



ACT
Government

Education

VIP VISITS TO CANBERRA PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROTOCOL

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VIP VISITS TO CANBERRA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), Members of Parliament, Senators, overseas officials and other dignitaries (VIPs) often request to visit Canberra public schools to participate in meetings, school activities or to hold media/promotional events. These protocols provide guidance to visiting VIPs, schools and the Directorate in managing such requests.

Requests can be placed into two categories – visits with no invited media; and media/promotional events. Specific protocols for each are detailed below.

Any requests for school visits must be agreed by the Director-General of the Education Directorate. Any Directorate or school staff approached regarding a proposed VIP visit must refer the initiator of the visit to the Office of the Director-General.

ACT Public Schools are free to invite any MLAs to public events (public events are events that are open to the general public) and MLAs are free to attend public events without requiring permissions. These types of events include school fetes, fundraising events, open days and other school events open to the public. Events like graduations and sports days are not open to the general public and therefore access to these events by Members will depend on the circumstances of the event.

These protocols only apply to government school meetings/visits, school activities or media/promotional events.

Arranging a School Visit

1. The initiator of the visit must seek written agreement from the Director-General, Education Directorate.
2. The request must be emailed to DGEDUOffice@act.gov.au and EDUDLO@act.gov.au and include the following details:
 - School(s) requested to visit
 - Date, time and length of visit
 - Objective of visit (for example policy announcement, media opportunity, visit only)
 - Media to be invited (description – one outlet or open invite)
 - Number and names of attendees
 - A contact person's name and details
3. A decision will be made by the Director-General, in consultation with the Minister's Office, within 14 days of the request being received based on:
 - Purpose of the visit;
 - Media attendance;
 - Disruption to school activity; and
 - Education Directorate resources required to facilitate the visit.

4. Once a request has been approved, the Education Directorate Liaison Officer (DLO) will notify the relevant areas of the Directorate. The Directorate (School Operations) will then organise the event with the hosting school and the office of the visiting VIP.
5. The Directorate, in consultation with the Minister's Office, reserves the right to refuse, cancel or delay a school visit.
6. A senior officer from the Education Directorate will attend all school visits to support school leaders.

Specific protocols for visits with no media

7. Visiting VIPs must adhere to the following:
 - No media outlets are to be invited to the visit;
 - The visit must not significantly disrupt the business of the school;
 - The visit should occur between the hours of 10am and 2pm, or after 3pm;
 - The visit should not occur in the first or last weeks of a school term;
 - VIPs are responsible for their own security measures as required.

Specific protocols for media and promotional events

8. Visiting VIPs must adhere to the following:
 - School facilities must not be used by non-government VIPs for media and promotional events, noting that media outside of school grounds is allowable.
 - All media coverage, once approved by the Director-General, is to be arranged in conjunction with the Directorate's Media and Communications Unit;
 - Media and promotional events should be related to education;
 - If the proposed event relates to an ACT Government initiative, the visiting VIP's office should confirm with the Minister's Office which VIP is most appropriate to lead and participate in the event;
 - No announcements or media conferences are to be made/held in classrooms or with school signage in the background. Filming outside or at the school gates is required;
 - Staff cannot be included in any visual representations or provide comment to media on any issues related to political campaigning (refer [Attachment A](#));
 - Students cannot be included in any visual representations or provide comment to media on any issues related to political campaigning. Media permissions for participating students need to be confirmed with the school (see [Attachment B](#));
 - If the objective of the visit falls outside of the parameters set out in the permission section of the *authority to use photographs form* or on the *online enrolment form*, additional permission forms should be supplied by the visiting VIP's office; and VIPs are responsible for their own security measures as required.

School Visits during Caretaker period

9. During the caretaker period there are additional conventions that apply to school visits and the use of school facilities for political or campaign purposes.

Use of School Facilities

10. During the caretaker period, school facilities must not be used for campaign or political purposes. If media events or political campaigning occurs it is to be outside of the school grounds. School signage or identifiers cannot be used in visual representations, which may infer support. No official resources are to be utilised and the operations of the school should not be unreasonably impacted.
11. It is not appropriate that the use of agency premises extend to such activities as engaging public servants in political dialogue, or using public servants for logistical support for political functions. Nor should the use of premises unreasonably disrupt the normal operations of the offices concerned.

