

# Handbook for Neighbourhood House Boards

MARCH 2019





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## CHAPTER ONE



# Role of the Board

The purpose of the Board is to ensure the House achieves its purpose.

The purpose of the House is community development.

## THE BOARD:

1. focuses on the purpose of the House
2. monitors that things are on course
3. considers the big picture
4. develops and implements a strategic plan for the House
5. employs and supports the Manager, who manages the day to day operations of the House not the Board
6. ensures the House is effective and achieves what it sets out to do
7. ensures appropriate policies and procedures are in place to support and guide House operations
8. ensures that the activities of the House fit within the government's Strategic Framework for Neighbourhood Houses
9. ensures the House complies with its legal obligations and is following its Constitution
10. ensures the House meets all funding agreement commitments and KPIs
11. supports the people DOING the work

# Role of the Board

The purpose of the Board is to ensure the House achieves its purpose, and the purpose of the House, ultimately, is community development.

## The Board:

- considers the big picture
- develops and implements a strategic plan for the House
- ensures that House activities fit within the Neighbourhood House Program Strategic Framework
- ensures the House complies with its legal obligations and is following its Constitution
- ensures the House meets all funding agreement commitments and KPIs
- ensures the House is effective and achieves what it sets out to do
- ensures appropriate policies and procedures are in place to support and guide House operations
- employs, supports and monitors the Manager, who manages the day to day operations of the House

**USE YOUR STRATEGIC PLAN TO GUIDE DECISIONS TOO.**

## DECISION MAKING AS A BOARD

Use your mission statement as a filter to guide decisions in Board meetings.

*Ask how this decision fits the purpose and values of the House?*

### A good mission statement:

- defines the fundamental purpose of the House
- should be concise and easily remembered
- provides a snapshot of who you are and what you want to do

### Strategic planning:

- looks at the big picture, dreams towards a better community
- is a systematic process to set short and long term goals and agree on the strategies to reach those goals



Steve Bowman summarises Board duties to be:



**Stay awake**



**Ask questions**



**Read your papers**



**Follow the Constitution**

Your strategic plan should align with the four Neighbourhood House Program goals:



**CONNECT COMMUNITY**



**SUPPORT PEOPLE**



**CREATE OPPORTUNITY**



**LOCAL LEADERSHIP**

#### **Policies and Procedures:**

- guide the day to day operations of the House
- deal with a range of topics from difficult matters such as conflict resolution to room hire
- increase accountability and transparency, keeping things consistent and on track
- provide a framework for staff and volunteers to do their job

#### **KNOW YOUR CONSTITUTION!**

##### **The Constitution:**

- is a set of rules or guidelines outlining how your House should operate
- is a legally binding document and it is important for the Board to work to the rules it sets out

##### **Board members need to:**

- always act in the best interest of the House
- discuss a decision thoroughly and rigorously
- listen to each other
- argue in the room
- publicly support final decisions, and not undermine them
- work together in a positive and respectful manner, building trust to make the hard decisions together
- have fun

“**The role of the Board is to make the choices that create the future we want in our communities.**”

**STEVE BOWMAN:** CONSCIOUS GOVERNANCE



**ROLE:**

The Board provides governance to the House. Governance is about leadership, setting the strategic direction and monitoring that things are on course. It is about supporting the staff and volunteers working to achieve that strategic direction.

**The Role of the Board is to:**

- Ensure the House complies with its legal obligations and is following its Constitution.
- Know your Constitution!
- Support and monitor the manager's work in meeting funding commitments and KPIs
- Develop and implement a strategic plan for the House
- Ensure that the activities of the House fit within the Strategic Framework for Neighbourhood Houses and your own House strategic plan
- Develop policies and procedures to support and guide House operations
- Employ, support and monitor the manager to manage the day to day operations of the House

**The Role of the Board is also to:**

- Act on behalf of members of the association
- Act for the benefit of the community
- Ensure the House is effective in what it sets out to do
- Ensure the House is viable and can continue to operate

and

- Provide leadership to benefit the community
- Consider the big picture
- Decide what sort of community you want
- Focus on the purpose of the House
- Set the direction, not take control

**MISSION:**

A mission statement defines the fundamental purpose of an organisation, succinctly describing why it exists, what its values are and what it aims to do. The mission statement should be concise, generally just one sentence long, and explain the fundamental outcomes the organisation is working to achieve. It provides a snapshot of who you are, what you value and what you want to do.

The mission statement of a House should guide the decisions of the Board to ensure that the House fulfils its purpose. The mission statement should be quotable. Put it on your agenda.

An example of a mission statement is:

*NHT: Supporting our Network to make a difference through a community development framework*

What is yours? Could you quote it in an elevator pitch?

## SETTING THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION:

### What is strategic planning?

Strategic planning is a systematic process where your House sets its goals and agrees on the priorities and strategies to reach those goals. The process is strategic because it looks at the big picture and chooses how best to respond to the needs of your community and the circumstances it faces.

Strategic planning involves making decisions about what could be done and choosing your priorities for both the short term and long term.

- Community engagement and consultation is essential at the start of the process
- Work with your community, don't just plan for them
- Ask what is important, listen to what they think, respond and represent their needs and views

A strategic plan is different to an operational plan. A strategic plan offers an inspiring vision of where your House would like to be in three years, describes the key things you will focus on and identifies the strategies that your House will take to get there.

In contrast, an operational plan focuses on specific actions and detailed tasks over a shorter period, such as 12 months. The operational plan works towards implementing the strategic plan and must mesh with it. Both should be practical and realistic about what can be achieved.

Strategic planning is an exciting task because it is about shaping a sustainable future for your House and community!

The Neighbourhood House Program is funded through the Department of Communities. As part of the funded network each House works towards the four Program goals. Your strategic plan should align with these four program goals, which are:



Connect Community



Support People



Create Opportunity



Local Leadership

### In summary, the benefits to your House of creating a strategic plan include:

- Everyone in the House obtains a better understanding of their role, goals and direction
- There is a greater focus on the more strategically important and relevant issues
- You are better able to stay in touch with and respond to changes occurring in your community
- Better decisions can be made that fit the circumstances in which you are working
- Your resources are used more efficiently
- Your performance is improved and more consistent
- Your interactions with people during the planning process help to break down barriers and improve understanding of the House and its role
- You can act on the basis of a shared set of values and understandings

## Developing a strategic plan

Your House's mission is the reason that you exist. Your strategic plan will support this and describe your vision of the House's future and how to achieve it.

The plan should take account of the current situation within the House (your policies, people, finances etc.) and the circumstances in which you are operating (your community make-up, needs, services, other providers etc.). You should also consider emerging issues and trends.

More particularly, the strategic planning process allows your House to ask questions such as:

- Where are we now?
- What are we good at; what are our strengths?
- Where can improvements be made?
- Are there opportunities or threats the House should act on?
- Where do we want to be in three years' time?
- What difference do we want to make?
- Has our community changed in terms of its make-up, focus and needs?
- What does this mean for future service delivery?
- Which critical issues must we respond to?
- Where should we direct our limited resources?
- Do we have the people, and the capacity and commitment to achieve our goals?
- Do we need to set a new direction?
- Do we need to change our Mission?

## THE CONSTITUTION:

The Constitution is a set of rules or guidelines outlining how your House and its members should operate. It contains information on meetings, financial management, how your Board should be made up and elected, and other key issues. Your Constitution is a legally binding document and it is important for the Board to work to the rules it sets out for your House.

It sets out:

- The organisation's name
- Its objectives
- Its rules on the way the House will be managed
- The structure of the board and their powers
- Whether there are subcommittees or not
- Rules as to how AGMs and SGMs are held
- The relationship between members

Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading provides a template Constitution, known as the Model Rules. Your House can either adopt or amend the Model Rules to suit.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

A policy is a set of principles or rules to guide how your House deals with a particular issue and makes decisions about it. A policy includes a set of procedures that describe the detail of how you will implement the policy. Policies deal with a range of topics from important matters such as Work Health and Safety, to difficult ones such as conflict resolution, to room hire and computer use.

All main activities of your House should have written policies to guide them. These will need to be reviewed regularly and kept up to date, as well as policies developed for new situations. Well

written policies and procedures increase accountability and transparency, and keep things consistent and on track. When an issue comes up, the policies are there to support and guide the Board's response and actions.

Policies offer a framework for the House manager, other staff and volunteers to get on with their job, ensuring everyone has the same expectations and understandings about how things are done. Policies guide good practice in how the House operates.

It is the Board's role to ensure that policies and procedures are in place.

## DECISION MAKING:

Decision-making can be made simple by using your mission statement as a kind of filter. Filtering is when we quickly remove choices or options that do not align with our mission. This saves us a lot of time and makes decision-making quick and simple. The bonus is that we only have deep discussions about choices that fit with our House's mission.

Use the strategic plan to guide your decision making. It's okay to say NO if a decision will over-stretch resources, or doesn't align with the House mission.

If you are stuck as a Board on a decision and can't decide, leave it and move on. Come back to it next meeting and/or seek more information.

The essential question to ask yourself and fellow Board members is: Does this decision help the House to fulfil its purpose?

To be an effective Board member you will:

- Be willing to always promote the House in a positive way
- Always act in the best interests of the House
- Be informed about the House, its services and the community
- Set an example with your conduct at the House
- Prepare for, attend and participate in meetings regularly
- Discuss a decision thoroughly, making sure that everyone who wishes has
- the opportunity to contribute to the discussion before a decision is made
- Debate in the room – once the decision is made you must publicly support the decision of the Board to your community
- Be familiar with current House policies and procedures and how they guide House operations
- Work together in a positive and respectful manner, build relationships and trust to make the hard decisions together
- Respect delegated responsibility and authority
- Deal with concerns sooner rather than later

## HOUSE HEALTH CHECKLIST

If your House is working effectively, your Board will be able to tick all the boxes on things such as:

- ☐ We are committed to and take an active leadership role in developing our community
- ☐ We develop, regularly update and follow our strategic plan and use it to guide our decisions
- ☐ We manage and track our financial position responsibly and frequently – we have a budget and our financial reports always track our spending against our budget
- ☐ We have friendly and co-operative external relationships with a wide range of groups and organisations and seek regular feedback from them
- ☐ We seek out and welcome as many people from our community as possible
- ☐ We have codes of conduct and policies and procedures that guide the Board, staff, volunteers and users of the House
- ☐ We behave and communicate openly and respectfully with each other
- ☐ We have constructive, productive and supportive relationships with all who work in or use the House
- ☐ All Board members, staff and volunteers have up to date position descriptions
- ☐ We develop, regularly update and follow our policies and procedures
- ☐ There are clear, written definitions of delegated authority
- ☐ There are regular staff meetings the manager has an annual appraisal which always involves discussion and reflection on their role and any training needs.
- ☐ The board ensures the manager conducts annual staff appraisals which always involve discussion about each staff member's current position description and any training needs.
- ☐ The President and the Manager communicate regularly and have structured meeting times outside Board meetings.
- ☐ We offer training and support to all our Board members, staff and volunteers to be able to do their best
- ☐ The governance of our House is principled, transparent, accountable and effective
- ☐ We have fun and enjoy our work and celebrate our achievements

## CHAPTER TWO



## What's the purpose of a House?

Neighbourhood Houses are places where people come together and find support, belonging and purpose as they work together to support their local community and make a real difference in people's lives.

Houses are run by the community, for the community and offer a wide range of programs and activities for local people.

The purpose of the House is community development.

# What's the purpose of a house?

The purpose of the House is community development.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development is our core business. It involves ways of working that empower individuals and groups of people to make changes in their community on issues that affect them.

Community development is not about service delivery. It is not a worker running a project for the community. It is drawing people together to unite and run with a possibility.

### What a Neighbourhood House is:

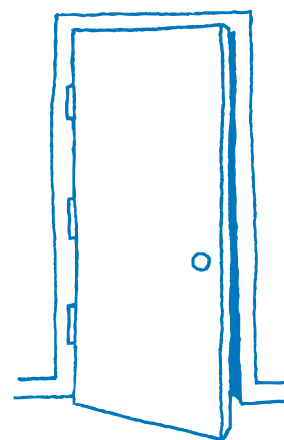
- A locally based community asset
- Run by volunteers
- Not-for-profit
- A legally incorporated association
- Non-partisan — not aligned to any political party
- Secular — not aligned to any religion

### Governance

- Houses are community operated organisations, led by a Board of Governance consisting of volunteers living or working in the local community.
- Maintaining local governance is central to the Neighbourhood House Program philosophy and is a requirement of the core funding.

### What a Neighbourhood House does:

- Delivers programs using a community development model
- Consults to plan its priorities and actions
- Promotes belonging and community spirit
- Has 'open door' access



Houses are run by the community, for the community and offer a wide range of programs and activities for local people.

The Strategic Framework for the Neighbourhood House Program is a guide for House activity and operations.

