**FINANCIAL HARDSHIP ASSISTANCE POLICY**

**Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for families experiencing financial hardship to help ensure every Secondary student has access to their own individual learning device.

**Background**

Narre Warren South P-12 College has in the past provided 1:1 Chromebook devices in Secondary Classrooms, this has allowed students in-class digital learning.

In consultation and support of the Narre Warren South P-12 College School Council, the classroom provision will change from 2023. Commencing at the beginning of the 2023 school year, students will be required to have their own individual device (as set out in the *Bring Your Own Device Policy*), referred to as BYOD. This change will provide greater opportunity to benefit from digital technologies to support and enhance learning and development at school.

Narre Warren South P-12 College understands that our community, families, households and individuals may suffer financial difficulty from time to time. Financial hardship can present challenges to meeting primary needs, much less curricular activities. Narre Warren South P-12 College acknowledges the importance of an individual device for the best learning outcomes for students.

**Definition of Financial Hardship**

Financial hardship usually refers to a situation in which a person cannot keep up with debt payments and bills. This particular term is also used in decision-making processes about whether to offer someone relief from certain types of payment obligations.

Financial hardship can occur for many reasons. In some cases, people struggle to find employment for an extended period of time or face situations where they cannot work due to a personal or family illness.   Major life events like a fire, car accident, pandemic, family trauma or other significant challenge may create financial hardship.  It is not an ongoing financial situation that requires constant subsidy.

Typically, when an organisation makes a judgment on the merits of a person's financial hardship, the focus is on the overall financial picture and reasonable nature of the request.

**Process**

To be considered for Financial Hardship Assistance, the parent or guardian of the student (or representative) must submit a request (by letter or email) to the Principal of Narre Warren South P-12 College. The financial hardship request will be kept confidential. Only the members of the Principal Class Officers will have knowledge of the request as well as specific delegates relevant to the application process.

The letter of application should include the following:

* Students name, age and year at school
* Parent/Guardian’s name, address, phone number and e-mail address
* Reason for the request
* Program impact i.e BYOD Program
* Proposed payment plan or amount of time needed for fees to be waived

Upon receipt of the letter, the Principal will review the request with the Assistant Principal of Wellbeing and any delegates relevant to the application process to approve, counter or deny the request.

The Principal (or representative) will provide final authority of the outcome and will communicate the decision and any related payment plan by letter or email to the Applicant.

Any appeal will be addressed directly to the Principal.

**Limitation on Financial Assistance**

* Financial hardship assistance is only available to current students of Narre Warren South P-12 College.
* All approved Financial Hardship Arrangements will be reviewed at the end of each year.
* Financial Hardship Arrangement recipients may expect to pay a minimum contribution to be determined by the Principal.
* The student must meet a minimum school attendance as per the Principal’s review
* The decision to offer Financial Hardship Assistance is solely at the discretion of the Principal
* Applications for assistance with the provisioning of BYOD devices will be limited to only the BYOD device provided. Any loss, theft, or damage to the provided device will not warrant a replacement. In such cases, a new application and payment plan must be initiated for a replacement device.