

# GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

## COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

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Target Audience:	School staff, school councils and community members	

This document should be read in conjunction with [Community Use of School Facilities policy](#).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The primary function of Northern Territory Government schools is to provide educational services for young people, yet there are many hours when school buildings and grounds are not in use. It is during these hours that schools can support the community by sharing school facilities and providing an opportunity for schools and their communities to strengthen relationships.

Schools are encouraged to promote the use of their facilities and for this information to be available on the school's website.

### 2. GUIDELINES/PROCEDURES

#### 2.1 *Management of Community Use*

The following activities should be given priority for use:

- educational purposes, i.e. adult literacy and numeracy programs, tutoring for students
- professional teaching association activities
- local sporting organisations for use of basketball courts or ovals
- not-for-profit organisations.

Consideration should be given to the availability of similar services by existing private providers. Where there is already an appropriate standard of facility within the community the school may not wish to approve uses that may compete and impact on the long term profitability of these providers, e.g. local council hall.

#### **Public Shelters**

The use of school facilities as public shelters during disasters, such as cyclones or floods, should be in accordance with the Emergency Management – Public Shelter Responsibilities Policy and the All Hazards Emergency Management Action List.

User agreements are not necessary for public shelter use.

### **Building the Education Revolution (BER)**

The school must agree to provide access to libraries and multipurpose halls funded under BER at no, or minimal, cost to the community. This must include reasonable access by any community or not-for-profit groups in the local community. Schools shall charge a fee to cover utility and operational costs. Refer to the BER guidelines on the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website for further information.

### **Determining the cost of use**

A schedule of fees should be determined in consultation with the school council for the use of facilities. Fees comprise the following:

- bond – where required (see below)
- utilities fee – a non-refundable fee to cover utility and operational costs (i.e. power)
- hire fee – an additional fee may be charged to groups to assist with school council fundraising activities.

All fees must be paid in advance.

In consultation with the school council, principals have the discretion to waive and/or reduce fees in accordance with this policy. Any waiver or reduction should be applied consistently and fairly across comparable users and should only be applied to utilities fees in exceptional circumstances.

Principals and school councils must ensure that departmental funds provided to a school council for the provision of an educational program are not used to subsidise community use of school facilities.

School councils may approve the use of school facilities to commercial operators at market rates. Fees should not be waived for commercial operators.

### **Bond**

Schools can request a bond (an up-front payment) from users as a way of encouraging users to take care of school facilities and to provide funds to cover replacement or repair of any damage caused by the user. The bond should be non-refundable if the conditions of the agreement are not met. As a general rule of thumb a bond should be 5% of the value of the agreement.

### **Insurance**

Users must produce evidence of their public liability insurance which provides appropriate coverage for the user of at least \$10 million. In addition, if the user has employees, evidence of workers compensation insurance for the user's workers must also be produced.

If a user does not have public liability insurance and is of a non-commercial nature and the school council is satisfied that the use is of a low risk nature, discretion may be exercised in deciding whether to permit use of the school's facilities. This discretion should be exercised

with great caution and only in rare circumstances. The basic requirement is for the community user to have public liability insurance. Activities involving physical activity (e.g. sports, dancing etc) must be covered by insurance. If the requirement to have public liability insurance is waived, the user is required to indemnify the Northern Territory Government for any loss or damage to person or property as a consequence of using the school's facilities. Note clause nine (9) of the Community Use Agreement.

### **Use of school facilities for polling purposes**

The department has entered into an Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding with the Australian Electoral Commission and Northern Territory Electoral Commission which eliminates the need for schools to put in place user agreements when schools are being used as polling places.

Schools will negotiate operational details such as fees, availability and suitability of school facilities directly with the Electoral Commissions.

It would be reasonable to expect that political candidates are able to set up signs and notices on school grounds at the conclusion of the school day on the Friday before election-day. For some schools this would not be until after school care finishes or when all or most students have vacated the premises. Principals must clearly define with political parties and candidates where promotional material can be erected/displayed and when it is to be removed. This is to avoid the possibility of star pickets damaging underground services and communication lines.

Principals who have any doubts as to whether an activity is allowed should contact their Regional Director for advice.

## **2.2 Community Use Agreement Template**

A [Community Use of School Facilities Agreement and Schedule](#) has been developed for schools to use to appropriately manage the above processes.