

## Case Study – Williamstown High School

### Background

Williamstown High School (WHS) is a dual campus school located in Melbourne's western suburbs with an enrolment of some 1400 students, coming mainly from Williamstown and neighbouring suburbs. Most family engagement to date has been related to fundraising.

### Situation

The school's principal was keen to engage more actively with the community particularly around the school's development of its strategic plan. This was seen as a possible avenue for greater parental engagement in a significant way. There was a perception that parents were not keen to turn up to meetings and there was little interest in being involved in planning. This was an issue the school principal decided needed to be addressed.

### What did you do?

Three parents worked with the principal to organise a community forum to capture parent and community input into the strategic plan. The parents organised flyers (content and layout) and guest speakers and a parent facilitated the forum.

Families within WHS were informed of the forum and flyers were posted around the community and provided to the three local primary schools (two government, one Catholic), as well as being advertised in local primary school newsletters.

The forum was held at the school with a larger than anticipated turn out of approximately 160 parents, staff and community members.

At the meeting, participants were asked to respond to three questions:

- What do you want for your children by the time they leave WHS?
- What do you like about WHS and not want to lose?
- If you could change one thing, what would it be?

Responses were collated and a small group of parent School Councillors synthesised these responses into key themes and actions.

This process was then replicated by the students, some of whom then facilitated a similar forum with a cross section of 50 students from across the school

### Results

- Excellent turn up of participants with a robust and enthusiastic discussion about input into the Strategic plan.
- Feedback from the forum was fed into School Council sub-committees and included as input into policy review – e.g. uniform, homework.

Input from families has been included in school self-review as well as the development of the next school strategic plan – especially into the values and purpose statements.

Following on from the forum, there was an increase parent engagement particularly in the attendance at the Year 7 Parent Information Evening.

