

AGM - All You Need to Know

By David Knuckey

It's AGM season again. Each year at this time, SAASSO is inundated with calls from parents asking what should be done at the AGM and who should do it.

As often as not, our job is to assuage parents concerns over an outlandish rule they have been told exists on running their AGM ... "Is it true school staff choose the chairperson?" "We are told that teachers automatically fill any spare parent spaces on Council." "Our principal says they can just roll-over the term of any councillor?" None of which are true.

There are two key meetings when it comes to electing and organising your Governing Council; the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and the first Governing Council meeting after the AGM – each has specific tasks that must be conducted.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The Governing Council must conduct an AGM each year – The Council Chairperson calls and presides over the AGM. There are two formal aspects of the AGM:

1. Reporting to the school community.
2. Electing parents to the Governing Council.

Reporting

The following reports must be delivered:

- The Chairperson delivers the Annual Report, which will include:
 - Strategic and operational plans, such as the Site Learning Plan.
 - General activities and operations of the Governing Council since the last AGM.
- The Treasurer presents:
 - An up-to-date statement of the receipts and expenditure of all accounts controlled by the Governing Council.
 - The audited financial statement of receipts and expenditure for the previous financial year.

Elections

Parents of the school elect parents to the Governing Council – this can be done one of two ways - they cannot do both:

1. An election conducted at the AGM (the option most schools choose).
2. A postal ballot of parents.

The Governing Council determines the election format and establishes the election timeframe. The principal acts as returning officer for elections.

Notice of election

The principal will notify the school community of the upcoming election, by the means generally used to communicate with the school community. This notice must:

- Advise the time and date of the meeting (giving at least 14 days notice).
- Advise the period during which nominations for election as councillors must be accepted and outline the nomination process. Nominations must be in writing on approved nomination forms.

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Nominations

If the number of nominees is less than or exactly equal to the number of spaces available, no election is needed. If there are more nominees than spaces, however, the principal will conduct a ballot. Independent scrutineers are allowed at the counting of the votes.

Only parents who attend the meeting can vote in the elections.

After the election has been declared, if the parent seats on your Governing Council (as set in your constitution) have not been

filled, parents in attendance at the AGM may be invited to nominate and be elected by a further ballot.

Postal Ballots

Instead of conducting an election at the AGM (or another general meeting of the school), the Governing Council can choose to conduct a postal ballot of all parents. Similar rules apply, however, in addition, the 'election notice' must:

- Tell parents when ballot papers will be available and how parents can obtain one.
- Set the date by which ballot papers must be lodged and advise how parents can lodge them.

When electing and appointing members, the Governing Council must consider that the majority of members must be elected parents of the school. At the time of election, nomination or appointment, school staff and employees of the Minister's administrative unit must not make up the majority of parent members on the council.

First Council Meeting After the AGM

Within one month of the AGM, the principal will call and preside over the first meeting of the Governing Council (because you do not yet have a chairperson), at which the following occurs:

Appointing other members

At this meeting, the Governing Council may also appoint the following members to its ranks:

- Community representatives
- Affiliated committees nominees

Officer-Bearer elections

The council elects:

- Chairperson
- Treasurer
- Secretary



The Governing Council may also appoint an executive committee.

Nb. It is vital to hold these proceedings in this order, so that appointed members are eligible for office-holder elections.

Committees

The Governing Council should appoint members to its sub-committees. All councils must have the following committees:

- Finance Advisory Committee
- OSHC Committee
- Canteen Committee

Councils may also form other committees as it sees fit (eg. fundraising committee).

All committees are under the auspices of the council and the council determines the membership, roles, and responsibilities of all committees. Note that all committees must have at least three members and one member must be a Governing Councillor. Additionally, for the Finance Advisory Committee, the Treasurer and the Principal are mandated members and the Treasurer must be chair of this committee. ■