Consultation with Directorate (including school-based) staff

12. All MLAs and/or their staff are to contact the appropriate Minister or Minister's Office. Directorate and school staff must not initiate visits or consultation during the caretaker period.
13. Any consultation that non-Government members wish to undertake with Directorate officers is to be initiated through the Minister's Office. The Minister is to notify the Chief Minister of any request and whether it has been granted.
14. Directorate and school staff may, within the scope of their responsibilities and accountability, comment on the practicalities of implementing and administering the policies proposed by the member. Directorate and school staff are not to discuss or be questioned about Government policies or offer opinions on matters of a political nature.
15. Discussions are to be kept confidential between Directorate and school staff, and the member they meet¹. The Minister is, however, entitled to be informed that the discussions have taken place and to seek assurances that the discussions were kept within the agreed purpose.

Checklist

Schools are encouraged to use the Checklist provided at [Attachment C](#), to assist work through the process of managing VIP Visits to ACT Public Schools.

Enquiries

General enquiries on this protocol can be directed to the Education DLO - EDUDLO@act.gov.au

¹ [Caretaker Conventions](#)

Attachment A

PUBLIC SERVANTS POSITION OF NEUTRALITY AND POLITICAL IMPARTIALITY

All ACT public servants must maintain a standpoint of neutrality and political impartiality.

To get this balance right, you must be alert to whether any political activity that you engage in will adversely impact your ability to perform your official duties, give rise to a real or perceived conflict of interest or breach any other conduct requirements of the [Public Sector Management Act 1994 \(PSM Act\)](#).

For example, the types of political activities that ACT public servants may choose to do in their own time are:

- participating in political campaigns or canvassing including doorknocking, letterboxing, phone polling and other volunteer campaign activities;
- engaging in political debate and making comment in a private capacity including on social media platforms; and
- participating in rallies and events.

In undertaking these types of activities, you must avoid creating the impression that you are acting in your role as an ACT public servant. Accordingly, you should not engage in a political activity while:

- identifying yourself as an ACT public servant, including by placing that information on social media profiles;
- wearing any kind of work uniform/lanyard;
- giving the impression that you are speaking on behalf of the government and/or the Directorate for which you work.

Under section 9 of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994*, a public employee must not disclose information obtained during the course of their duties unless they:

- do so in the course of duties and have the proper authority to do so;
- are required to do so by law; or
- are giving evidence in court.

Unlawful disclosure of official information may constitute a breach of the PSM Act and may amount to a criminal offence under the *Crimes Act 1900*.

Attachment B

AUTHORITY TO USE PHOTOGRAPHS (INCLUDING VIDEO) OF CHILDREN FOR THE PROMOTION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

Dear Parents and Carers

The Education Directorate seeks to use photographic (including video) images of students to promote public education. The photographs are used for Directorate and school promotional purposes including corporate publications such as Annual Reports. This may include illustrations for printed materials as well as the Education Directorate and school websites.

Photographs of students may also be taken by the media to illustrate a newspaper or television story about public education. The Directorate at times also provides copies of photographs of students to the media for this purpose. The media is only ever invited into a school when they have sought and gained Directorate approval.

The media includes local and national television and radio stations, newspapers, and other publications.

At times the names of children may be included in school newsletters and websites and media where it relates to an article or story that acknowledges their student work and success. Students are normally only identified by their first name except where they are named as part of a media story.

If you fill in this form, your personal information and that of your child will be collected and handled by the Directorate and/or School. This information is necessary for us when we publish photographs, video recordings and newsletter items relating to your child. This may include publishing on websites. You are not required to grant permission, this is a matter entirely at your discretion, however, by granting permission you will greatly assist us to promote the educational opportunities and the achievements of our schools and their students.

Normally we will not use or disclose this information for another purpose, without your consent, unless you would reasonably expect us to use or disclose the information for a related purpose. However, you need to be aware that images and information published on the school website can be copied and used by other web users and therefore the school has no control over its subsequent use and disclosure.

The Directorate has a privacy policy that explains how we handle personal information, including how we handle privacy complaints. The policy is available on the Directorate's website (www.education.act.gov.au) on the About Us page.

