



## Student Voice and Participations Policy/Statement

### Context

St Patrick's College is a Catholic day and boarding school for boys in the Edmund Rice tradition, established in 1893. St Patrick's College is committed to providing a caring, supportive, and safe environment where every student has a place, a voice and their story is known. Edmund Rice Education Australia is committed to providing safe and supportive environments where all children and young people entrusted to our care are affirmed in their dignity and worth as a person. This policy should be read in the context of the College Child Protection and Safety Policy.

### Background

Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA), as St Patrick's College's governing authority, sets the policy framework for all EREA schools. These policies have been contextualised for St Patrick's College's particular school environment so that our policies reflect the needs of our students.

### Student Voice and Participation

St Patrick's College encourages its students to be engaged in relationships with their learning, their faith, their community and their world through student voice and participation opportunities. Our students are empowered by knowledge and enlightened by their faith, they are valued for their contribution to learning and to the school community, and their unique perspectives are recognised and embraced (CEM 2018).

Our 'Student Voice and Participation Statement' recognises the value of and presents opportunities for student voice and participation.

Students in our care are empowered, hope-filled and free to build a better world for all. Students of all year levels are encouraged to become leaders who voice the needs of students and the community, both formally and informally, to bring about an understanding of our collective responsibility for the learning and wellbeing of all. Students are invited into the story of Jesus to strive to make his message of compassion, justice, and peace a living reality within our community. Students provide input in the development of strategies to enhance wellbeing, promote safety, and discrimination of all kinds.

The sense of belonging and being in a relationship with others builds and strengthens the ability of learners to understand and manage their emotions, develop their sense of self, their agency, and their resilience in the face of difficulty, challenge, or adversity (CEM 2018).

### Opportunities for Student Voice and Participation

Formal opportunities such as the Student Council, the Student Congress, the Faith in Action group, the SAGERS group, and the Student Wellbeing Group coexist with opportunities including:

- education and awareness raising of nationally driven campaigns against violence
- year level cohort meetings
- a dynamic and evolving pastoral care programme
- student-led initiatives and campaigns e.g., Winter food appeal
- student surveys to enhance the learning and wellbeing programs
- interest-based learning programs



- discussion focus groups
- faith in action through social justice programs
- volunteering and community projects
- community service
- strategic planning and policy development e.g., Student Code of Conduct
- student leadership development

The College is committed to developing all students as leaders.

### **Inclusivity**

The College is a place of justice and equality, and this will be reflected in our student voice and leadership programs. Wherever possible, all our student programmes will reflect the diversity of the student body including the voice of our Indigenous, multicultural, day and boarding students.

### **Formal Programs**

#### **Student Council**

- As the most significant student leaders in the College, the College Captain and Vice Captains are expected to be ambassadors who embody the values and vision of the College. They must be approachable, reliable, and trustworthy, with high expectations of themselves and others. They must be effective listeners, must lead by example and be willing to build community. Captains also have ceremonial duties and welcome our new Year 7s to College through the Year 7 Transition Program. The Council meet regularly with the Deputy Principal and College Principal to consult on issues, ideas, and initiatives and in doing so, participate in and promote student voice and agency.
- The College Captain and Vice Captains are to take an active role in all aspects of the College community and to work with others to achieve the best possible outcomes. Their leadership must be based on a model of service and are expected to live and enable the Edmund Rice charism evidenced in the EREA Touchstones and the College's Four Pillars: Faith, Tradition, Excellence and Relationships in a commitment to being an exemplar of the College community. These student representatives are elected in the students' second last year at the College through an application and endorsement system.
- Each of the four Houses has multiple applicants for Captains each year. The aim of the captain system is to promote physical activity through the House system with a focus of participation, effort, and inclusivity rather than peak performance. Captains are responsible for morale; motivation; student participation at college events as well as good sportsmanship; conduct and enjoyment.
- The Captain and Vice-Captains of Boarding are selected from Year 12 students and are seen to be students who relate well to younger students, providing advice, support and care as needed. These roles must balance with academic and co-curricular commitments. These student leadership



positions form part of the College-wide Student Leadership profile and sit on the College's Student Council, providing student voice on a range of operational, strategic, and spiritual matters.

