

# Message from Seton College Parents

16<sup>th</sup> March 2021

## **PRIVATE SCHOOL LEAVES PARENTS FOOTING THE BILL BUT WITHOUT A SAY**

A private school in Brisbane has removed the rights of parents to express their opinion on how their P & F (Parents and Friends) funds are spent. Seton College in Mt Gravatt, a Brisbane Catholic Education school, changed the structure of the now defunct Seton College P&F committee in 2018, renaming it the 'Seton College Community Engagement and Consultative Committee', or 'The Seton Collaborative' for short. The Seton Collaborative is a merger of the P & F and the School Board, with the balance of power leaning far from the side of the parents who are paying into the fund every term. The change also affects the way membership is granted and how decisions for major expenditures are approved, leaving parents frustrated and alarmed.

According to Catholic School Parents Queensland (CSPQ), the association charged with ensuring Catholic P & F committees operate effectively, a P & F association must: hold an Annual General Meeting, hold regular open meetings at times and frequencies determined to best suit the parent community and hold yearly elections of executive members. Since the Seton Collaborative was formed three years ago, there has yet to be a single advertised Annual General Meeting (AGM) or official election of executive committee members. In 2020 not a single open meeting was held where parents could attend. Despite this, the Seton Collaborative Executive still approved \$50,000 to upgrade the College library last year. Parents are shocked at the complete lack of community consultation on such a large expenditure, equating to half of the total amount of parent paid levies held in the Seton Collaborative's bank account.

In February this year, parents received an email stating that nominations for the executive committee of the Seton Collaborative were open for the first time since it formed in 2018 and encouraged interested parties to apply to be one of the five executive members. However, it was also revealed that the positions would be 'discerned by the current executive', and NOT elected by the college parent community as is the usual process in a P & F association.

Whilst most P & F associations meet monthly, there is still no date set for an AGM nor a regular open meeting of the Seton Collaborative. Expressions of interest for the executive committee closed on February 12<sup>th</sup>, with no timeline given as to when an announcement of the elected Seton Collaborative executive team will be made.

Seton College families are feeling like this is all part of the plan by Brisbane Catholic Education to dissect the school bit by bit, leading to a closure earlier than the original 2024 deadline. Parents feel they have lost their rights to engage in the education of their children and to have a say in how their compulsory P&F levies are being spent. They are confused as to why the college are using the Seton Collaborative's Terms of Reference (copy attached), and not adhering to the P & F principles as set out by Catholic School Parents Queensland ([pandf.org.au](http://pandf.org.au)) whilst the Seton College P&F continues to be a registered organisation with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission ([acnc.gov.au](http://acnc.gov.au)) and there is no such official registration for the Seton Collaborative.

For media enquiries, please email [saveourseton@gmail.com](mailto:saveourseton@gmail.com)

## TERMS OF REFERENCE SETON COLLEGE COLLABORATIVE EXECUTIVE

### PURPOSE

The **Seton Collaborative Executive** is an integral part of the College community, providing a formal structure for parents and others interested in the welfare of the students to plan and organise activities for the benefit of the College and the ongoing development of students, as well as contributing to the development of the College vision and mission, and policy as part of strategic planning.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Seton College Collaborative Executive:

- Organises and hosts parent forums each year.
- Provides an avenue of support and information to aid the involvement of parents/carers in their children's education and the College community.
- Promotes the principles of Catholic education and a distinctive Christian community/environment in the College.
- Provides an opportunity to participate at College, archdiocesan, state, and national levels.
- Acts as an Advisory Board on school policy and direction but does not have a decision making role on these matters.
- Decides, with the College executive and school community, the appropriate distribution of the P&F Levy.

The group commits to the following principles in achieving its purpose:

- Prayerfulness and reflective action
- Collegiality and shared wisdom
- Open, respectful and honest dialogue
- Transparency and accountability
- Inclusiveness, confidentiality and trust

### MEMBERSHIP AND STRUCTURE

- The Seton College Collaborative Executive will consist of five members from which a Chair will be sought.
- The Principal will be an ex officio member and secretariat functions will be carried out by the Executive Assistant to the Principal and the College Business Manager.
- Expressions of interest in membership will be sought from the parent body and discerned by the current executive.
- In the event of sub committees being deemed necessary, membership will be co-opted from the parent body.
- Executive Membership terms are twelve months, with expressions of interest sought annually. Members may serve two consecutive terms.
- Meetings of the Executive will be held quarterly. A quorum of three executive members is required.
- Items of business can be nominated by members of the parent community.
- Permission by a parent or community member to present to a Collaborative Executive meeting may be sought from the Chair in collaboration with the Principal.
- Reporting of activities will occur annually.