

A distinctive of Christian Education National (CEN) is how our schools are governed. We are parent-governed Christian schools. We believe schools ought to be firstly accountable to the parent community they serve, rather than the government, a church, or a denomination. It is to parents that God has given the responsibility of nurturing their children. As a response to this belief, parents are encouraged to share the vision of Christian education and set the direction for the school.



What is a PARENT-GOVERNED SCHOOL?

WHO OWNS YOUR SCHOOL?

A local not-for-profit association of Christian parents, teachers and past parents owns and maintains each of our schools. This group of people are known as 'The Association'.

The Association elects board members who, acting on behalf of the Association, govern the school. The board determines policy and broad direction. The board appoint the principal and other key leaders and gives oversight to this executive team.

The executive needs to achieve the aims and objectives of the Association for the school. Because the board is primarily a governing board it generally does not get involved in the day-to-day running of the school. It is the executive team who manage the school.

WHO CAN JOIN THE ASSOCIATION?

Each Association reflects their school history and culture. Some associations are open to all current families. Others are open to past and present parents, or even grandparents and interested members of the broader Christian community. To ensure schools remain true to their vision and mission, full Association membership—which includes voting rights—is limited to practising Christians. Talk to your school principal to better understand your particular school's Association and membership criteria. Committed parents are essential in maintaining the vision for Christ-centred education and ensuring a healthy, vibrant Association.

WHY SUCH A STRONG EMPHASIS ON PARENTS?

Children are precious gifts from God. The Scriptures clearly teach that the chief responsibility for the nurture and guidance of children belongs to their parents. Christian parents seek to bring up their children to know and love a loving God, His son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. When a partnership between home (parents/grandparents/carers) and school is established, both academic and biblical worldview foundations in students are stronger and more effective.

HOW CAN CEN HELP SUPPORT YOUR ASSOCIATION & SCHOOL?

Your school is part of a community of over 60 schools across Australia who are members of CEN. CEN provides a range of services that promote the vision of Christ-centred education. Support services include:

- principal & executive staff appointments
- parent vision conferences
- teacher training
- board members' handbook
- governance training & course manual
- policy documents exemplars
- help desk for urgent enquiries & assistance.

A brief history

The first schools in Australia were Christian schools established by the Anglican Church (Church of England) in New South Wales in the late 1700s. Free 'charity schools' run by other denominations gradually came into existence in the following decades.

In 1872, Victoria became the first Australian state to pass an Education Act providing for free, secular public education. Other states followed suit in the following two decades. Funding for non-government schools was stopped and most of them closed.

It was almost 100 years later that funding of non-government schools was reintroduced. The number of schools and students has grown dramatically since. In 2014 just over 34% of all students in Australia were enrolled in non-government schools.

Our parent governed school movement has been strongly influenced by Dutch migrants. Having fought in Holland for the rights of parents to choose who educates their children, they shared their passion and vision with other Christians in Australia. Pastor Jan Overduin of Arnhem Holland was one of the most vocal and influential fighters for Christian education. He believed Christian parents had a responsibility to teach their children from a biblical perspective. His courage in refusing to allow non-Christians to teach from a Nazi worldview in his school led to some board members being gaoled and himself spending years in a concentration camp. Members of his congregation were instrumental in starting Tyndale Christian School in Sydney.

It is good for us to remember the sacrifice and commitment that the pioneers of our schools faced. They established our schools enabling Christian parents to choose who they partner with in educating their children.