PLEASE PROVIDE THE NECESSARY INFORMATION BELOW TO ADVISE IF YOU DO, OR DO NOT, GIVE YOUR PERMISSION.

Permission

Child's full name:

Name of school:

Full Name of parent or carer:

Photographs:

Yes, I agree to photographs and video recordings being taken and used by the school and Directorate.

No, I do not agree.

Yes, I agree to photographs and video recordings being taken and used by the media.

No, I do not agree.

Newsletters and Websites:

Yes, I agree that my child's name may be included in school newsletters and websites and media where it relates to an article or story that acknowledges their student work and success.

No, I do not agree.

Date:

Signature:

Office Use

Student central ID

Entered into MAZE

Attachment C

CHECKLIST FOR VIP'S VISITING ACT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Date request received	
Request from	
Contact name and details	
School requested to visit	
Date, time and length of visit	
Objective of visit	
Media to be invited	

Once a request for a school visit is received, the request should be emailed to the Education Directorate Liaison Officer (DLO) who will liaise with the Office of the Director-General and School Operations to facilitate the visit. Requests fall in to one of two categories:

- visits with no invited media; and
- media/promotional events.

VISITS WITH NO INVITED MEDIA

No	Action Required	Officer	Time	Complete
1.	EDU DLO to email request to School Operations: schooloperations@act.gov.au (Ph: 6205 3313). Email should include the following details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who is requesting the visit • purpose of the visit • date and time of the visit • number and name of attendees. 	DLO	1 day	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	School Operations to review request and provide the following information to the DLO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confirmation of visit, or • alternative date/s if it is not possible to schedule the visit on the requested date. 	School Ops	2 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	EDU DLO to email the original request and advice from School Operations to the Office of the Director-General for review and confirmation of visit details. The email to the Director-General's office is to include the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school(s) requested to visit • date, time and length of visit • objective of visit • number and names of attendees • contact person's name and details. 	DLO	1 days	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.	Director-General's office to review request for visit in consultation with Minister's Office based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purpose of the visit • disruption to school activity • Education Directorate resources required to facilitate the visit. 	DGEDU	10 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Once the request has been approved by DGEDU, the DLO will request a Protocol Brief via TRIM and progress to the relevant line area to complete. All protocol briefs for events are due to the Minister's Office five working days prior to the visit/event	DLO	1 day	<input type="checkbox"/>

MEDIA / PROMOTIONAL EVENTS

No	Action Required	Officer	Time	Complete
1.	EDU DLO to email request to School Operations: schooloperations@act.gov.au (Ph: 6205 3313). Email should include the following details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who is requesting the visit • purpose of the visit • date and time of the visit • number and name of attendees • media attendance 	DLO	1 day	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	School Operations to review request and provide the following information to the DLO: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confirmation of visit; or • alternative date/s if it is not possible to schedule the visit on the requested date. 	School Ops	2 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	EDU DLO to email the original request and advice from School Operations to the Office of the Director-General for review and confirmation of visit details. The email to the Director-General's office is to include the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school(s) requested to visit • date, time and length of visit • objective of visit • media to be invited • number and names of attendees • contact person's name and details. 	DLO	1 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Director-General's office to review request for visit in consultation with Minister's Office based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purpose of the visit • media attendance • disruption to school activity • Education Directorate resources required to facilitate the visit. 	DGEDU	7 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	Once the request has been approved by DGEDU, the DLO will request a Protocol Brief via TRIM and progress to the relevant line area to complete. All protocol briefs for events are due to the Minister's Office five working days prior to the visit/event	DLO	1 day	<input type="checkbox"/>

6.	If the proposed event relates to an ACT Government initiative, the Minister's Office should liaise with the visiting VIP's to confirm which VIP is most appropriate to lead and participate in the event.	DLO/M O	2 days	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	All media coverage, once approved by the Director-General, is to be arranged in conjunction with the EDU Media and Communications Unit.	EDU M&C	Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	EDU Media and Communications to liaise with the relevant school to ensure students are not included in any visual representations or provide comment to media on any issues related to political campaigning. EDU Media and Communications to ensure media permissions for participating students are confirmed with the school.	EDU M&C	Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/>