The 4 goal areas of the Framework 2018-2023 are:



**CONNECT COMMUNITY**



**SUPPORT PEOPLE**



**CREATE OPPORTUNITY**

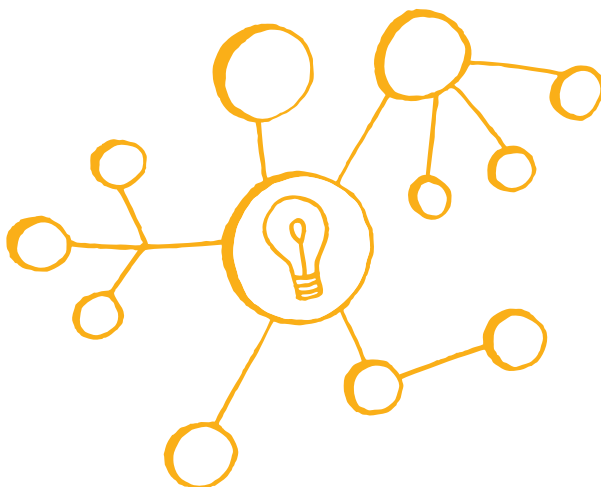


**LOCAL LEADERSHIP**

### Guiding principles of CD include:

- promotes change by the community, for the community
- values local knowledge, local skills, local culture, local resources and local processes
- is a process that can be owned, controlled and sustained by the community itself
- is a dynamic process, with the journey itself as important as the outcome – good process is the key to good community development
- is more than a planning process – it is an ongoing learning process where new attitudes, ideas and networks develop from acting and reflecting together

“The principles of community development guide the process rather than a recipe or prescription. It is about drawing people together to unite and run with a **POSSIBILITY**.”



## The purpose of the House is community development.

Neighbourhood Houses are places where people come together and find support, belonging and purpose as they work together to support their local community and make a real difference in people's lives. They are run by the community, for the community and offer a wide range of programs and activities for local people. Houses are the warm and generous heart of their communities.

As a network, the Neighbourhood Houses form the largest community development infrastructure in Tasmania, with the most regionally diverse footprint of any non-government community service organisation in the state. The network has been working together across Tasmania for over 30 years, with many Houses serving their community for over 40 years (as of 2019).

### WHAT IS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT?

Community development involves ways of working that empower individuals and groups of people to make changes in their community on issues that affect them.

At its most simple — and powerful — community development is the art of bringing people together, united by a common concern or opportunity and choosing to work together to deliver change.

The process of working together connects people, groups and organisations with a greater sense of purpose and meaning. It also has greater potential for collective impact. The process is founded on ways and means to create connections and belonging. Everything builds from there.

There are as many definitions for community development as there are differences in communities. The concept joins the ideas of 'community' and 'development' - with the joining signifying that the community itself takes the lead in its own development. Other forms of 'development' which involve external 'experts' setting the rules for locals and not including local perspectives or strengths, are not part of this approach.

### Our guiding principles of community development

Community development:

- promotes change by the community, for the community.
- values local knowledge, local skills, local culture, local resources and local processes
- brings people together to find support and social connection
- is a process that can be owned, controlled and sustained by the community itself
- is a dynamic process, with the journey itself as important as the outcome — good process is the key to good community development
- is more than a planning process — it is an ongoing learning process where new attitudes, ideas and networks develop from acting and reflecting together
- is an inclusive, fair and responsive approach to creating solutions in communities
- encourages active participation, consultation and involvement from the broad community in the design, development, delivery and evaluation of a project

- promotes the ability of communities to collectively make decisions about the use of resources in their community
- is about following the energy and motivation of the people involved — you may initially start out planning to go from Point A to Point B, but you end up at C or J — and that is okay if you have gone with the energy and the input from the community
- is about giving up your 'power' as a worker and collaborating with others
- provides the vehicle for people to act on community concerns
- builds on existing skills, experience, potential and passion of the community while continuing to foster leadership, entrepreneurship, learning and collaboration

The principles of community development guide the process rather than a recipe or prescription. It is about drawing people together to unite and run with a *possibility*.

### How we use a community development model?

The purpose of Neighbourhood Houses in Tasmania is to be local locally-led organisations that build community capacity using a community development framework.

Houses maintain a focus on community development by:

- Responding to community needs
- Representing community views
- Delivering programs using community practices
- Facilitating delivery of services locally
- Building community capacity

This means that the way Houses do their work is as important as the projects chosen. House programs and activities always strive to ensure community members feel welcomed, included, represented and have a say in what happens.

Houses are welcoming safe places, which are inclusive and respectful and aim to connect people and community. Houses can vary in focus and activities but must always reflect the following elements.

### What a Neighbourhood House is:

- A locally based community asset
- Run by volunteers
- Not-for-profit
- A legally incorporated association
- Non-partisan — not aligned to any political party
- Secular — not aligned to any religion

### What a Neighbourhood House does:

- Delivers programs using a community development model
- Consults to plan its priorities and actions
- Promotes belonging and community spirit
- Reduces social isolation by building connection and relationships through community
- Has 'open door' access, is welcoming, inclusive and non-discriminatory
- Actively seeks to collaborate, network and work with other agencies and organisations
- Cooperates and shares information and resources with each other
- Looks for opportunities, not deficits, and works with the community towards solutions
- Looks for measurable outcomes

Neighbourhood Houses bring people together to work on what is important in their community. This could be through developing social skills, making new connections, or working towards new options for work or study by participating in the activities of a Neighbourhood House.

### CD vs service delivery:

Community development is not about service delivery. It is not a worker running a project for the community. It is drawing people together to unite and run with a possibility.

One of the greatest challenges facing Houses is the risk of moving into 'service delivery' rather than community development. To build community capacity a House may, at times, use grants to broker a service, or collaborate with an organisation to deliver a needed service locally. However a House's core function is community development. Programs must engage and grow the skills, strengths and capacities of participants and volunteers. Service models which 'funnel down' expertise onto local community members are not developmental in approach and will not have the lasting impacts of a community development approach.

### The State Government's Neighbourhood House Strategic Framework

Communities Tasmania, through its Community Services Program (CSP) provides core funding to Neighbourhood Houses and their peak body Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania (NHT). The Strategic Framework and the associated Funding Agreements with Neighbourhood Houses address the program and reporting requirements of that funding.

The Tasmanian Government funds the Neighbourhood Houses Program, which is an investment in place based community development. Houses receive recurrent funding under this Program, enabling each House and its members to coordinate and support local community development.

There is a Strategic Framework for the Neighbourhood House Program which is a guide for House activity and operations. It is designed to unify effort and practice, creating fairness and consistency across all Houses under the Program. It also allows for improvement through the sharing of good practices and ideas.

As a Board you are responsible for this key Funding Agreement, and as with any contract, your role is to ensure the House is on track and following through on the Strategic Framework.



## THE 4 GOAL AREAS OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE PROGRAM STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2018-2023 ARE:

**1. Connect Community** — Houses build, connect and support community networks of inclusiveness, involvement, trust and cooperation to improve community spirit, cohesion and wellbeing.

Houses engage the broader community to develop ways of working together around a shared goal. This approach aims to increase community ability and capacity to respond to issues or opportunities. Typically activities used to achieve this goal include community infrastructure (sheds, transport, gardens, social enterprise), promotion of a positive community through events, and by connecting community to services.

**2. Support People** — Houses support the development of the personal skills, knowledge, abilities and resilience of people to improve the health and wellbeing of themselves and their communities.

This goal recognises that communities include people with different strengths who, at times, may face different challenges. It recognises that people go through life changes and support from peers and community can be beneficial. Activities used to achieve this goal include food security, strengthening relationships, parenting skills, social inclusion, life skills, assistance, and social and recreational activities.

**3. Create opportunities** — Houses support skills development, life-long learning, training and employment readiness opportunities to improve people's social engagement and economic opportunities.

Activities used to achieve this goal include education and training opportunities, driver mentoring, job readiness, and volunteering.

**4. Local Leadership** — Houses must be community operated organisations, led by a Board of Governance consisting of volunteers living or working in the local community.

Maintaining local governance is central to the Neighbourhood Houses Program philosophy and is a requirement of the core funding. The model requires Houses to be community-led organisations that are responsive and accountable to a local community. A mix of locally connected people, consulting with the community and making governance decisions to set strategic directions gives a strong basis to the community development approach.

Activities used to achieve this goal include governance knowledge and skills, volunteer board skills, decision making and accountability and strategic planning for community and House.



## Funding Agreements/Contracts

In addition to the above core funding Houses also gain additional project or program funding from various bodies. Additional resources could be in the form of in-kind support, donations of goods or services or project funding which extend the reach of a House's work and outcomes. Gathering in-kind and other support from business and community groups demonstrates that a House has good connections with and support from its community. The efforts contribute to the processes of community development and can get more people aware of and involved in a House's work. Additional funding may require special reporting to the funding body or sponsor. This would be specified by them in the guidelines attached to the funding.

The Board is ultimately responsible, on behalf of the Association, for any funding contracts and must work to ensure the House is meeting these requirements and adheres to reporting requirements.

When receiving grant funding the contractual obligations of the funding are spelled out in the Grant Deed. The deed sets out the obligations of the parties. It is important to ensure that you fully understand the obligations under the deed before signing it. Generally, the deed may bind the recipient to:

- use the grant for the purpose in which it was provided, and for the specific items listed in the deed
- meet any specified conditions required
- seek written permission prior to any changes to the project, budget or timeframe
- provide any required project reports on time
- return any unexpended funds
- acknowledge the grantor as a source of funding for the project.

## CHAPTER THREE



# Governance vs. Management

**Governance is the role of the Board.**

It has a big picture, strategic focus.

**Management is the role of the Manager.**

It has a day-to-day operational focus.

# Governance vs. Management

**Governance is the role of the Board.** It has a big picture, strategic focus.

## Governance is about:

- Leadership
- Setting the strategic direction
- Monitoring that things are on course
- Supporting the staff and volunteers working to achieve that strategic direction
- Defining and delegating authority to the Manager

**Management is the role of the Manager.** It has a day-to-day operational focus.

## Management is about:

- Day to day operations
- Implementing the strategic direction
- Organising programs
- Leading staff and volunteers

## Why is governance important?

- It keeps the organisation on track through checks and balances
- Provides clarity on roles, responsibilities and delegated authority
- Ensures resources are used in the manner they were intended.



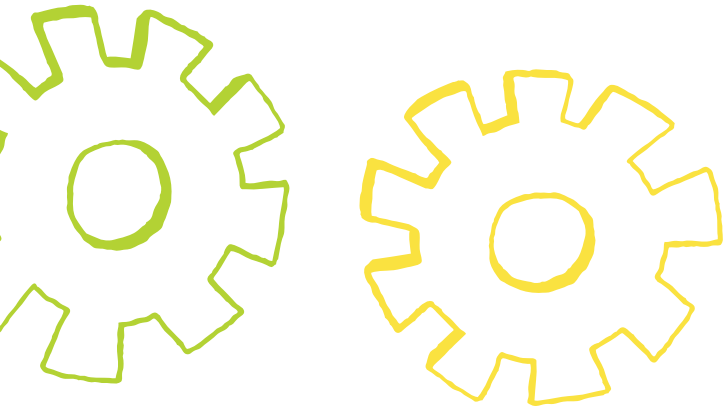
## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR GOVERNANCE?

The Board is responsible for the governance of the House. The Board ensures the House fulfills its purpose, which is community development.

The Board makes sure that the House is effectively and properly run, and is well managed financially.

### The Three Main Board Duties:

1. **Duty of Care:** act with informed participation
2. **Duty Of Loyalty:** act in the best interests of the House
3. **Duty of Obedience:** act in keeping with governing laws and rules



Steve Bowman from "Conscious Governance" summarises Board duties to be:



Stay awake



Ask questions



Read your papers



Follow the Constitution

**Only decisions of the whole Board are binding on the Manager. No one Board member, including the President, is able to direct the Manager.**



**Governance is the role of the Board. It has a big picture, strategic focus. Management is the role of the Manager. It has a day-to-day operational focus.**

## WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

*The act, process or power of governing*

It is about:

- Leadership
- Setting the strategic direction
- Monitoring that things are on course
- Supporting the staff and volunteers working to achieve that strategic direction
- Defining and delegating authority to the Manager

## Why is governance important?

- It keeps the organisation on track through checks and balances
- Provides clarity on roles, responsibilities and delegated authority
- Ensures resources are used in the manner they were intended

## Who is responsible for governance?

The Board is responsible for the governance of the House. The Board ensures the House fulfills its purpose, which is community development. The Board makes sure that the House is effectively and properly run, and is well managed financially.

## The Three Main Board Member Duties:

1. Duty of Care
2. Duty of Loyalty
3. Duty of Obedience

**Duty of Care:** to "*act as an ordinary, prudent person would in a like circumstance. This requires diligent, attentive, informed participation.*" This means that a Board member owes the duty to exercise reasonable care when they make a decision as a steward of the organisation.

**Duty of Loyalty:** to "*act in good faith, in the best interests of the organisation*". This means do not act so as to harm the organisation or to benefit personally at the expense of the organisation. This means that a Board member can never use information obtained for personal gain, but must act in the best interests of the organisation.

**Duty of Obedience:** to "*act to ensure the organisation operates in keeping with the laws and rules governing its formation and status and in accordance with its own bylaws and mission.*" This means they are not permitted to act in a way that is inconsistent with the central goals of the organisation.

Which Steve Bowman boils down to:

- Stay awake
- Read your papers
- Ask questions
- Follow the constitution
- Follow through

## WHAT IS MANAGEMENT?

*The act, art or manner of managing or handling*

It is about:

- Day to day operations
- Implementing the strategic direction
- Organising programs
- Leading staff and volunteers

### Who does what?

**The Board** employs the Manager to manage the day to day operations of the House, in accordance with the strategic plan and policies and procedures. They provide a clear position description and delegated authority for the Manager's role. Then they let the Manager do what they are paid to do — manage!

