

# STAWELL SECONDARY COLLEGE

## Parent Payment Policy

### Rationale:

- The Victoria 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.
- Stawell Secondary College is best placed to make local decisions which 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 school communities.
- Learning and teaching programs vary across schools based on local needs and circumstances and reflect each school's priorities, decisions and resources. This, in turn informs the parent payment charge approved by school councils that may vary from one school to the next.

### Aims:

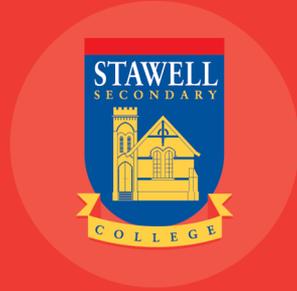
- To ensure that parent payment practices are consistent, transparent and ensure that all children have access to the standard curriculum at Stawell Secondary College.

### Principles:

- **Educational Value:** Student learning, aspirations and wellbeing are paramount when schools 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 at the school.
- **Engagement and Support:** Early identification and engagement strategies by the school 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, sensitively and without judgement and the identify and personal information of all parents and students are kept confidential in respect to parent payments.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** School parent payment practices are well communicated, clear and transparent and their impact on student programs and families are reviewed by school councils.

### Definitions:

Word	Definition
Parent	'Parent' means, in relation to a child, a guardian and every person who has parental responsibilities 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.



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## **Implementation:**

### **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. The Stawell Secondary College School Council is responsible for developing and approving school-level parent payment charges and can request payments from parents under three categories only – Essential Student Learning Items, Optional Items and Voluntary Financial Contributions.

- 1. Essential Student Learning Items:** These 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. E.g. Food technology ingredients, materials for technology subjects, incursions, school diary.
- 2. Optional Items:** These 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. E.g. Laptops, excursions.
- 3. Voluntary Financial Contributions:** Parents can be invited to donate 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-deductable. Stawell Secondary College currently does not request any Voluntary Financial Contributions from parents.

### **Payment Arrangements and Methods:**

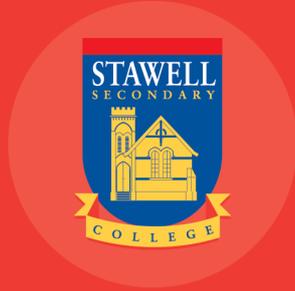
Parents can make payments to Stawell Secondary College via the following options:

1. Contacting the General Office. We accept payments of cash, cheque or EFTPOS in person.
2. Direct Debit in instalments either weekly, fortnightly or monthly. The Business Manager can assist families to set this up at any time. Families maintain full control at all times and are able to stop and start their regular payments to suit their personal circumstances.
3. BPAY.
4. Centrepay (through Centrelink).

### **Cost and Support to Parents:**

When school council considers the proposed requests for parent payments the cost is kept to a minimum and is affordable to most parents at the school. Considerations will be made in regards to the:

- Items students consume or take possession of are accurately costed.
- Payment requests are broadly itemised within the appropriate category.



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- Parents are advised that they have the option of purchasing equivalent Essential Student Learning Items themselves, in consultation with the school.
- Information on payment options is available, accessible and easily understood to all parents so that they know what to expect and what supports they can access.
- Parents are provided with early notice of annual payment requests for school fees (i.e. a minimum of six weeks' notice prior to the end of the previous school year). This enables parents to save and budget accordingly.
- Parents are provided with reasonable notice of any other payment requests that arise during the school year – ensuring parents have a clear understanding of the full financial contribution being sought.
- The status and details of any financial arrangements are kept confidential and only shared with relevant school personnel.
- Parents experiencing hardship are not pursued for outstanding school fees from one year to the next.
- Use of debt collectors to obtain outstanding school funds owed to the school from parents is not permitted.
- There will be only one reminder notice to parents for voluntary financial contributions per year.
- Invoices/statements for unpaid essential or optional items accepted by parents are not generated more than monthly or according to the parent payment arrangement with the school.

## **Support for Families**

Families of Stawell Secondary College may experience financial difficulties and may be unable to meet the full or part payments requested. The Principal and school council should exercise sensitivity to the differing financial circumstances of students and their families when considering parent payment fees. Stawell Secondary College offers the following options to support and assist parents:

1. Second hand and low-cost options e.g. school clothing pool low cost suppliers
2. Camp, Sports and Excursions Funds
3. State Schools Relief
4. Local community supports

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.

Stawell Secondary College's hardship arrangements are:

- Contact the Business Manager on 5358 1700 or in person, at any time, to discuss financial concerns or situations when having difficulty making payments.
- In circumstances where the school becomes aware of the student's family concerned will alert the Business Manager who will then contact home and organise a meeting to discuss options to assist the family. This could include such things as; supplying the student with second hand clothing, putting the family in contact with community organisations that can support their



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particular circumstances, developing a payment plan for the family that is manageable and supportive of their needs.

All parents are provided with the name and contact details of a nominated parent's payment contact person at the school who they can discuss payment arrangements with.

## **Engaging with Parents:**

Stawell Secondary College will effectively engage in communication with the school community around payment plan options by:

1. Enrolment Packs: information about the Stawell Secondary College Parent Payment options will be disseminated to all incoming students on enrolment.
2. Connections: Information will be disseminated in the school newsletter 'Connections' at the beginning of each year to inform parents of their options.
3. A letter will be posted to every family, in November each year, informing the parents of the following year's Essential Materials charges as set by School Council. A breakdown of the costing of each relevant year level will also be included plus a list of all options for payment of any charges.
4. The policy will be included on the School Website for easy access by parents.
5. Parents can raise any issues and make general inquiries about changes directly to the Business Manager on any weekday.
6. Complaints should be directed to the Principal on 5358 1700.

## **Evaluation:**

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's review cycle in accordance with the Child Safe Policy, in November every year. The review will be led by the Principal and referred to the Policy Subcommittee and School Council for ratification. It is the responsibility of the school council to monitor the implementation of the policy, identify the factors/measures to be considered, such as transparency of processes and engagement with parents, how/when it will be reported back to the school community, and timing and process of review.

*Reviewed last: 2018*

*Next Review: 2019*