

2. COMMITTEE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITY

The committee having been elected, are responsible to the members of the association for the proper management and conduct of the affairs of the community association. A major concern and responsibility of the committee must be above all to ensure that their decisions and actions are at all times taken in the light of the best interests and welfare of the members and clients of the association.

Some of the functions and duties arising from this responsibility are:

- i. To ensure that appropriate staff are employed at all times.
- ii. To ensure the proper maintenance of any assets including building, grounds and equipment.
- iii. To ensure that proper control is maintained over the finances of the association not only for the present but also with the future in mind.
- iv. To be aware of the needs of the community in which the organisation operates and ensure that this knowledge is reflected in its decision.
- v. To encourage active client and general community participation in the activities of the association and to ensure that the community is aware of what the association is doing.
- vi. To initiate fund-raising and social activities so as to foster a close relationship between the association and the community.
- vii. To have an understanding of the organisation's programmes and its benefits for the clients and attempt to foster a general awareness of these aspects in the community.
- viii. To be aware of and ensure the regular review of the constitution and any by-laws, regulations and policies so that these are appropriate to the current situation.
- ix. To have a willingness to learn about the organisation, its operation and its people/staff.

Since the committee is representing all the members of the association it is highly desirable that its decisions and actions always have regard to what is in the best interests of the majority of members of the association. Failure to do so may well lead to conflict within the association.

COMMITTEE PERSONNEL

Most community organisational committees will usually comprise the following positions:

- President
- Immediate Past President (optional)
- Vice President/s
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- General Committee Members

Some of the desirable characteristics of persons occupying these positions are:

PRESIDENT

The primary role of the President of an association is to provide leadership to the committee and the association. The President must act as a co-ordinator ensuring that all facets of the operation come together in a controlled way. The President must also be prepared to be a motivator providing encouragement to members of the committee, members, and employees, to maintain their interest and commitment.

The President normally acts as chair for all regular meetings of an association (unless the Rules or Constitution say otherwise) so it is extremely important that the person occupying this position has knowledge of meetings and meeting procedure.

In the past the Chair or Chairperson of the committee was referred to as the 'Chairman'. The gender neutral title of Chair or Chairperson is considered more appropriate. Some committees may use the term 'President' instead of Chair or Chairperson.

The President/Chair or Chairperson serves as the committee's figurehead and acts as a link between the committee and the management who in turn act as a link to employees and volunteers.

While in practice the President/Chair or Chairperson is required to play a leading role in the committee, it is worth noting that there is little legal distinction. There is no legal distinction between the duties of a President/Chair or Chairperson, and those of any other committee member.

In some organisations the President and the rest of the executive committee are the management.

The President is also responsible for taking a leading role in keeping the vision of the community organisation alive, setting its direction and course and monitoring, and ensuring that proper procedures are in place.

Other roles may include the following duties/functions/responsibilities:

- Having an enthusiasm for the association and what it does.
- Leadership ability (an ability to motivate people to work together as a team – including employees).
- Representing the organisation at official functions,
- Knowledge of the local area.
- Overseeing the search for and monitoring of the group's management,
- Calling 'special' or 'extraordinary' meetings when required,
- Having a manner and disposition coupled with common sense to enable him or her to get along with most people.
- Assisting employees in preparing committee meeting agendas,
- Knowledge of meeting procedure.
- Welcoming and inducting new committee members,
- Mediating disputes between committee members and/or staff,
- As required, acting as a spokesperson for the organisation to the media, to government and to other organisations,
- Calling other committee members into line if they are not fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations.
- Preferably previous experience on a committee.
- A willingness to learn about the organisation and its operations.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Some Rules/Constitution provide for the Immediate Past President to remain on the committee. This is usually done to ensure that there is continuity and the retention of history between one committee and the next one where regular changes in committee membership may occur. The primary role of the Immediate Past President is to act as advisor to the new committee. However, it is essential that the Immediate Past President does not dampen the enthusiasm of the new committee or be seen to be over-ruling decisions or changes.

