

Coorong and Mallee
Partnership

INNOVATIVE GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS AND PRESCHOOLS

A partnership approach to improved governance – a case study

Leader

Ruth Clothier, Principal,
Geranium Primary School



“Governing council members have a keen interest in their sites and play a vital role in improving outcomes for schools and preschools. The partnership is making the most of that.”

– Ruth Clothier

The setting

Helping people to contribute

Governing council members have a significant contribution to make, not only in their own local preschool or school, but in the broader community. This idea sparked a new initiative in the Coorong and Mallee Partnership and created a new partnership-wide governing council meeting.

 decd.sa.gov.au/governingcouncils



Government of South Australia
Department for Education and
Child Development



“We recognised that governing council members have a right both to be informed and involved in the planning of the partnership, and so we invited them to work with us on establishing our partnership plan for 2017.”

Ruth Clothier

The steps

Meet and collaborate

The schools and preschools in the Coorong and Mallee Partnership decided to meet as a group and work collaboratively to improve outcomes for all of their sites.

Ruth facilitated the event and ran the first meeting. She helped the group put together a statement of purpose. The partnership focused on how they could communicate with the entire community.

The group also identified priorities for the partnership at the first meeting. They talked about how they could communicate, and how to best reach the entire community. They made proposals and created an action plan.

In 2017, the group meeting focused on the big themes in partnership-wide data and a wellbeing project that needed significant community commitment. The program involved setting up an intervention strategy in all preschools and schools. Key people in each community were trained, and funding was set aside for parent events that met the needs of each community.

The partnership has committed to holding 1 meeting each year. The meeting will be held at sites across the partnerships so that governing council members can get to know other sites and locations.

Invitations are extended to each site's council.

Each council can send 1 representative (chairperson or delegate). Meetings are led by the Coorong and Mallee Partnership chairperson, who introduces and welcomes everyone.

A summary of the meeting is published in preschool and school newsletters. This is part of the communication strategy to inform the wider community.

How to make it work

With this partnership approach, it's important to:

- **genuinely discuss and ask the opinion of parents – not just hold an information session**
- **acknowledge the considerable commitment for people to attend – they give up a day's work and travel long distances**
- **act quickly on agreements and action plans**
- **be well prepared, and give people plenty of notice about the date.**



This partnership approach has successfully changed the mindset of council members from their own site to the whole partnership

How it helped

This partnership approach has successfully:

- **fostered a genuine desire to contribute from council members and others involved in the meetings**
- **demonstrated to parents that their knowledge and views are valued and appreciated**
- **increased the interest of council members in the work happening across the partnership**
- **provided a genuine opportunity for parents to discuss what is working and what isn't working**
- **increased the sense of 'partnership with', rather than 'services to' in council members.**