend on the President. S/he must uphold the Constitution of the P&F Association with which they should be conversant.

Role:
It is the President’s role to ensure:
☑ That the meeting is properly convened in accordance with the Constitution. This includes giving proper notice of the meeting, a quorum is present, and that s/he is properly appointed to the Chair.
☑ That all rules and regulations pertaining to the P&F’s Constitution are observed including sub-committees. (See P&F Constitution).
☑ That an agenda is prepared and circulated, this can be prepared with the help of the Secretary.
☑ That the meeting begins and ends punctually pointing out major changes to the agenda.
☑ That all motions and amendments are put in clearly understood terms and related to the business of the meeting.
☑ That control of the meeting is maintained. (See Code of Conduct).
☑ That an issue is thoroughly discussed, that those wishing to speak are allowed to do so, uninterrupted and that private discussion among members does not take place.
☑ That s/he acts impartially and in the best interests of the P&F.

Note: The President must not take any side in a discussion. S/he must ensure that all points on both sides are raised and thoroughly debated. If the issue being discussed is one that the President feels very strongly about s/he should step down from the chair for that particular discussion which enables him/her to speak from the floor. The Vice President can take the chair. In the case of a tied vote the President is advised to vote to maintain the status quo. This is because a change in status should not occur by the majority of one vote particularly that of the President. It is worth mentioning here that when the status quo is to be changed (for example in the case of school uniform) it should be established prior to a vote being called what % must be in favour of the change for it to take place. It is usually 65-75%.

☑ Decisions made at the meeting are acted upon promptly.
☑ The meeting is closed only after all other business is concluded.

Responsibilities:
It is the President’s responsibility to:
☑ Ensure that the meeting is opened with a prayer/reflection.
☑ Perform customary courtesies – including thanking executives and other helpers, and welcoming new members.
☑ Verify the accuracy of the minutes to be presented.
☑ Sign minutes as correct when they have been confirmed.
☑ Ensure correct functioning of all office bearers and sub-committees.
☑ Where appropriate, sound out suitable people who may be available for executive positions or to act in other capacities.
☑ Not become involved in activities which could undermine the President’s reputation for impartiality.
Vice President
The role of the Vice-President may be viewed as a learning experience – it may provide an opportunity to learn more about the P&F in general and the President’s role in particular.

Role:
It is the Vice-President’s responsibility:
★ In the absence of the President, to chair the meeting in accordance with the role set down for the President.
★ Assist the President by attending the official functions which s/he may be unable to attend.

Secretary
The secretary is central to the efficient operation of any organisation. Attributes of a good secretary are common sense, initiative, organisational skills and an ability to work with the Chair.

Role:
It is the Secretary’s role to:
★ Liaise with the President and assist in the running of the meeting.
★ Supply the President with information pertaining to the effective functioning of the meeting eg. correspondence received, minutes recorded.

Responsibilities:
It is the Secretary’s responsibility to:
★ Prepare the Agenda in consultation with the President.
★ Circulate the Attendance Book and note apologies.
★ Make available all Inward and Outward correspondence to the meeting.
★ Write any letters necessary to carry out P&F decisions.
★ Note any points of Agenda for the next meeting.
★ Prepare and circulate draft of minutes to President and Principal shortly after the meeting then ensure Draft Minutes are available from the school office. Minutes are not official until they have been formally accepted at the next meeting as an accurate record and signed by the President.
★ Where agreed, provide a summary of Minutes for the school newsletter.

Note: Minutes of a meeting provide a formal record of what decisions were made; what topics were discussed; what actions were agreed to and time frame within which they are to be completed. They should be prepared in an accurate, concise and timely manner, expressing only the facts, not the writer’s opinion.

Minutes should include:
★ Starting and finishing times
★ List of those present, apologies and date of next meeting
★ Record of all decisions and motions, expressed clearly and concisely.
★ In the case of motions: the names of the mover and seconder.

P&F Federation Delegate
Role:
Someone who would attend any P&F Federation meetings held during the year, and report back to the next General Meeting with any correspondence.