VICE PRESIDENT

The primary role of the Vice President is to support the President in the functions of leadership, co-ordination and motivation. Vice Presidents should therefore be prepared to:

- Assist the President or take the President's place in his or her absence.
- Accept responsibility such as chair of a subcommittee or other specific function when called upon.

SECRETARY

It is a requirement that all incorporated organisations appoint a Secretary. Like committee members, Secretaries must be at least 18 years old, however they are not necessarily committee members in their own right, and the task may be carried out by a paid employee.

The position of Secretary is perhaps one of the two "busiest" within any organisation. The functions of a Secretary include:

- Recording of minutes of all meetings.
- Handling all correspondence for the organisation.
- Maintaining the files.
- Maintaining membership records.
- Maintaining employees/personnel records. (employment contracts, correspondence)
- Ensuring that all rules relating to meetings are complied with including:
 - Notices
 - Quorums
 - Meeting Procedures
- Preparing agendas for all meetings (in consultation with the President).
- Provides safe custody of "Common Seal" and maintains records of use of Common Seal
- Maintaining a Register of Officers and committee members

It is not uncommon to use a Dictaphone to record events at meetings. This is useful to assist in recalling discussions and decisions for minutes but only key points need to be included rather than general conversation.

TREASURER

The Treasurer's job is to monitor the organisations financial processes and keep on top of the variety of different reporting obligations. In a large organisation with professional employees, a Treasurer may provide a link between the employees and the committee on financial matters, make sure procedures are put in place to keep things running smoothly, draw up a budget and monitor the monthly accounts. In smaller community organisations, the Treasurer also organises bank accounts, signs the cheques, keeps the books on track, draws up a budget, and manages the asset register.

Traditionally Treasurers have needed to have a good/sound understanding of bookkeeping and/or accounting regimes.

Today's Treasurers have a number of options available to them. These include outsourcing payroll and bookkeeping to an organisation that specialises in the Not for Profit sector and who will do up the bookkeeping to a professional standard. This in turn has the knock on effect of reducing your annual audit costs.

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The reality is that the role of volunteer Treasurer is one of the hardest roles to recruit for. The outsourcing non-core functions of any volunteer allows the committee members to focus on running the organisation and securing funding by way of either sponsorship, fundraising or grant writing.

The other option is to recruit a Treasurer that has a good understanding and a practical application of the following;

- Australian Taxation Office (ATO);
- Business Activity Statement (BAS);
- Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT);
- Goods and Services Tax (GST);
- Non Contributory Superannuation, etc.

Outsourcing the bookkeeping and payroll functions will assist in securing a Treasurer as this is one of the most difficult positions to fill. The Treasurer will usually chair the finance committee, (if there is one), and ensure that regular financial reports are provided to the committee. The Treasurer is also responsible for liaising with independent auditors and external agencies such as the Australian Tax Office (ATO) in the production of financial statements, GST Returns and ensuring the committee is aware of and understands the group's financial situation and performance.

It is important to note, that the existence of a Treasurer in no way detracts from the obligations of other committee members. Duties of care are personally imposed on every committee member regarding the finances of the organisation.

The specific jobs of the Treasurer include:

- Preparation and maintenance of all Accounting records;
- Preparation of payroll and associated records of leave etc;
- Preparation of Business Activity Statements (GST) and other Tax Office requirements;
- Preparation of all budgets;
- Preparation of all Financial Reports and Statements. (Monthly reports to committee and end of year reports);

- Maintenance of all records of income and expenditure;
- Maintain a general supervision of the finances of the association and provide advice to the committee;
- Arrange for the annual audit of the Financial Statements for the organisation.

To undertake these functions the Treasurer needs:

- Knowledge of bookkeeping.
- Time to maintain the records.
- A willingness to learn.

NOTE: Because of workload involved it is recommended that organisations and committees consider ways of helping Secretaries and Treasurers. The appointment of Assistant Secretary and Assistant Treasurer from general committee members is one option you may wish to consider.

Some committees now employ a person on a casual basis as an administration officer to help the secretary and treasurer depending on the size of the organisation and the extent of their finances. Again, many smaller organisations don't want the added burden of hiring yet another staff member (irrespective of them being casual) to perform a function that can be readily outsourced and professionally administered.

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