*Only decisions of the whole Board are binding on the Manager. No one Board member, including the President, is able to direct the Manager.*

### The Manager:

- Provides leadership in the community development functions of the House
- Designs programs to achieve the outcomes identified in the strategic plan
- Monitors day to day activities
- Ensures efficient and effective program delivery by staff and volunteers
- Facilitates House programs and activities, and reports on outcomes

- Is involved in the employment of staff
- Gathers community and House user feedback
- Establishes processes to collect information for annual Outcomes Reporting requirements
- Provides information to the Board
- Reports to the Board
- Implements Board decisions

## JOINT RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board and Manager are jointly responsible for:

- Determining community need
- Discussing ideas and establishing long term goals
- Developing an effective strategic plan in accordance with the goals of the Neighbourhood House Strategic Framework and the requirements of the Department of Communities Tasmania
- Ensuring risk management processes are in place and implemented
- Ensuring that achievements are recognised and documented
- Working together in a positive and respectful way
- Promoting the House in a positive manner
- Organising events, fundraising activities, etc approved by the Board

## PRESIDENT/MANAGER RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between the President and the Manager needs to be professional, coordinated and act as a partnership. The President provides the link between the Board and the Manager. They need to discuss and be clear on their respective roles.

This includes establishing:

- protocols for communications between the Board and staff
- how the Manager will report to the Board
- the nature and frequency of communications
- staff recruitment and performance evaluation processes

The President needs to:

- Work with the Manager to set meeting agendas
- Coordinate the Manager's annual performance evaluation
- Lead new Board member orientation in conjunction with the Manager
- Act as alternate spokesperson for the House
- Work in partnership with the Manager for the benefit of the House
- Work in partnership with the Manager to make sure Board resolutions are carried out
- Ensure that the Manager is supported, feels supported, and is given the direction they need
- Support and encourage the Manager in establishing their professional identity and their career development.
- Make the Manager a cup of tea from time to time



## DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

It needs to be clear who can make decisions about what. What is solely a Board decision, or a Manager's decision? "Delegation of authority" is a collection of formal decisions by the Board that define who has authority over decisions.

This authority needs to spell out clearly in what circumstances the Manager has the power to:

- Give instructions
- Delegate authority to others
- Act of behalf of the Board in certain circumstances
- Make decisions in regard to certain matters — decide what these are!
- Spend money to a certain amount without seeking specific approval each time
- Maintain records and report to the Board on House matters

### Ask:

- what does the Board wish to be consulted on before decisions are made?
- what issues or matters does only the Board want to deal with?
- what specifically does the Board want to receive information about in reports?

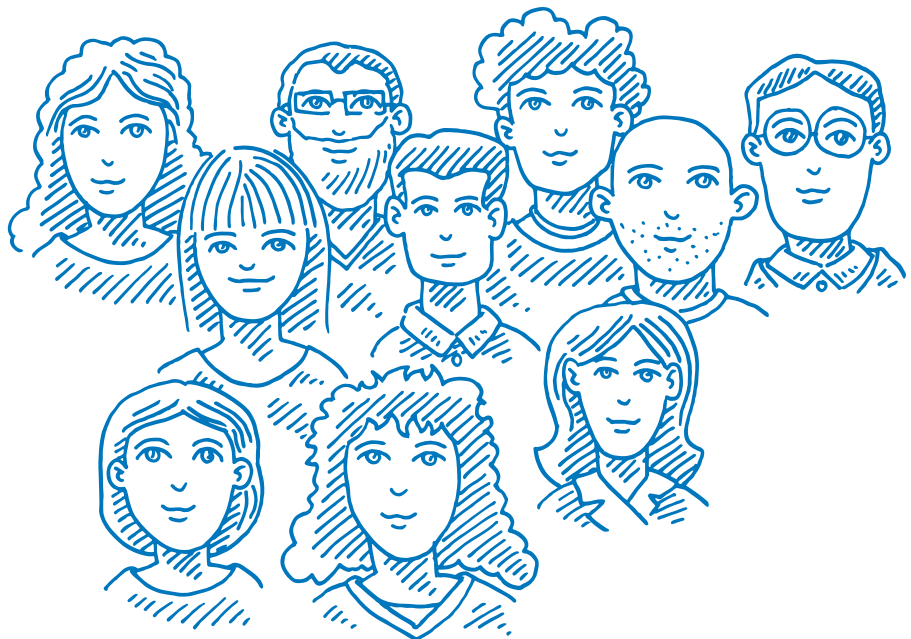
Delegation of Authority will be spelled out in your constitution and in various policies and procedures. We strongly suggest also collating all these elements of delegated authority into a clear policy so it is clear and easily understood by everyone, and able to be referenced in one place.

## SUPPORTING YOUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS:

*Happy staff = happy House.*

### Steps to help support your staff:

- The Manager manages the staff and volunteers, not the Board
- Establish a clear policy on the authority delegated to the Manager and stick to it
- Direct your concerns about staff matters to the Manager
- The Manager communicates Board decisions to the staff
- The Board should have an annual performance reflection and evaluation process in place for the Manager, and ensure the Manager has a similar process in place for staff
- Follow due process in staff and volunteer matters
- Seek proper professional HR support and advice — NHT can help you with finding local advice
- Allocate money in the budget for professional development of staff
- Ensure you and the Manager provide a safe workplace
- Allocate money in the budget for the HR support
- Act on the HR advice — this is your insurance for a healthy workplace
- Have an employee/volunteer assistance scheme in place for external supervision or support
- Have a code of conduct and ensure the Board sets the example
- If a Board member volunteers at the House — remember that when you are in that volunteer role you *cannot* have your Board hat on. The Manager is "your boss" when volunteering at the House.
- Say thank you for work well done
- Have fun!
- Remember NHT's role is to support you, and if you have any questions or any concerns about any or all of the above please call. NHT has developed a lot of resources, like the Manual you are reading, to support Boards and their Houses so if you are unsure where to turn or look — give us a call.





## CHAPTER FOUR



## Board Roles

The role of every Board Member is to ensure the House, for which you are responsible on behalf of the membership of the Association and the community, fulfills its purpose.

The guiding question for all Board Members should be:

*"How will this assist the House to fulfill its purpose?"*

# Board roles

The role of every Board Member is to ensure the House, for which you are responsible on behalf of the membership of the Association and the community, fulfills its purpose.

Steve Bowman from "Conscious Governance" summarises Board duties to be:



Stay awake



Ask questions



Read your papers



Follow the Constitution

## The usual designated Executive roles within the Board include:



President  
(or Chairperson)



Vice President  
(or Vice Chairperson)



Secretary



Treasurer



Public Officer

The whole Board is responsible for the finances — everyone is responsible for the money!

The Board should discuss a decision thoroughly, everyone who wishes has the opportunity to contribute, then make a decision.

**Only decisions of the whole Board are binding on the Manager. No one Board member, including the President, is able to direct the Manager.**

Separate your role as a Board member from other volunteer roles in the House.



The guiding question for all Board Members should be:  
*"How will this assist the House to fulfill its purpose?"*

## SNAPSHOT OF DUTIES

### Chairperson

- Provides leadership and direction to the Board
- Facilitates the meetings and discussions
- Keeps Board focus on governance
- Is key liaison/support for the Manager

### Secretary

Ensures:

- the safety and accuracy of all Board records
- the annual report to the Members is prepared
- the annual report and financials are lodged correctly
- the Members' register is maintained and updated

### Vice Chair

- Knows the Chairperson role so can perform these duties in the Chair's absence

### Public Officer

- Acts as the House's official person on whom any legal notices are served
- Ensures that the House is acting within the rules of its Constitution

### Treasurer

Ensures:

- all House income is banked
- accounts and wages are paid
- financial reports are prepared

**Wear one hat at a time!**



## **The role of every Board Member is to ensure the House, for which you are responsible on behalf of the membership of the Association and the community, fulfills its purpose.**

The guiding question for all Board Members should be: *"How will this assist the House to fulfill its purpose?"*

Steve Bowman, in his Conscious Governance workshops, sums up Board duties as:

- Stay awake
- Read your papers
- Ask questions
- Follow the constitution
- Follow through

The usual designated Executive roles within the Board include:

- President (or Chairperson)
- Vice President (or Vice Chairperson)
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Public Officer

The whole Board is responsible for the finances — everyone is responsible for the money!

The Board should discuss a decision thoroughly, everyone who wishes has the opportunity to contribute, then make a decision.

There are some key responsibilities that apply to all Board members which are to:

- Turn up to meetings! But even if an apology, give input through the Chair via email or phone call
- Ensure the House complies with its legal obligations and is following the Constitution
- Ensure the House meets all funding agreement commitments and KPIs
- Ensure that the activities of the House fit within the Strategic Framework for Neighbourhood Houses and the House Strategic Plan
- Employ, support and monitor a Manager to manage the operational activities of the House
- Develop and implement a Strategic Plan for the House

There are some key tasks that apply to All Board members which are:

- Be willing to always promote the House in a positive way
- Act always in the best interests of the House
- Argue in the room — once the decision is made, you must support the decision of the committee
- Prepare for, attend and participate in meetings regularly — exclusion rules in the constitution may apply
- Be informed about the House and the community
- Attend and assist with Board and House functions where possible
- Set an example with your conduct in the House

Separate your role as a Board member from other volunteer roles in the House.

## WEAR ONE HAT AT A TIME!

The usual designated roles within the Board (depending on your House's Constitution) include:

- President (or Chairperson)
- Vice President (or Vice Chairperson)
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Public Officer

The Board may also decide on additional roles that will help it work more effectively. Most Constitutions allow Boards to bring in expertise for a limited time to inform and support the Board in areas where it does not have the required expertise. These "experts" are invited on "ex- officio", which means they can have input in their areas of expertise, but they cannot vote as they were not elected by the Members.

NHT advocates that the Manager should attend (and be paid to attend) the Board meetings in an ex-officio capacity. This enables them to present reports to the Board and inform Board decision making. Our observation is that when the Manager does not attend meetings it is inefficient and leads to unnecessary misunderstandings. However it is also good practice to have time each meeting where the Board meets alone.

**Key aspects of the individual Board Executive roles are set out on the following pages.**



## **Chairperson:** *a person who presides over a meeting*

The key roles of the President/ Chairperson are to:

- Provide leadership and direction to the Board
- Build teamwork within the Board
- Work with the Manager to set meeting agendas
- Approve the agenda before distribution prior to meetings
- Facilitate the meeting, making sure all items are covered efficiently and that everyone has the opportunity to be heard
- Bring the meeting to consensus or agreement
- Work with the Secretary on the business to be conducted at each meeting
- Review minutes of meetings and ensure they are signed correctly
- Focus the Board on matters of governance and strategy
- Mentor and support Board members
- Work with the other Board members to recruit new Board members
- Periodically consult with Board members on their roles and help them assess their performance
- Coordinate Manager's annual performance evaluation
- Assist Manager in conducting new Board member orientation
- Be readily available to the Manager for support and discussion as required
- Act as alternate spokesperson for the House
- Work in partnership with the Manager for the benefit of the House
- Work in partnership with the Manager to make sure Board resolutions are carried out

- Ensure the Board behaves consistently with its own rules as well as externally imposed rules
- Ensure discussions are fair, open and thorough, as well as timely, orderly and relevant
- Chair other meetings — annual and special general meetings (AGMs and SGMs)
- Institute the process for appraising the Board as a whole
- Plan for the succession of the Manager

NB: Remember you are not “the boss”; the whole Board makes the decisions, and the whole Board is responsible for those decisions.

**Vice Chair:** *a person who is designated to preside over a meeting in the absence of the Chairperson*

The key roles of the Vice Chairperson are to:

- Understand the responsibilities of the Chairperson, and be able to perform these duties in the Chair’s absence
- Carry out special assignments as requested by the Chairperson

**Secretary:** *a person in charge of record keeping, correspondence, minutes of meetings*

The key roles of the Secretary are to:

- Ensure the safety and accuracy of all Board records
- Ensure meeting agendas and additional papers such as reports are prepared and distributed to Board members, in plenty of time before a meeting, such as a week if possible

NB: the secretary is not responsible for creating all the documents for a meeting. For example, the Chair and Manager work up the detail of the agenda. It is the secretary’s responsibility to ensure there is a process in place for the required documents to be generated and distributed.

- Take meeting minutes, which include a true and accurate record of decisions, key discussion points, and most importantly, the actions from each meeting.

NB: the secretary does not have to be the minute taker, but it is their responsibility to ensure that good minutes are taken. The task can be rotated through the Board members.

- Review and prepare Board meeting minutes for upcoming meeting

NB: ALL Board members are responsible to sign off the minutes of the previous meeting as a true and accurate reflection of that meeting.

