

## RATIONALE

The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA) has a responsibility to make a Catholic education available to all Catholic students whose parents seek a Catholic education for them, while embodying the Church's preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged (Mandate, p 50), insofar as this is possible.

Schools are reminded that it is essential to minimise potential barriers for parents such as fees and other costs (Mandate, p 7), and to keep costs to parents as low as possible (Mandate p, 38). Schools need to avoid material ambitions that might lead to higher fees and force them into giving counter-witness (Mandate, p. 22).

Schools have a responsibility to communicate the financial constraints under which they operate to parents enrolling their children in Catholic schools.

Parents are required to make a commitment to support Catholic education financially by paying fees as a necessary contribution to the costs of delivering a Catholic education.

## DEFINITIONS

### School Fees:

For the purpose of this policy statement, School Fees shall include the total cost of educating a child and comprises: tuition fees; levies (e.g. curriculum levies, or IT levies); and other charges (e.g. book hire, insurance, compulsory excursions, camp fees, amenities, building levies, etc.).

### Application Fee:

The fee associated with processing an application for student enrolment into a school.

### Enrolment Deposit:

School fees paid in advance as a deposit, associated with securing a student enrolment into a school, after an offer of enrolment has been made by the school.

### Role of School Boards or School Councils:

- In diocesan accountable schools, Boards are responsible for the financial management of the school, including the setting and collecting of school fees in accordance with the policies and guidelines of the CECWA.
- In Order accountable schools, Boards or Councils may only have an advisory role with regard to the setting and collection of school fees.

## PRINCIPLES

1. Schools shall ensure that school fees reflect the socio-economic status of the school community, in the context of the policy rationale.
2. Financial grounds shall never be the reason for the non-enrolment or exclusion of any child from a Catholic school.
3. The collection of school fees shall be approached in the spirit of Christian charity & justice.
4. The withholding of access to students from normal pastoral and curriculum provision shall not be used as a fee collection strategy.

5. Families with limited capacity to pay school fees have an entitlement to claim a fee concession. Requests for fee concessions shall be treated with dignity, fairness, compassion and confidentiality.
6. Families with eligible means tested family concession cards (Health Care Card or Pensioner Concession Card) have an automatic entitlement to tuition fee concessions.
7. The confidentiality of all information pertaining to parents and/or guardians and the payment of school fees shall be maintained, as mandated in legislation.
8. Where parents and/or guardians have the capacity to pay fees, the collection of school fees shall be actively pursued.

## PROCEDURES

1. School fees are to be announced to the College community before the end of the previous school year. Fees and all discounts, including CECWA's Health Care Card Discount Scheme, shall be clearly advertised and easily accessible to parents. This includes fee brochures, the College website and parent newsletters.
2. Salvado Catholic College shall comply with a standard schedule of fees to ensure consistency and comparability across all schools in the System. The standard schedule is provided in the Supporting Guidelines document that complements this policy.
3. Salvado Catholic College:
  - Recognises the Church's preferential option for the poor and disadvantaged.
  - Communicates this policy to parents.
  - Highlights details of school fees as well as information relating to the discounts and fee concessions defined in this policy.
  - Has a timeline for the payment of accounts stated on each account sent home.
  - Has a process for negotiating the method of payment and the provision of concessions, if required.
  - Provides information regarding access to the various forms of government assistance if appropriate.
  - Has a procedure following non-payment, up to and including Judgement.
4. This policy is to be updated annually to reflect:
  - any changes to the CECWA Policy Statement 'School Fees: Setting and Collection;
  - any legislative changes; and
  - any community socio-economic considerations.
5. The Principal may from time to time request financial information from families to support applications for fee concessions or any other concessions.
6. Families that are holders of an eligible means-tested family concession card are simply required to provide evidence that their card is valid for the duration of the academic year.
7. On application for admission, parents and/or guardians will be provided with the College's fee policy.
8. Acknowledgment of the fee collection procedures shall be on the 'Application for Enrolment' form which shall be signed by both parents and/or guardians. In the case of a sole custodial parent or guardian, one signature will suffice.

### **Fee Prior to Enrolment**

9. Application fees, if applicable to the College, shall not exceed \$55.00 or 15 of the school annual tuition fee, whichever is the greater. Application fees are non-refundable. Salvado Catholic College's application fee is \$35.00.
10. Enrolment Deposits, if applicable to the College, shall be no more that 25% of the annual tuition fee and shall be deducted from the first semester's tuition fees in the year of enrolment. Where circumstances beyond the control of parents result in an enrolment deposit not being paid, the principal shall consider waiving it. As a new school and in consultation with CEWA, Salvado Catholic College has set the Enrolment deposit at \$200.00, as it has been since the foundation year.

### **Fee Setting**

11. Annual College fees shall be set by the College Board during the budget process each year. Increases to total school fees shall be in accordance with the maximum increase parameters annually set by the CECWA.
12. Diocesan accountable schools wishing to exceed the maximum increase in school fees shall obtain the prior written approval of the Executive Director of Catholic Education.

### **Fee Discounts**

13. Families with limited capacity to pay school fees have an entitlement to claim a fee concession. Requests for fee concessions shall be treated with dignity, fairness, compassion and confidentiality.
14. The CECWA introduced the Health Care Card Discount Scheme in 2005 to provide an automatic fee concession for the holders of eligible means tested family concession cards. This discount shall be implemented across all year levels, from Kindergarten to Year 12. Further details of the Health Care Card Discount Scheme are available for schools in the *Supporting Guidelines* document that complements this policy.