### **Student Congress**

An arm of student empowerment and engagement is the Student Congress. It meets every three weeks per term to discuss ways to enhance student connectedness at the College. The Congress is elected by students and staff and represents all year levels across the College. The Student Council also works collaboratively with the Student Congress to mentor them as emerging leaders and plan initiatives.

### **Student Voice Committee**

Students from every year level, as well as an International Student representative, attend regular meetings and report on safety issues at each level. The students run the meeting entirely and staff say very little, except in responding to concerns. Meetings are also attended by the Director of Students so that safety issues can be passed directly to the Leadership team. The group focus specifically on when and where students might feel unsafe at college, physical safety, safety for culturally diverse groups (including international students), safety for students with disabilities or other needs, emotional safety, and digital safety.

### **Social Justice Committee**

The Social Justice Committee is a vibrant and active part of our school community. The elected College Vice Captain-Social Justice chairs the St Patrick's College Social Justice Committee, and the Director of Identity works with the group and attend all meetings. Social Justice at St Patrick's College is an opportunity for our community to put faith into action.

This group is open to all year levels and weekly meetings are held to discuss and plan for opportunities for students to engage in works of justice and service with compassion.

### **Boarding**

The Captain and Vice-Captains of Boarding are selected from Year 12 students and are seen to be students who relate well to younger students, providing advice, support and care as needed. These roles must balance with academic and co-curricular commitments. These student leadership positions form part of the College-wide Student Leadership profile and sit on the College's Student Council, providing student voice on a range of operational, strategic, and spiritual matters.

### **Faith in Action Group**

The Faith in Action Group is a vibrant and active part of our school community who, together with the Faith in Action Facilitator and trainee, work in our opportunity community putting faith into action.

This group is open to all year levels and weekly meetings are held to discuss and plan for opportunities for students to engage in works of justice and service with compassion. For example: fundraising and advocacy for our partners in India, Caritas Project Compassion Appeal, St Vincent de Paul, Winter Food Drive, St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal, EREA Advocacy for Justice and Climate Action.

### **SAGERS Group**



The College's SAGERS (Student Action Group Environmentally Resource Smart) Group meets weekly to raise awareness and address issues around sustainability, climate change and recycling. Membership is open to all interested students across the College. SAGERS have established some connections with other community groups and extended their activities into the wider community.

Most importantly SAGERS made a positive contribution towards preserving our common home.

### **Student Wellbeing Group**

The Student Wellbeing group is a vibrant and active part of our school community which, together with the Pastoral Care Coordinator, meets weekly to plan and implement student wellbeing initiatives across the College. The group is involved in initiatives such as 'R U OK' and 'Bullying No Way' days. Further, they plan and run the annual Mental Health and Wellbeing assembly which is in sync with the annual St Patrick's College Mental Health Brekkie. Our future direction in student voice and participation currently includes peer mentoring programs.

### **Extra-Curricular Student Leadership**

All extra-curricular initiatives offer students the opportunity to grow as student leaders. Each Captain has a particular portfolio and is aligned with staff who they work with to achieve goals and offer assistance to lead their group collaboratively. Extra-curricular portfolios include: College Band, Performing Arts, SAGERS, Faith in Action, Student Wellbeing, and all sports.

### **References**

- CEM 2018 Student Voice Statement
- Amplify DEAT Vic 2019
- Ministerial Order No. 870 – Child Safe Standards
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

### **Review**

This policy has been developed by St Patrick's College. This policy has been endorsed by the School Advisory Council.

Date of Policy Rectification: 19/10/2021-Completed by: Amber Henderson-Risk and Compliance Manager. Principal

Approval for Rectification: Signed by Principal: Steven O'Connor Date: 27/10/2021

This policy is due to be updated in 12 months from the date endorsed by the School Advisory Council unless required earlier. Next planned review October 2022.