- Provide notice of meetings of the Board when such notice is required
- Attend to all correspondence, ensuring that all official, Board level correspondence is organised and available for inspection at any time.
- Prepare an itemised report to the Board meeting, noting any relevant correspondence such as funding agreements and ACNC letters, but not power bills or Council minutes
- Ensure the annual report is prepared
- Ensure the annual report and financials are lodged correctly
- Maintain and update the House membership register
- Maintain and update the officeholders register

**Treasurer:**

The key roles of the Treasurer are to:

- Work with the Manager and Finance staff to ensure that:
  - All House income is banked
  - Accounts and wages are paid
  - Staff entitlements and tax obligations are met
  - Transactions are recorded in Books of Account
  - Annual budget is presented to the Board for approval
  - Regular financial reports against budget, by grant, are provided to the Board on a timely basis
  - Financial report and statements are prepared
  - Business activity statements (BAS), installment activity statements (IAS) and other required returns are prepared and lodged
  - Liaison with House's external auditor occurs
  - An asset register is maintained
  - Appropriate and adequate insurances are in place
  - Book keeper role is a paid position
  - Delegated authority for signing exists, with combination of Board and staff (min of 2 signatories)
  - All detail of grants are checked
  - Electronic books are kept
  - Reconciliation of the books and bank statements occurs
- Chair the Finance Subcommittee (if existing)

If you don't feel you understand a particular transaction, then it is your job to gain understanding and get the assistance you need.

The whole Board is responsible for the finances — everyone is responsible for the money!

**Public Officer:** *a person in charge of ensuring all legal requirements are met*

The key roles of the Public Officer are to:

- Act as the House's official person on whom any legal notices are to be served
- Notify amendments to rules or the Constitution, and the passing of special resolutions
- Ensure that the House is acting within the rules of its Constitution
- Ensure all legal requirements of incorporation are carried out
- To ensure the House has processes in place to comply with relevant legislation
- Ensure reporting to ACNC is complete

NB: ACNC = Australian Charities and Not-for profits Commission.

They must be notified of changes to:

- the legal name of an organisation
- the address where service happens
- Responsible persons register is updated ie. Board membership (let them know if someone takes on or finishes a role on the Board)

To avoid the potential for conflict of interest and observe best practice in governance, it is best that the person appointed as Public Officer does not hold any other office within the House. This is sometimes unavoidable in smaller communities where the number of volunteers may be limited. Where it does become necessary to combine the position of Public Officer with other roles, steps should be taken to avoid the potential for obvious conflicts of interest.

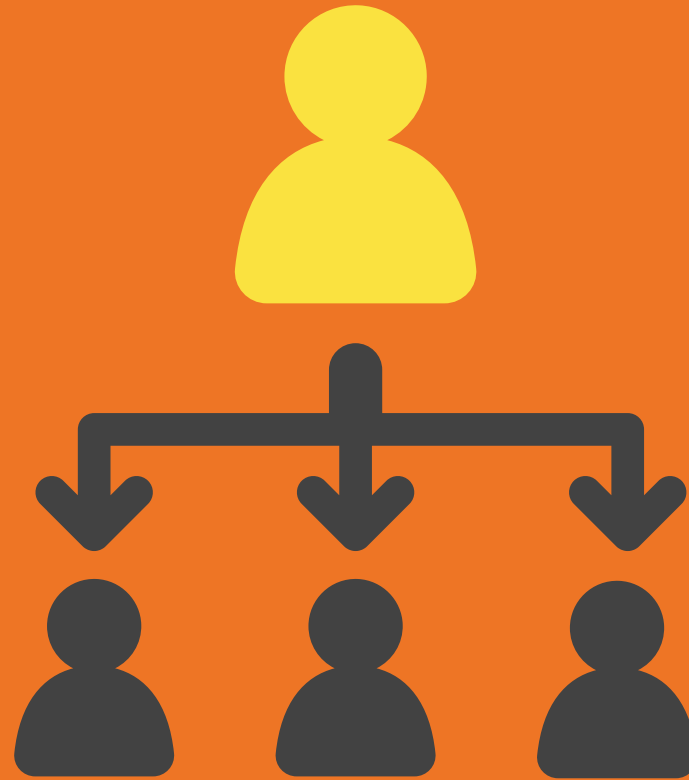
A House could also appoint someone to the role of Public Officer (subject to the provisions of its Constitution) who is not a member of the Board.

## STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

Steve Bowman in his Conscious Governance workshops proposes that each Board member commits to upholding the following standards of behaviour to foster and promote a professional attitude to their role on the Board.

1. To take personal responsibility for contributing impartially to the decisions of the Board, with no thought given to personal gain
2. To actively seek adequate knowledge about the business of the organisation
3. To provide positive input into the development of organisational policy
4. To provide strong support for the long term strategies of the organisation
5. To accept the need to sufficiently prepare for Board meetings and decisions, and to insist on sufficient information to enable informed debate and decision making
6. To perform the assignments delegated by the Board
7. To delineate and state personal positions vs organisational positions on controversial matters to better enable the Board to make informed decisions for the betterment of the organisation
8. To devote sufficient time to the duties of a Board member
9. To uphold high ethical standards at the Board level
10. To tender a resignation if unable to uphold any of the above Standards of Behaviour

## CHAPTER FIVE



# How to have effective Board meetings

## President = Chairperson = President

The President chairs the Board meetings.

A good Chair is a good facilitator

A bad Chair is controlling.

# How to have effective Board meetings

**President = Chairperson = President**



## Key roles of Chairperson

- Build teamwork within the Board
- Facilitate the meeting, making sure all items are covered efficiently and that everyone has the opportunity to be heard
- Focus the Board on matters of governance and strategy
- Ensure discussions are fair, open and thorough, as well as timely, orderly and relevant
- Follow the agenda



## A good facilitator:

- Keeps the meeting on track and the agenda moving forward
- Helps resolve conflict without taking sides
- Draws out participation from everyone, giving space to all voices
- Provides structure to the work of the group
- Parks an issue if the group gets stuck



## A poor facilitator:

- Gets emotionally attached to outcomes
- Takes sides on issues or with people
- Tells the group what to do
- Acts like the boss



**The President chairs the Board meetings.**

**A good Chair is a good facilitator. A bad Chair is controlling.**

### **Teamwork**

- Work together in a positive and respectful manner
- Work according to your Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest policies
- Know your role so you can be an effective team member
- As a Board, build relationships — you are a team
- Help the Chair by being an active participant, contributing to discussions when necessary
- Allow space and encourage those who are quieter to voice an opinion

### **Ownership of agenda**

- Ultimately the Chair does set and “own” the agenda but this should be developed with the Manager, and with invited input from the Board
- An agenda is a list of topics to be covered during a meeting
- Don't cram too much onto the agenda
- Prioritise the important issues to ensure they get proper attention and time
- Focus the agenda around the Strategic Plan

### **Set some group rules for how you want to operate as a Board**

- Respect others in the room
- Allow for different personality types
- Be present and participate
- Everyone has the right to speak



## **President = Chairperson = President**

**The President chairs the Board meetings. A good Chair is a good facilitator. A bad Chair is controlling.**

### **CHAIRPERSON**

The key roles of the Chairperson are to:

- Follow the meeting agenda
- Provide leadership and direction to the Board
- Build teamwork within the Board
- Bring the meeting to consensus or agreement
- Remember they are not "the boss" - the whole Board makes the decisions, and the whole Board is responsible for those decisions
- Focus Board discussions on matters of governance and strategy
- Ensure the Board behaves consistently with its own rules as well as externally imposed rules
- Ensure discussions are fair, open and thorough, as well as timely, orderly and relevant

### **Facilitator v Controller**

A good facilitator is someone who:

- Keeps the meeting on track and the agenda moving forward
- Helps resolve conflict without taking sides
- Draws out participation from everyone, giving space to all voices
- Provides structure to the work of the group
- Can question and guide the discussion without having to be the 'expert' on the subject matter
- Focuses on how people participate in the meeting, not just on what gets achieved
- Have the meeting start and finish on time

### **What a facilitator isn't**

Signs that someone is not facilitating well include:

- Refusal to have an idea recorded
- Changing the wording of an agreed action
- Getting emotionally attached to outcomes
- Judging comments and liking some ideas over others
- Manipulating people and behaviours through their own feedback
- Monopolising conversation
- Taking sides on issues or with people
- Being closed to group suggestions on the process
- Trying to have all the answers
- Telling the group what to do
- Acts like the boss
- Acts like the expert

### **Group created/agreed rules**

When bringing together a group of people to work together it is good to set some ground rules. At the first meeting after the AGM have a discussion as "new" Board to set your agreed group rules. Agree to the key ones that the group identifies as important. These can be written up and referred to during each meeting, or reminded of before each meeting.

These could be included in Board papers and reviewed regularly, or when a new member starts, when things get tricky etc.

Rules may include, but are not limited to:

- Be open to listening
- Respect others in the room
- Allow for different personality types
- Come prepared; read your papers and be ready to discuss agenda items
- Be present and participate
- Everyone has the right to speak
- There is no right or wrong, only opinions and viewpoints
- Everyone is treated equally
- Confidentiality of the group will be respected
- What goes on in the room stays in the room
- It's always ok to ask questions
- There is the right to 'park' a topic or issue if it is not relevant to the current discussion
- Keep your hats separate — ensure Board hats are worn at Board meetings
- Board members are required to be attentive, diligent and to participate
- Apologies need to be approved — they are not automatically accepted
- If three or more consecutive meetings are not attended by an individual Board member then the person may be encouraged to step off the Board
- Deal with concerns sooner rather than later
- Ask — how are we doing as a Board; how can we improve?
- Work according to your Code of Conduct policy
- Know your role so you can be an effective team member

NB: In-camera sessions can be good practice to provide a regular opportunity for Board — only discussions, however these need to be initiated during good times, not when there is already disagreement or division.

### Ownership of the agenda

The agenda should be worked up between the Chairperson and the Manager

### Teamwork

- Work together in a positive and respectful manner
- As a Board, build relationships — have dinner, get to know each other and build trust to make the hard decisions together
- Respect delegated responsibility and authority
- Show appreciation and thanks for work well done
- Offer training and support
- An agenda is a list of topics to be covered during a meeting and what is to be achieved
- An agenda should state the date, time and place of the meeting
- Don't cram too much onto the agenda to make sure your meetings don't drag on unnecessarily
- Avoid just copying your agenda from meeting to meeting. Prioritise the important issues to ensure they get proper attention and time, not just a few minutes at the end of the meeting when everyone is feeling tired and wants to go home
- Indicate which agenda items are for information only and which are for decision making
- Focus the agenda around the Strategic Plan
- The Chair legally owns the agenda and can decline a proposed agenda item, for example if it is not strategically relevant



## CHAPTER SIX



# Good Financial Reporting

One of the key roles of being a Board member is to monitor the finances of the organisation.  
All Board members are responsible for the overall finances of the organisation.

It isn't something that Board members are often passionate about, however if the House isn't operating well and healthily financially, it will greatly affect the outcomes for your community.

# Good Financial Reporting

One of the key roles of being a Board member is to monitor the finances of the organisation.

It isn't something that Board members are often passionate about, however if the House isn't operating well and healthily financially, it will greatly affect the outcomes for your community.

At NHT we are passionate about good financial reporting as we know that good reports help Board members and the organisation feel confident about how it is tracking, and occasionally highlight where change is needed.

## Auditors

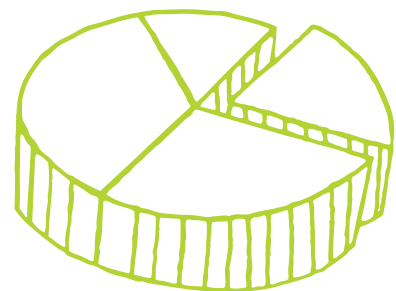
External auditors are independent people, usually from professional services firms, who are specifically employed by the organisation to provide audit services.

The process for appointment, reappointment and removal of external auditors is laid out in your Constitution.

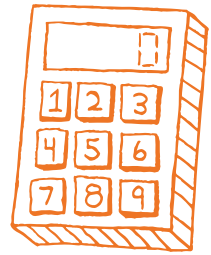
**There are three financial documents that record financial information on your organisation**

1. **Budget:** an estimate of your finances for the coming year.
2. **Profit and Loss statement:** shows your income and expenditure for a certain period (month) or for the year to date
3. **Balance sheet:** provides a picture of the financial health of an organisation at a given moment (usually the end of the month or the financial year)

At NHT we are passionate about good financial reporting as we know that good reports help Board members and the organisation feel confident about how it is tracking.



**All Board members are responsible for the overall finances of the organisation.**



### Setting the Budget

A budget lets you know your current situation, and lets you look forward. It predicts the expenses you expect to get and the income you hope to bring in. In order to plan a year of programs or events and to set goals, the House needs to know if its plans can be funded. Knowing how much money is available and allocating it accordingly is the role of the Board.

The critical role of the board is to then monitor how the budget is tracking.

### Board reports

Financial reports presented to the Board should be user-friendly. The information should include explanations and comments, including potential problem areas and recommendation on what to do.

Behind the scenes, there are a lot of numbers that go into the development of the budget v actual document. A 1 page summary of the income and expenditure, by grant, for the year to date, with explanations for deviations from the budget is a satisfactory starting point for a Board to review the financial progress of the House.