The total discounted school fees for holders of eligible means tested family concession cards are set as follows:

Kindergarten to Year 6	- \$300.00 per student
Year 7 to Year 12	- \$1,500 per student

These school fees shall be annually reviewed by the CECWA, based in the changes to the eligibility income thresholds, and shall be communicated to school by the CECWA office during the budget process each year.

Family building levies shall be charged at the corresponding percentage of the Health Care Card school fee:

Kindergarten to Year 6	- 30% of HCC fee - \$90.00 per family
Year 7 to Year 12	- 20% of HCC fee - \$300.00 per family

*Salvado Catholic College may add certain specific additional charges for holders of eligible means tested family concession cards. These may be levied on a user-pays basis and could include charges associated with VET courses, camps, music lessons and other activities where there are direct and additional costs associated with such activities.*

*Keeping these costs to a minimum and within the spirit and intent of this policy, assist those families who encounter difficulties in meeting these additional charges.*

### **Discounts for Families**

15. Families with siblings enrolled in Kindergarten through to Year 12 in the same Catholic school are entitled to a level of family discount that shall be determined by each School Board or Council. CECWA highly recommends the following family discount levels:
- 2nd child enrolled = 20% of that child's tuition fee
  - 3rd child enrolled = 40% of that child's tuition fee
  - 4th child enrolled and beyond = 100% of that child's tuition fee
16. Kindergarten fees shall be charged as a proportion of the respective Year 1 fee. The specific proportion shall be equal to the FTE of the Kindergarten program that the College runs.
17. All students and families are eligible for sibling discounts, including families who receive automatic tuition fee discounts as holders of eligible means tested family concession cards.
18. Salvado Catholic College shall ensure that the usual family discounts are offered for Special Education students whether siblings attend Salvado Catholic College or a number of Catholic schools.
19. Consideration will be given to family fee discounts in situations where families have children enrolled in more than one Catholic school. Salvado Catholic College acknowledges that the provision of such discounts is not mandatory, it is encouraged to recognise families support of the System by providing additional family discounts in these circumstances.

### **Fee Collection**

20. Catholic schools are required to develop strategies for fee collection that are consistent with the principles of this policy.
- Fees and their payment should be discussed with parents at the time of enrolment. Relevant information on school fees and the specific College policy shall be made available at that time;
  - Salvado Catholic College shall facilitate multiple ways and frequencies for parents to pay e.g. debit card, credit card, direct debit or bank transfer; and weekly, monthly, per term or yearly;
  - Fees for the following year shall be communicated to in advance of the year-end, and be published prominently and unambiguously in newsletters and on the school website;
  - A full statement of fees payable for the year should be provided to each parent at the start of the school year and periodic statements (e.g. per term) should follow.
21. Every effort must be made to help parents understand their obligations as a matter of justice to the whole College community. The recovery of unpaid fees, particularly if this involves legal action, must be approached humanely and sensitively to protect the child as much as possible from the public embarrassment that could arise.
22. Refer to the College's ***Summary of School Fees and Charges*** and ***Terms of Payment*** document as part of this policy.

**The steps to be taken in relation to the collection of unpaid fees are as follows:**

1. A written communication shall be sent to the parents, bringing promptly to their attention the outstanding balance.
2. Should there be no response within 14 days, an appropriate person(s) shall approach the parents on a personal basis, in a sensitive, discreet and confidential manner.
3. If the personal approach cannot be made, or no action results from it within another 14 days, a formal registered letter from the school Principal should be used to remind parents of their financial obligations. This letter should include an invitation to discuss the matter with the school and a specified timeframe for a response. *Refer to Sample Letter 1: Fee Obligations in the Supporting Guidelines document.*
4. Should there be no response or action within 14 days of the letter, the school Principal shall send a formal registered letter with a final notice, seeking payment and outlining the possible outcomes, including legal action, which could occur if payment is not received within the specified timeframe. *Refer to Sample Letter 2: Fee Obligations in the Supporting Guidelines document.*
5. If, despite this last letter, there is no response or action the College Board may approve to engage the services of a debt collection agency or a solicitor to recover outstanding fees and any additional costs.
6. In the event that debt collection agent is not successful in contacting the parents or in establishing a debt repayment plan, Salvado Catholic College may consider initiating court proceedings. Before this is done, Salvado Catholic College shall inform in writing the Executive Director of Catholic Education.
7. Before any enforcement proceedings are taken, such as a Property Seizure and Sale Order, Earnings Appropriation Order, or any other enforcement action, including the launching of a caveat on a property, Salvado Catholic College shall obtain written approval from the Executive Director of Catholic Education.
8. Salvado Catholic College shall keep comprehensive documentation of each attempt to resolve the problems of outstanding fees.
9. Under no circumstances can a child enrolled at Salvado Catholic College be refused on-going enrolment because their parents have not paid fees.

**REFERENCES**

Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009 – 2015

CECWA School Excursions policy

Catholic School Board Constitution, Western Australia

Privacy Act 1988

Supporting Guidelines for Schools, CECWA School Fees: Setting and Collection policy

Originally Released	Date of Last Review	Date for Next Review
2015	2018	2021