### Budget vs. Actual

As at 30/11/2018  
YTD 41.67%

Grant	Budgeted Income	YTD Income	Budgeted Expenses	YTD Expenses	YTD %
Core	120,000.00	72,000.00	119,000.00	49,500.00	41.60%
Literacy	16,000.00	16,000.00	16,000.00	5,500.00	34.38%
Garden	10,000.00	5,000.00	10,000.00	12,000.00	120.00%

*An example of what a one page summary could look like*



**The Board is ultimately responsible for finances, though it may sometimes delegate some responsibility to a finance subcommittee.**

Through careful analysis and planning, good financial management should result in secure funding and the best possible use of available funds. By implementing good financial management your House will deliver the strategic goals in a financially sound manner

Financial management involves two important aspects. First, it is the collection and presentation of financial information to help you make decisions. Second, it is the development and implementation of policies that ensure your financial information is correct.

## **FINANCIAL DOCUMENTS**

Whilst the Treasurer is the board member responsible for reporting on the finances of the House at Board meetings, EVERY member of the Board shares a responsibility to understand the finances of the House. When a motion is moved to accept the financial report as presented, the Board becomes responsible for the finances of the House. All members of the Board must be satisfied with the report that is presented and if they are not, they must seek clarification until they are satisfied.

Financial statements record the performance of the organisation and allow management and other stakeholders to see the strengths and weaknesses by providing a written summary of the financial activities for a given period. This is particularly important for the House because it enables you to demonstrate the viability of the services provided, which encourages further community and government support.

Three financial documents you must be familiar with are:

1. Budget
2. Profit and Loss
3. Balance Sheet

### **1: Budget**

A budget is a way of thinking ahead financially. Accounting looks backward, at what income you have received and the amount you have actually spent. Budgeting looks forward. It predicts the expenses you expect to get and the income you hope to bring in. It is intended to minimise the risk of being faced with nasty surprises and to provide a base for your planning. Reporting against budget throughout the year then gives a Board the best information about where the organisation is at.

The Board sets the strategic plan for the House. This plan is then financially mapped out through a budget.

A budget is an estimate of the income and expenditure you believe you will receive over the coming financial year. A draft of your House budget, by grant or other income source, should be prepared in late May/early June for the Board to review.

An example of how a budget spreadsheet could look is:

### Budget for 2018-19

	2018/2019 Budget	DoC Core	TCF Literacy
<b>Income</b>			
Grants: DoC	120,000.00	120,000.00	0.00
Grants: TCF	45,000.00	0.00	45,000.00
Donations	5,000.00	5,000.00	0.00
Room hire	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>171,000.00</b>	<b>126,000.00</b>	<b>45,000.00</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Audit	1,000.00	750.00	250.00
House Expenses	20,000.00	20,000.00	0.00
Project costs	26,000.00	26,000.00	0.00
Other Expenses	30,000.00	29,500.00	500.00
Workshops & tutors	34,000.00	0.00	34,000.00
Wages & Salaries	54,050.00	45,000.00	9,050.00
Superannuation	5,225.00	4,275.00	950.00
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>170,275.00</b>	<b>125,525.00</b>	<b>44,750.00</b>
<b>Net Profit/(Loss)</b>	<b>725.00</b>	<b>475.00</b>	<b>250.00</b>

It is important to be prudent when preparing/reviewing a budget. Prudent budget preparation means income is not overestimated and expenses are not underestimated. Your budget content should err on the side of caution. Extra funds are a bonus, too little could spell disaster.

When setting the new year's budget it is important to analyse the previous year's budget, but don't base your figures purely on that - use past experience as a guide and then anticipate spending according to the organisation's 12-month operational plan. Consider any expected cost increases that may occur (e.g. wages, electricity, etc).

As a budget is an estimate of your finances for the coming year, it is a good idea to keep notes regarding the assumptions you have made when developing your budget. You may also need to look further into the future than the financial year you are preparing a budget for. For example, if you are giving a staff member extra hours to manage a project this financial year, you should take the time to see if you will be able to continue this employment arrangement the following financial year if the funding received this year is reduced next year.

The finances will be reviewed by the board at each meeting, but it is also a good idea to review your budget half way through the financial year. Assumptions that were made in the budget setting process may now be clearer and an updated budget, called a forecast, may be a better tool for analysis against your actual position.

The Board must formally adopt the budget at a board meeting. The approved budget should be in place for the start of the financial year. Later in the year, a forecast can be approved as an updated budget for comparison purposes.

## 2: Profit and Loss

*In your audit report this is known as a Statement of Comprehensive Income.*

The profit and loss report shows your income and expenditure for a certain period (month) or for the year to date. The normal duties of the finance officer of the House will populate this report — paying wages, processing creditor invoices, receipting income. All of these transactions must be allocated to a grant, or spread amongst your grants, or another income source, so that the actual v budget comparison can be made.

The basic structure of a Profit and Loss is:

**Revenue - Expenses**  
**= Profit (surplus)/Loss (deficit)**

If revenues, money coming in, are larger than expenses, the Profit and Loss will show a profit (surplus) for the period you are analysing. For example, this can happen in the months you receive your upfront grant payments from Department of Communities.

If revenues are less than the expenses for the period your Profit and Loss is reporting on, there will be a loss (deficit) showing.

As a member of the Board of Governance, you need to compare income and expenditure numbers regularly on year-to-date basis *against the approved budget.*

## 3: Balance Sheet

*In your audit report this is known as a Statement of Financial Position.*

The balance sheet provides a picture of the financial health of an organisation at a given moment (usually the end of the month or the financial year). It functions as a historical record of activity since day one for your House and lists in detail the various assets that the organisation owns, its liabilities and the value of the organisation's equity (or the net worth of the organisation).

- **Assets** are the items of value owned by the organisation — what you own
- **Liabilities** are the amounts owed to external stakeholders of the organisation — what you owe
- **Equity** is the accumulated funds from the operations of the organisation, often referred to as accumulated funds in the balance sheet — what you'll have left

The key to accepting the figures in the balance sheet as being true, is the completion of reconciliations. The Treasurer should on a regular basis be provided with a copy of the bank statements and a reconciliation report from the accounting software to check that the 2 documents balance. The finance officer needs to be completing monthly reconciliations of the items in the balance sheet. The auditor's will need to view these documents as at 30<sup>th</sup> of June as part of their audit process.

## BUDGET V ACTUAL BY GRANT

The Treasurer is in the best position to prepare the explanations and comments as a one-page summary, after studying the financial reports provided by the House Manager & finance officer/bookkeeper. Financial reports presented to the Board should be user-friendly. The information should include explanations and comments, including potential problem areas and recommendation on what to do.

Behind the scenes there are a lot of numbers that go into the development of the budget v actual document.

A 1 page summary of the income and expenditure, by grant, for the year to date, with explanations for deviations from the budget is a satisfactory starting point for a Board to review the financial progress of the House.

**An example of what this could look like is:**

### Budget vs. Actual

As at 30/11/2018  
YTD 41.67%

Grant	Budgeted Income	YTD Income	Budgeted Expenses	YTD Expenses	YTD %
Core	120,000.00	72,000.00	119,000.00	49,500.00	41.60%
Literacy	16,000.00	16,000.00	16,000.00	5,500.00	34.38%
Garden	10,000.00	5,000.00	10,000.00	12,000.00	120.00%

This document could include a traffic light colour coding scheme for the YTD %age complete column. This summary is comparing how far into the financial year you are to the expenditure on the grant thus far. A traffic light colour coding system can be applied to the YTD %age to show:

#### Green — On Track

The expenditure on this grant is very close to the YTD %age and so no further investigation is necessary

#### Orange — Under Control

Possible reasons for a variation here:

- A budget assumption error has come to light
- A large expense has been paid and the YTD %age will come into alignment over the next couple of months (timing issue)
- Progress on the grant activity has been slow, but you are sure that everything is on track for the rest of the year

#### Red — Problem

Further information about the discrepancy will need to be provided on:

- How significant the variation to budget is and how this has come about?
- Can the variation be covered?
- What are the implications for the budget for the rest of the year?
- Should the House prepare a forecast — an updated budget — to be used for the rest of the financial year?

## FORECAST V ACTUAL BY GRANT

If at your half yearly budget review (an important step for any organisation) you deemed it necessary to prepare a "forecast" (which means an updated budget) for the remainder of the financial year, you should start to receive "Forecast v Actual" reports from your House. If circumstances have arisen that prompted the need for a forecast (an updated Budget) then continuing to analyse your House finances on a budget v actual basis is pointless.

## SOLVENCY

Cash flow management is critical to ensure organisations have enough money to pay the bills. These bills include day-to-day running expenses and large sums predicted and planned for in your annual budget.

In cash flow management, timing is critical. You must have money available to pay the bills when they come in. If you run out of cash you can't pay your bills on time - and unless arrangements are made to cover shortfalls, you may end up in financial difficulty. This difficulty could be as trivial as paying the phone bill late, but if you are not in control of your cash flow minor problems can escalate and you may have to make staff redundant, or in the worst case scenario, wind up and close your organisation.

Even profitable organisations have gone under because of cash flow problems. It is the responsibility of every board member (and especially the treasurer) to ensure that systems are in place that will prevent the organisation from trading while insolvent. This means you can't pay your bills as they fall due. Any breach of this requirement can create financial risks for individual Board members.

## Solvency check

The question of solvency is a legal one. *The law provides that a House is insolvent if it is unable to pay all its debts when they fall due.* The vital question is, does the House have access to enough cash and expected future revenue to meet its current and future expenses?

The "Current Ratio" is a commonly used Board solvency check — it is a measure of whether an entity has enough current assets to meet its current liabilities. The calculation is:

Current assets

Current liabilities

- A current ratio below 1 means your House does not have enough *liquid* assets to cover your current liabilities — this may indicate insolvency concerns.
- A current ratio equal to 1 means your House is just able to cover your current liabilities with your current assets.
- A current ratio higher than 1.2 is ideal and means your House can meet your current liabilities with your current assets, with a surplus of assets.

Another handy ratio to calculate is your month's cash on hand. This is particularly important where grants/funds are handed out over the course of the financial year. This calculation tells you how long you can continue to function with the cash you have, without further injections of income.

The formula for this calculation is:

$$\frac{\text{Total expenses}}{\text{Months of the financial year so far}} = A$$
$$\frac{\text{Current bank balance(s)}}{A} = \text{Month's cash on hand}$$

Given that a House's core funding grant payments can be 3 months apart, and remembering that there can be delays in payments, a Month's Cash on Hand calculation greater than 3 is highly recommended.

## AUDITS

### What is the Role of External Auditors?

External auditors are independent people, usually from professional services firms, who are specifically employed by the organisation to provide audit services. They primarily form an opinion about whether an organisation's financial reports comply with the relevant legislation and requirements and give a true and fair view of the organisation's financial position.

The external auditor can also provide an independent view of aspects of the policies and internal controls of the organisation.

Importantly the audit should provide in a "Notes" section details about what aspects of financial reporting or the position of the organisation financially need addressing.

The process for appointment, reappointment and removal of external auditors is laid out in your Constitution. While the Board collectively decides on which auditor to recommend, it is the members who ultimately vote on a resolution to appoint or remove external auditors at the AGM.

It is important for external auditors to be independent of management. Independence can be defined as being free from relationships with management that can interfere with acting in the best interests of the company. *The Corporations Act 2001* requires that auditors make a written declaration that they have not contravened independence requirements of the Act or any professional codes of conduct (s 307C).

## CHAPTER SEVEN



# Strategic planning

The Board's purpose is to ensure that the House fulfills its purpose, and its purpose is community development.

To achieve this, the Board sets the strategic direction of the House and then monitors that things are on course.

The Manager plans and organises with the staff and volunteers to pursue the actions that will achieve that direction.

# Strategic planning

To achieve its purpose, the Board sets the strategic direction of the House and then monitors that things are on course.

## Strategic Planning:

- looks at the big picture, dreams towards a better community
- then asks how best to respond to the current needs and circumstances of your community
- sets short and long term goals and priorities
- develops strategies to reach those goals
- is an exciting task because it is about shaping a sustainable future for your House and community!
- is a way for Houses to ensure their processes are accountable and transparent
- is not an end in itself but rather a means of assisting a House to achieve its purpose
- helps a House look at how they get from here ... to there

## Developing a Strategic Plan:

- community engagement and consultation is essential at the start of the process
- work with your community, don't just plan for them
- it will support the House's mission statement

## Strategic vs. operational

- a strategic plan offers an inspiring vision of where your House would like to be in three years and identifies the strategies that your House will take to get there
- an operational plan focuses on specific actions and detailed tasks over a shorter period, such as 12 months
- the operational plan works towards implementing the strategic plan and must mesh with it
- both should be practical and realistic about what can be achieved, and not be mere wish lists



**The strategic planning process allows your House to ask questions such as:**

- Where are we now?
- What are we good at; what are our strengths?
- Where can improvements be made?
- Are there opportunities or threats the House should act on?
- Where do we want to be in three years' time?
- What difference do we want to make?
- Has our community changed in terms of its make-up, focus and needs?
- What does this mean for future service delivery?
- Which critical issues must we respond to?
- Where should we direct our limited resources?
- Do we have the people, and the capacity and commitment to achieve our goals?
- Do we need to set a new direction?

**Some key tips**

- Prepare to plan — allocate enough time to the process
- Invite a facilitator in to run the process and capture the work of the group
- Write up the strategic plan
- Share it so staff and volunteers know what the guiding strategy and overall direction is
- Be realistic and don't over stretch staff or resources
- Review and update the document as required — it is a live document so changes can be made. Don't travel too far down the wrong road. Review and make changes as required — its okay!

Your strategic plan should align with the four Neighbourhood House Program goals:



**CONNECT COMMUNITY**



**SUPPORT PEOPLE**



**CREATE OPPORTUNITY**



**LOCAL LEADERSHIP**



## WHAT IS STRATEGIC PLANNING?

Adjective: *strategic: relating to the identification of long-term or overall aims and interests and the means of achieving them.*

Strategic planning is a systematic process where your House sets its goals and agrees on the priorities and strategies to reach those goals. The process is strategic because it looks at the big picture and chooses how best to respond to the needs of your community and the circumstances it faces for the next few years. It involves making decisions about what could be done and choosing your priorities for both the short term and long term.

- Community engagement and consultation is essential at the start of the process
- Work with your community, don't just plan for them
- Ask what is important, listen to what they think, respond and represent their needs and views

Strategic planning is an exciting task because it is about shaping a sustainable future for your House and community!

## WHY DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN?

A strategic plan is used for one purpose only — **to help the House do a better job.**

Strategic planning enables Houses to think through and document what they are doing and why they are doing it. The process encourages the review of established directions to ensure strategies are current and relevant.

There are many choices of things for Houses to get involved with, so how do you decide where to put your time, energy and resources?

Houses are being increasingly asked to clearly demonstrate their capacity to use resources responsibly and strategically. Just as importantly, they need to give clear indications of their results and the impact of their chosen activity. A strategic plan is important to keep the House on track, but also to show other organisations you may want support from that you know how to be strategic, you have a vision and you are on track towards that vision.

A strategic plan creates transparency into how and why decisions are made. It helps to unpack past mistakes or failures, and also helps to learn and grow from successful decisions and choices. A plan helps to keep the House accountable, and lets other organisations know where they are going, what they need to do to get there, how they are progressing along the way, and what results are being achieved.

A strategic plan helps a House look at how they get from here ... to there.

## PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

The strategic planning process is a way for Houses to ensure they are accountable and that their processes are transparent.

During the process difficult questions should be encouraged and discussed:

- Do we need to change our Mission statement?
- Has our target community shifted its focus or needs?
- Should we abandon much loved programs that have outlived their usefulness and concentrate resources elsewhere?
- Is there enough capacity and commitment within our present staff and management team to achieve our goals?

A successful strategic planning process will be genuinely inclusive, involving not just the Board but also paid staff, volunteers, funders, partner organisations and the community. It aims to focus the House's vision and priorities in response to a changing environment and to ensure that members of the organisation are working toward the same goals.

The strategic plan documents for the House:

- where they are going
- what they need to do to get there
- how they are progressing along the way
- that a full account of the results achieved will be delivered at the appropriate time

## THE PROCESS

There is no perfect recipe for developing a strategic plan but there are some common activities or steps in the process.

### 1. Environmental scan

This activity reviews the House's current relationship to the broader political, social and economic environments, identifying the House's current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

This is called a SWOT analysis.

New "hot spots" are identified and analysed. For example, consider the circumstances in which you are operating which includes your community make-up, needs, services, other providers etc.

You should also consider emerging issues and trends such as a change of government policy or a shift in demographics that may have an impact on the House.

The Board can then look at how the House is placed to meet the challenges, issues and opportunities identified in the environmental scan and commit to a set of strategic choices to go forward.

The plan should also take into account of the current situation within the House such as your policies, people, finances etc.

### 2. The Mission statement

Your House's mission is the reason that you exist. Your strategic plan will support this and describe your vision of the House's future and how to achieve it.

The mission statement defines the fundamental purpose of the House, succinctly describing why it exists and what it aims to do. The mission statement should be concise, generally just one sentence long, and explain the fundamental outcomes the House is working to achieve. It provides a snapshot of who you are and what you want to do.

The mission statement of a House should guide the decisions of the Board to ensure that the House fulfils its purpose, providing guidance and inspiration to the Board and staff.

The mission statement should be quotable. Put it on your agenda! If you can't use it for guiding decisions then change it as it's no good to you.

### 3. Setting the goals (sometimes called “objectives” or “outcome statements”)

This is the activity that assists the House to choose specific priorities — to be strategic about the ends that need to be accomplished for the House to achieve its mission.

Goals should be designed and written to be SMARTER:

**S**pecific

**M**easurable

**A**cceptable

(to those working to achieve them)

**R**ealistic

**T**imely

**E**xtending the capabilities

(of those working to achieve them)

**R**ewarding

(for those working to achieve them)

They can be seen as milestones to achieving the House's overall purpose.

### 4 Action planning

These are the strategies or activities that have been prioritised and selected to help the House achieve its goals. They clearly reflect and respond to the findings from the environmental scan, with a number of broad activities matched to each strategic goal.

Action planning also includes specifying responsibilities and timelines for each objective, or who needs to do what and by when.

A strategic plan is different to an operational plan. A strategic plan offers an inspiring vision of where your House would like to be in three years, describes the key things you will focus on and identifies the strategies that your House will take to get there.

In contrast, an operational plan focuses on specific actions and detailed tasks over a shorter period, such as 12 months. The operational plan works towards implementing the strategic plan and must mesh with it. The manager sets the operational plan NOT the Board.

Both plans should be practical and realistic about what can be achieved, and not be mere wish lists.

## EVALUATION

Your planning process should also include methods to honestly monitor and evaluate the strategic plan and its results, including documenting how the House will know who has done what, to whom and by when.

### Strategic planning — a process not a monument

The important thing to remember is that a strategic plan is not a monument, or an end in itself, but rather a means of assisting a House to achieve its purpose. There needs to be enough flexibility in the process to be creative and responsive to new developments. In reality this will normally mean changing the activities that have previously been selected to achieve the House's mission in the light of new opportunities or challenges.

The process is helpful as it allows the House to honestly test old assumptions in the light of new information about the present, and anticipate the environment in which the House will be working in the future.

Finally, the process is about building commitment and embracing public accountability through engaging key stakeholders in the regular process of identifying priorities and evaluating strategies in the pursuit of changing people's lives for the better.

**Some key tips:**

- Prepare to plan — allocate enough time to the process
- Invite a facilitator in to run the process and capture the work of the group
- Write up the strategic plan
- Share it so staff and volunteers know what the guiding strategy and overall direction is
- Be realistic and don't over stretch staff or resources
- Review and update the document as required — it is a living document so changes can be made — it's ok!
- Better decisions can be made that fit the circumstances in which you are working
- Your resources are used more efficiently
- Your performance is improved and more consistent
- Your interactions with people during the planning process help to break down barriers and improve understanding of the House and its role
- You can act on the basis of a shared set of values and understandings
- Everyone is clear on what the House is trying to achieve

The Neighbourhood House Program is funded through the Department of Communities. As part of the funding requirements each House works towards the four Program goals. Your strategic plan should align with these four program goals, which are:



Connect Community



Support People



Create Opportunity



Local Leadership

**BENEFITS OF CREATING A STRATEGIC PLAN:**

Some of the benefits for the House include:

- Everyone in the House obtains a better understanding of their role, goals and direction
- There is a greater focus on the more strategically important and relevant issues
- You are better able to stay in touch with and respond to changes occurring in your community
- Where are we now?
- What are we good at; what are our strengths?
- Where can improvements be made?
- Are there opportunities or threats the House should act on?
- Where do we want to be in three years' time?
- What difference do we want to make?
- Has our community changed in terms of its make-up, focus and needs?
- Where should we direct our limited resources?
- Do we have the people, and the capacity and commitment to achieve our goals?
- Do we need to set a new direction?



## CHAPTER EIGHT



# Understanding your constitution

All Neighbourhood Houses must be an incorporated association under Tasmanian law to be able to receive government funding through the Neighbourhood House Program Strategic Framework 2018-23.

All incorporated associations must by law have a constitution. The constitution sets out the rules for the association and documents:

- how your association operates
- the association's purpose
- the rights and responsibilities of members and office bearers

# Understanding your constitution

All Neighbourhood Houses must be an incorporated association under Tasmanian law to be able to receive government funding.

## YOUR CONSTITUTION

Your constitution is a legally binding document and it is important for the Board to work to the rules it sets out for your House. It should contain the essential rules only. Policies are used to guide other rules for the House.

The House should have copies of the Constitution available to give to new House members, Board members, stakeholders, and anyone else who's interested. The constitution is not a state secret so share it! Members should know the rules. They have the right to inspect and ask for a copy of the rules.

**The constitution outlines how your House and its members should operate. It contains information such as:**

- aims and purpose of the House
- membership process
- rights and responsibilities of members and office bearers
- how the office-bearers and members of the Board are elected or appointed
- how meetings are convened and conducted
- dissolution process



**All incorporated associations must by law have a constitution.**

**An incorporated association can:**

- operate regardless of changes to its membership
- enter into contracts
- apply for government grants
- accept gifts and donations

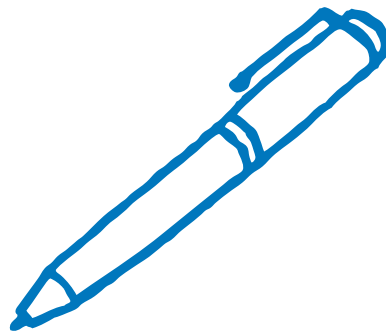
If the constitution is no longer a useful working document then changes can be made.

The procedures for changing your Constitution will be set out in the Constitution.

**Checklist for the Board about their Constitution**

- Can members understand it?
- Can the rules be followed?
- Is it up to date?
- Is it consistent with the law?

Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading provides a template Constitution, known as the **Model Rules**. Your House can either adopt or amend the Model Rules to suit.



## **A constitution is *the system of fundamental principles according to which a nation, state, association and the like is governed***

A constitution sets out the rules for the association and documents:

- How the association operates
- the association's purpose
- the rights and responsibilities of members and office bearers

### **INCORPORATION**

All Neighbourhood Houses must be an incorporated association under Tasmanian law to be able to receive government funding through the Neighbourhood House Program Strategic Framework 2018-23.

All incorporated associations must, by law, have a Constitution

#### **What is an incorporated association?**

Incorporated associations are:

- not-for-profit organisations
- voluntary
- suitable for community based groups
- an inexpensive way to give associations a legal identity which continues despite any membership changes
- registered with Consumer, Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1964* (CBOS sits within department of Justice, Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading)

#### **Advantages of Incorporation**

An incorporated association:

- can operate regardless of changes to its membership
- can accept gifts and donations
- can enter into contracts

- can apply for government grants
- have the automatic approval to solicit for charitable donations in the state of Tasmania

#### **Limitation of liability**

One of the principal reasons for incorporation is to gain the benefits of limited liability.

Unless it is specified in the association rules, a member of an incorporated association is not liable to contribute towards the:

- associations debt payments and liabilities or
- costs, charges and expenses associated with winding up the association

### **THE CONSTITUTION:**

The Constitution outlines how your House and its members should operate. It contains information such as:

- the aims and purpose of the House
- membership process
- rights and obligations of members
- how the office-bearers and members of the Board are elected or appointed
- how meetings are convened and conducted
- dissolution process

Your Constitution is a legally binding document and it is important for the Board to work to the rules it sets out for your House. It should contain the essential rules only. Policies are used to guide other rules for the House.

## Accessing your Constitution

The House should have copies of the Constitution available to give to new members, Board members, stakeholders, and anyone else who's interested. The Constitution is not a top secret document so share it!

Members have the right to inspect and ask for a copy of the Constitution at any time so they can be aware of the rules of the association

## Extras and add-ons

Not all of your rules need to be in the Constitution. In fact, only the essentials should be. You can set down other rules to govern other areas of House operations through policies and procedures. These will be binding on the House while they are in operation, but are much easier to revise and make changes to through a regular review process than making changes to a Constitution.

Remember, though, that you're bound by the law, and the Constitution, and your own policies and procedures, and *nothing else*.

## Amending your Constitution

A good Constitution should not get in the way of what you want to do. If your constitution is causing you difficulties, look at it and see if it is outdated and where changes could help. The procedures for changing your constitution will be set out in the constitution, and involve a special general meeting.

Ask a few questions:

- Can members understand it?
- Can the rules be followed?
- Is it up to date?
- Is it consistent with the law?

It's also true, though, that if you think that the constitution is causing issues such as difficulties getting a quorum, rotating Board members, etc. it could be worth considering whether the problem actually lies elsewhere, such as a poor Board induction process, late notice of meetings, factional issues.

## Changing a constitution:

- You pass a **Special Resolution** to change an association's constitution
- The association advertises its intention to make changes to its constitution
- A Special General Meeting is held to vote on the changes. If three quarters of the members present at the meeting vote in favour, the changes are passed.
- The Public Officer must notify CBOS of the amendments within one month by lodging a Notice of Special Resolution, and attach a copy of the changes
- Members are expected to accept and follow the association's constitution.

Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading provides a template constitution, known as the Model Rules. Your House Constitution should have been written adapting the Model Rules to suit at that time. If updating the constitution the Association can either adopt or amend the Model Rules to suit.

- An Association can use the *Associations Incorporation (Model Rules) Regulations 2017*
- Using model rules can save an association time and money drafting its own rules
- The Model Rules will apply unless inconsistent or excluded by rules drafted by the Association
- An Association does not have to use the Model Rules

## Amending the Model Rules

If you are using the template constitution it could be a good idea to make a few small changes.

1. **Put in your objectives.** Technically, you don't have to include your objectives or goals or mission in your constitution, however, including them makes it a lot easier for people to understand what you're on about.
2. **Put in criteria for membership.** The model rules say that every new member has to be approved by the Board. However, it doesn't say what the Board should take into account in making these decisions, and this can place the Board in a difficult position in the very rare circumstance that they do actually want to keep somebody out. If you put in something unspecific like "*Committed to the objectives of the organisation*" this gives you some cover.

## How well do you know your Constitution?

Board members need to read and understand the Constitution and ensure that the House is run in a manner that is consistent with it.

Ask a few questions:

- What are the objectives of the House?
- What are the rules for becoming a member of the House?
- Where is the register of members kept?
- How is the Board appointed?
- Who is eligible to vote at the annual general meeting?
- What is the quorum for a Board meeting?
- How often must Board meetings be held?
- What audit process is the House required to adhere to?
- When should the common seal be used?
- What is the House's dissolution process?

## CHAPTER NINE



# Risk management

Risk can be defined as the exposure to the chance of injury or loss; a hazard or dangerous chance.

Risk is the consideration of an adverse effect's chance of occurring and the size of its impact.

Risk is an everyday part of life. But you need to be aware of it, plan for it, and reduce it where you can. If a risk eventuates, these steps will make sure you are ready with an appropriate response.

# Risk Management

Risk can be defined as the likely chance of something happening and the seriousness of the consequences if it does happen.

**Risk management begins with three basic questions**

1. What can go wrong?
2. What will we do to minimise or prevent it?
3. What will we do if it happens?

**The House needs to comply with all legislative workplace health and safety requirements.**

**Areas of law to be compliant with to help reduce risk include:**

- Work Health and Safety Act
- Privacy Act
- Fair Work Act
- Anti-Discrimination Act
- Working with Vulnerable People Act
- Food Safety Laws

Risk is a part of everyday life. The responsibility of the Board is to ensure due care is taken to identify and address the potential risks that any reasonable person would consider exist within the House environment.



**Risk assessment is the consideration of an adverse effect's chance of occurring and the size of its impact.**

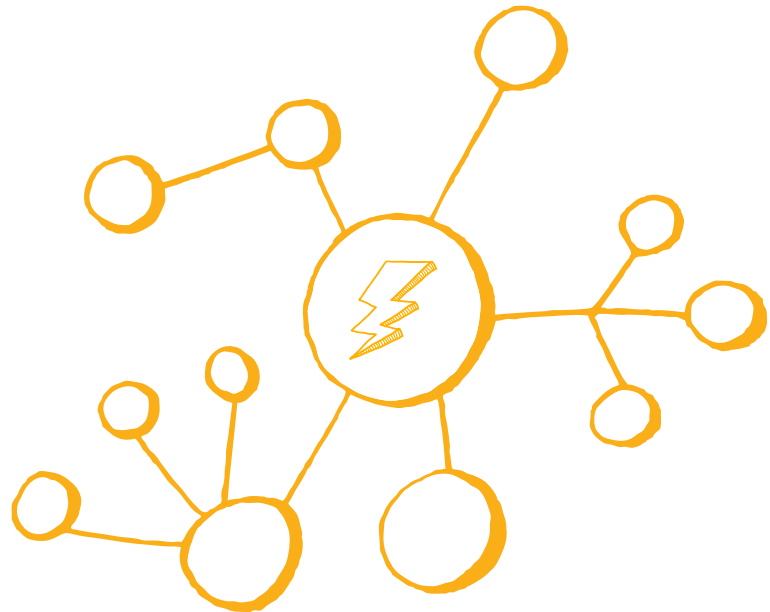
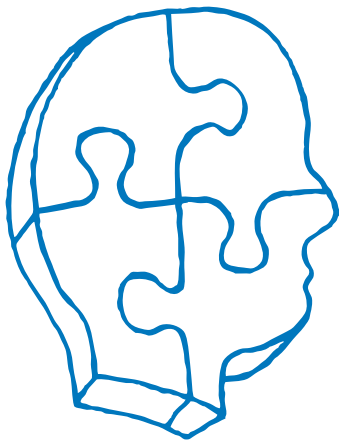
## **SYSTEMS & PROCEDURES**

Risk assessment procedures can be used to decide how risks will be dealt with, and the Board can then develop risk management systems, plans and procedures appropriate to the levels of identified risks to ensure risks are acceptable or avoided.

By putting in place an appropriate system of risk management and internal controls, Boards can reduce the impact of risks. Part of managing risk includes having appropriate policies and procedures in place.

**The Board** has primary responsibility for overseeing risk assessment and developing the appropriate policies and procedures for a risk management plan.

**The Manager** has primary responsibility for implementing the risk management plan, while the Board monitors the implementation.



## WHAT IS RISK?

Risk is an inevitable part of everything the House does. It is ok to have risks — they are an everyday part of life. But you need to be aware of them, plan for them, and reduce them where you can so that if they do happen you are ready with an appropriate response.

### Types of risk

There are many different types of risk, with work health and safety issues being the first to spring to mind for most people. Other types of risk include:

- Asset failure — the outdoor deck collapses
- Financial — you have a reduction in your grant
- Legal — someone sues the House after an injury
- Natural events — a storm damages the building
- People - challenging behaviours
- Public safety — poor outdoor lighting
- Regulatory requirements — complying with funding agreement
- Reputation of the House — Board members publicly dispute a Board decision
- Security — theft of personal information, or vandalism
- Technology — computer crashes losing important files
- Political circumstances — change in government policy
- Closure of a support service — funding runs out for the food program

### Risk management

Risk management means thinking systematically and strategically about possible risks, the consequences should they occur and what to do to minimise, or stop them.

Risk management is defined as 'the culture, processes and structures that are directed towards the effective management of potential opportunities and adverse effects.'

### Definitions

**Risk** is the likely chance of something happening and the seriousness of the consequence if it does happen.

**Consequence** is the outcome of an action, inaction, event or plan.

**Acceptable risk** is the amount of risk, including its type, the chance of it happening and the consequences that the House is prepared to accept or be exposed to at any point in time.

**Risk management** is the conscious awareness of all the risks involved, and the ease with which these can be managed. Of course, there can always be surprises with new risks arriving suddenly from nowhere — that's life! But the responsibility of the Board is to ensure due care is taken to identify and address the potential risks that any reasonable person would consider exist within the House environment.

## Why manage risk?

Good reasons for managing risk include:

- Reduces unexpected and costly surprises
- Helps to work out House insurance needs
- Provides better information for decision making
- Ensures the House is complying with regulations

Failure to manage risk can result in:

- Financial losses by the House
- Personal injury
- Loss of House reputation in community
- Criminal charges
- Environmental damage
- Public health issues
- Claims for financial compensation

## Identifying Risk

Risk management begins with 3 basic questions:

1. What can go wrong?
2. What will we do to minimise or prevent it?
3. What will we do if it happens?

Work through the following steps for any new project, event or initiative, as well as for the day to day operations of the House:

- Identify all the potential risks
- Rank them according to potential to occur and possible impact if they do
- Determine the existing quality of existing controls on the risks
- Develop new controls and strategies for the risks
- Monitor these

Some risks are obvious and can easily be identified, but it shouldn't be assumed that they are the only risks. Identifying less obvious risks involves *not* starting with a fixed point of view about what risk is. Gather different points of view about the perceived and potential risks by asking Board members, staff, volunteers, sessional contractors, other organisations and users of the House.

Use a risk management template undertake the following exercise:

1. Identify potential risk categories such as:
  - Asset register
  - Facilities
  - Strategic Plan
  - Work Health & Safety
  - HR
  - Financial
  - Image/reputation
2. List all major activities/ events/programs
  - Describe the perceived risk and how it might occur
  - Rate the potential to occur— high, medium, low
  - Rate impact if it does occur— high, medium, low
  - Keep the information in a Risk Register

In strategic and project planning, identify and document anticipated risks and how they will be handled including, but not limited to:

- budgeting and financial management
- availability of resources and assets
- feasibility and suitability of goals
- appropriateness of strategies
- implementation and delivery mechanisms

For any risk identified the Board needs to ask:

- Is the risk acceptable or unacceptable?
- Should we go ahead?
- How will the risk be fixed or reduced?
- When should the risk be dealt with?
- Who should do the necessary work?

### The Board's role in managing risk

The Board, together with the Manager, has primary responsibility for promoting and overseeing risk assessment and risk management for the House.

Risk management should be incorporated into the strategic and operational planning processes of the House.

- Agree on and monitor the 3 or 4 critical risks facing the House
- Approve and monitor the Risk Management policy
- Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) for the Manager that reflect risk monitoring and management
- Embed risk into the strategic discussions and analysis of the Board. Ask the risk question—'what are the risks inherent in this proposal, and how can we turn these risks into opportunities?'

All of these measures ensure that risk is an ongoing strategic process, not a compliance issue.

### Having a Risk Management policy

Houses need to commit to a proactive and effective risk management approach, integrating risk management into all that you do and fostering an environment where everyone involved with the House assumes responsibility for managing risks.

The purpose of having a Risk Management policy is to develop and maintain a culture of risk awareness by Board members, staff and volunteers, and avoid exposure to risk or reduce it to acceptable levels through risk management planning and implementation.

The governance, management and operations of the House need to be conducted in a manner to avoid, minimise or deal with risks that could adversely affect the health, safety and well-being of Board members, staff and volunteers.

The House needs to comply with all legislative workplace health and safety requirements and relevant House policies.

### Risk Assessment

Risks need to be assessed and ranked in a common and consistent manner.

Risk assessment can be used to decide how risks will be dealt with, and the Board can then develop risk management systems, plans and procedures appropriate to the levels of identified risks to ensure risks are acceptable or avoided.

Where necessary for the level of identified risk, develop risk management checklists, plans and procedures for:

- the physical assets of the House used by Board members, staff and volunteers
- projects, events and activities in which the House is involved
- the governance and management of the House

## Essential Steps

- Develop and implement an incident reporting system.
- Ensure all House policies and procedures are current, disseminated, implemented, complied with and monitored.
- Ensure all relevant insurance is taken out, kept current and at sufficient levels for the circumstances.
- Stay informed of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2012* and your role as a **p**erson **c**onducting a **b**usiness or **u**ndertaking (PCBU). This applies to both Board Members and the Manager as they are considered 'officers' under the Act because they participate directly in making key decisions about how the organisation is run and the activities undertaken. 'Officers' are responsible for addressing WH&S matters as outlined in this Chapter.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are familiar with and observe the House Risk Management policy and procedures, and the risk management systems, plans and procedures applicable to their work.
- Require all Board members, staff and volunteers to inform the Board and/or the Manager if they become aware of any risk not covered by the existing risk management systems, plans or procedures.

## Compliance reduces risk

Compliance means to act in accordance with rules or standards.

For Houses, being compliant means:

- Acting in accordance with your funding agreement—it is a legal document
- Being aware of, and tracking, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in your funding agreement. It is the Board's responsibility to meet these KPIs.
- Acting in accordance with your constitution
- Acting in accordance with the law

Areas of law to be compliant with include:

- Work Health and Safety Act
- Privacy Act
- Fair Work Act
- Anti-Discrimination Act
- Working with Vulnerable People Act
- Food Safety Laws

## Insurance

Insurance is a form of risk management primarily used to hedge against the risk of a contingent, uncertain loss. A major reason why you need insurance is to ensure that you are not forced to close if you are exposed to a claim.

There are a number of types of insurance, but make sure you only get the ones that you need. These include:

- Directors and Officers Liability
- Employment Practices Liability
- Public Liability
- Building (where applicable) and Contents
- Workers Compensation
- Professional Indemnity
- Volunteer



## CHAPTER TEN



# Maintaining a Healthy Board

We need to bring people onto “the team” well and develop teamwork through a good induction process, engaging together outside of Board meetings to build relationships, and by reviewing our performance as a “team” every year.

# Maintaining a Healthy Board

**We need to bring people onto “the team” well and develop teamwork**

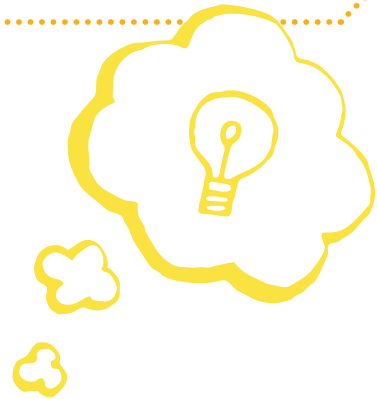
It helps to think about governance in sporting terms – a sporting team trains in between games to build teamwork, develop strategies and cohesion. If they just turn up on game day and “make it up” it doesn't go well. House staff get to work together daily, build formal and informal relationships and teamwork. However, often Boards expect to just turn up every four to six weeks for a couple of hours and magically and seamlessly work together.

We need to bring people onto “the team” well and develop teamwork through a good induction process, engaging together outside of Board meetings to build relationships, and by reviewing our performance as a “team” every year.

“Often Boards expect to just turn up every four to six weeks for a couple of hours and magically and seamlessly work together.

## Recruitment

- Neighbourhood House Boards must come from people who live and/or work in your community, (under the Neighbourhood House Strategic Framework) so recruiting a Board that has a blend of necessary skills needed AND local people who are willing to learn and develop governance skills is essential.
- Recruit people who are open to question, to learn and to think outside the square
- Recruit according to the most benefit to the House, not by popularity or friendship circles



### Staying healthy

- Conduct an annual performance review of the Board. Ask:

**How are we going?**

**What should we start doing?**

**What should we stop doing?**

- Remember to use the Mission filter to decide what new work to take on or what to stop doing.
- Identify pre-existing relationships, both good and bad, with staff, volunteers and other Board members. Be honest – this will help to create open, transparent dealings when making decisions with your Board hat on.
- The Board is not static, nor caught on a mouse wheel, going round and round doing the same thing all the time. It should be dynamic and pro-active in how it goes about its work.

### Induction

- Starts before the first Board meeting
- Is an on-going process of support and mentoring
- Involves providing a good, up-to-date package of information to the new member and a process to step them through it
- Ensures the new member can more easily grasp the processes, procedures and aims of the House.
- The faster they become comfortable within their new role, the faster they will contribute



## TEAMWORK

It helps to think about governance in sporting terms—a sporting team trains in between games to build teamwork, develop strategies and cohesion. If they just turn up on game day and “make it up” it doesn’t go well. House staff get to work together daily, build formal and informal relationships and teamwork. However often Boards expect to just turn up every four to six weeks for a couple of hours and magically and seamlessly work together.

We need to bring people onto “the team” well and develop teamwork through a good induction process, engaging together outside of Board meetings to build relationships, and by reviewing our performance as a “team” every year.

### Recruitment and Selection of new Board members

- Remember that House Boards must come from people who live and/or work in your community, (under the Neighbourhood House Strategic Framework) so recruiting a Board that has a blend of necessary skills needed AND local people who are willing to learn and develop governance skills is essential.
- Know what skills are needed and target individuals who could bring those skills, or are prepared to learn the required skills
- Recruit according to the most benefit to the House, not by popularity or friendship circles
- Recruit people who are open to question, to learn and to think outside the square

When recruiting new Board members:

- Ensure the time commitment required is clear and explained
- Ensure expectations are clear, such as attendance at meetings, support of events, Board culture
- Know what skills are needed and target individuals who could bring those skills, or are prepared to learn the required skills
- Recruit according to the most benefit to the House, not by popularity or friendship circles
- Recruit people who don't have a fixed point of view or personal agenda
- Recruit people who are open to question, to learn and to think outside the square

## INDUCTION OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS

### Induction Aims

Michelle Swallow of Leadership and Change Consultants says the most important things for Boards to do is provide a thorough and supportive induction process.

The purpose of induction to a Board is to provide new Board members with the necessary information, resources and paperwork to assist them with their role. It is the first step in building a relationship between them, the President, fellow Board members, the Manager and the wider organisation.

Induction starts before the first meeting. It is a process over a period of time and not just the events which lead up to the first Board meeting.

Induction is usually the responsibility of the President. It can also include the Manager and a nominated mentor from within the Board.

## Developing an Effective Induction Process

It is important to start your Board's relationship with a new member on a positive note. Some Boards make the mistake of signing up a new member, handing them a manual and then largely forgetting about them, assuming they will just get on with the job. While many new Board members may well do just that, you can help to make the settling-in process a little less daunting by having procedures in place to welcome and introduce new members to their role.

### Why?

It is of utmost importance for your House that your Board functions as a team. Having one or some members who do not yet feel part of the team can badly impact on the effectiveness of the Board. The new Board member may be "green" but they will still have a vote—and you want to make sure that they know what they're voting on.

An induction process will also help to ensure that the new member can more easily grasp the processes, procedures and aims of the House, which will in turn help to boost their confidence. And the faster a new Board member becomes comfortable within their new role, the faster they will contribute.

Your Board also needs to get to know its new member's strengths. An effective induction process can help in this process.

### When?

Your induction process should start straight away. Don't leave it for weeks or months. You need to strike while the new member's enthusiasm is at its peak. Confirming an appointment and then cutting them adrift will probably leave them feeling that maybe their services are not so in demand after all.

While it is important to start the induction immediately, don't do it all at once. Bombarding a new Board member with too much information can leave them feeling overwhelmed and frustrated. You should adopt a "drip-feed" approach. Hand over the Board manual straight away but then give them a few days or weeks to digest it before asking them for questions or feedback.

### Who?

You can involve staff members in your induction or orientation process, but the Board should lead the process. It is an excellent idea to offer the services of an experienced Board member as a mentor for the new addition. The mentor should be able to offer insights into aspects of the running of the Board that may be confusing at first—why meetings are held and how they are held; insights into the strengths of individual Board members; explanations about issues with a complicated background, etc. The mentor should be available to answer questions the new Board member has outside of Board meetings and act as a sounding board for ideas or issues the new member may want to test before bringing up in a full meeting.

### How?

Your induction process can be formal or informal. Elements can include:

#### Initial contact

The President makes contact as soon as the Board has confirmed a new member's appointment. Call them to let them know. Congratulate them and be positive. Tell them you will contact them again soon with more information about their new role.

#### The Board manual

Forward them a copy of your House's Board/Governance manual. The manual will serve as an initial introduction to the group as well as an ongoing reference.

It should include:

- Background information about the group;
- Official documents, such as the constitution, the strategic plan, policies, budgets and an annual report;
- Biographical and contact information about Board members, and staff (if appropriate);
- Meeting schedule and calendar of upcoming events;
- Information about Board and Board members' roles and responsibilities.

Give new members some time to digest the manual and then invite them to ask questions.

### Make the introductions

Introduce the new member to other members of the Board and the Manager as soon as possible after their appointment. Allowing new Board members the chance to get to know their colleagues in a more informal setting can help lay the groundwork for a more amicable and productive Boardroom relationship.

### Roles and responsibilities

Draw the new member's attention to the roles and responsibilities of the Board in general, and the roles and responsibilities they will be expected to undertake as an individual. Discuss any concerns they may have.

### Briefing

Take the new member through the minutes of recent meetings and brief them on issues the Board is dealing with at the moment, or will be looking at in the future. Allow them time to digest the information and ask questions.

Find out what they want to know more about—they could need more information about the House's programs, for example, or NHT, or about their legal or ethical responsibilities.

### Take them on a tour

Invite new Board members to take part in a tour of your House's facilities and let them see your programs in action. Introduce them to staff, volunteers and community members who use the House's services. Having a first-hand "picture" of what the House does will help them make better decisions when it comes to voting on issues affecting the House.

Show them where the Board meets, where they can park their car or catch the bus, where the kitchen is, where the toilets are, where the photocopier and other office equipment is (and the rules for its use).

### Reverse the learning

Make your induction process "two-way", ensuring your Board also gets to know its new member. Find out about the new member's interests, strengths, skills and what they hope to gain from their Board experience. This will make for a more constructive Board and will be useful when it comes to allocating responsibilities and places on sub-committees.

### Invite feedback

Once the new member has settled in, invite them to give some feedback on your Board's induction process. Ask them which parts of the process were useful and which were not, what they needed more of, and what they needed less of. Use their comments to improve your induction process in the future.

Source: [ourcommunity.com.au](http://ourcommunity.com.au)

## What should be included in an induction and who is responsible for this?

The following table summarises what you might include in your induction program for new Board members.

Issue	Activity	Who
<b>Welcome</b>	Welcome and introduction to the Board	President
<b>Governance</b>	Explanation of Roles and Responsibilities and Programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History of organisation</li> <li>• Vision and mission</li> <li>• Values, and philosophy</li> <li>• Board and subcommittee structure</li> <li>• Organisational structure</li> <li>• Tour of the House</li> <li>• Sector information</li> <li>• Acronyms</li> </ul>	President and Manager
<b>Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial discussion re: contribution</li> <li>• Outline of performance review process</li> <li>• Training needs analysis</li> </ul>	President
<b>Internal relationships</b>	Introduction to staff and volunteers and outline of each service/program	President and Manager
<b>Strategic planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give copy of strategic plan</li> <li>• Discuss strategic plan and progress</li> </ul>	President and Manager
<b>Governance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide policies and procedures:</li> <li>• Expenses</li> <li>• Conflict of interest</li> <li>• Risk policy</li> <li>• Code of conduct</li> <li>• Finance and audit</li> <li>• Work Health and Safety</li> </ul>	President and Manager
<b>Governance</b>	Give copies of relevant meeting notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schedule of dates of Board meetings</li> <li>• Give copy of last year's Board minutes</li> <li>• Give copy of Board/Governance manual, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Constitution</li> <li>– Contact details of Board members</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	President and Manager
<b>Finance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give copy of annual report and accounts</li> <li>• Give copy of most recent budget report</li> </ul>	Chair of Audit and Risk Committee and Finance Officer/Manager

Source: Informed by Leading Governance Checklist

## Succession planning for the Board

- Identify existing skills of individual Board members, and needed skills by individuals
- What skills would be lost if an individual left?
- What crucial skills would need to be replaced?
- Where does the knowledge sit? Is it documented or in someone's head? What if that someone leaves?

## Maintaining ongoing health of the Board

- Have an ongoing review process for meeting procedures. Ask questions such as: Was the meeting well-structured and run? Was there enough information in the meeting papers to inform discussion?
- Conduct an annual performance review of the Board. Ask: How are we going? What should we start doing? What should we stop doing?
- Remember to use the Mission filter to decide what new work to take on or what to stop doing.
- Do a skills analysis of Board members, and upskill members as necessary. For example, everyone should understand the financial reports so do some intentional training to ensure that they do.
- It is okay to have expectations of Board members, and a planned response if situations arise where members choose to not follow these expectations. Ensure these expectations and responses are discussed and introduced in good times so the Board has a clear process to draw on in difficult times and therefore avoid a knee-jerk reaction to a toxic situation.

- Maintain a Register of Interest for Board members, including commercial interests, membership of other organisations and the declaration of friendships and family relationships. Identify pre-existing relationships, both good and bad, with staff, volunteers and other Board members. Be honest—this will help to create open, transparent dealings when making decisions with your Board hat on.

The Board is not static, nor caught on a mouse wheel, going round and round doing the same thing all the time. It should be dynamic and pro-active in how it goes about its work.

## Personal vs Professional

Many firm friendships are established when people engage with a House. This is wonderful, but when an individual becomes a Board member they need to be able to separate the personal friendship they have with other volunteers, staff members and House users from the professional role they are taking on as a Board member where they will need to make unbiased, objective decisions for the benefit of the House as a whole.

Decisions and actions should never be influenced by friendships or family connections that individuals have within a House. The dynamics of an existing relationship may change depending which hat a Board member has on today. It is okay to make it clear to friends whether you are involved at the House today for your personal enjoyment or are at an event in your official capacity as a Board member.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN



## Role of NHT — the Peak Body

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania (NHT) is the peak body supporting the network of 35 Neighbourhood Houses located across the state.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and each individual House are independent entities.

NHT does not have authority over the Houses, and instead represents and supports Houses, networking them together as a State-wide community to support each other and collaborate.

# Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania

## Who are we?

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania (NHT) is the peak body supporting the network of 35 Neighbourhood Houses located across the state.

Neighbourhood Houses Tasmania and each individual House are independent entities. NHT does not have authority over the Houses, and instead represents and supports Houses, networking them together as a State-wide community to support each other and collaborate. Our goal is to help Houses do what they do best—use a community development approach to support local communities in ways that make a real difference in people's lives.

NHT is a small team comprising of an Executive Officer, several part-time workers and volunteers. Like each House, NHT is governed by a Board of Management with its members elected from the north, north-west and southern regions of Tasmania. The Board is comprised of staff, committee members, and volunteers from Houses, ensuring that the governance and management of NHT is always focused on the issues that really matter to our Member Houses and their local communities.

NHT is funded by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) under the Community Support Program, Peak Body Service.

## What we do

The services and resources that we provide to our members include:

### Training and events

- Hold the annual NHT Conference as a 3 day training and development opportunity for Houses staff and volunteers
- Organise and support regular regional meetings of Houses
- Conduct face-to-face governance training for Boards
- Coordinate regional networking and training opportunities
- Partner with other community organisations to deliver relevant programs
- Facilitate or broker training
- Source and broker project funding around common Houses priorities eg Everyday Literacy 10 year TCF grant

### Information and news

- Regular newsletter, updates, news and information for member Houses
- Newsletters, website and Facebook page
- NHT website—a key information resource for our members including a policies and procedures toolbox
- Governance resources including our Governance Handbook
- Confidential support to Houses on management issues



## Advocacy and lobbying

We support Houses with advocacy and lobbying through:

- Coordinated joint marketing, promotion and group purchase initiatives, eg Relationships Australia & Quartz Consulting (HR support)
- Lobbying to local, state and federal governments on behalf of our members
- Liaison with the major funding body, the Department of Communities Tasmania
- Lobby for funding and resources
- Representation on committees and boards within Tasmania, and on the national Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Community Centres Association (ANHCA)
- Sourcing and brokering funding on behalf of the network
- Supporting Houses to measure and report on their impact in communities
- Auspice projects that enable the common priorities of Houses eg Eating with Friends
- Promote Houses and their achievements

## What we are NOT

- We are not part of government
- We are not in authority or "in charge"—our role is to support your House
- We are not an arm of government. We are funded independently in the same way your House is.

## Hobart-based

Come and visit us—you are always welcome to book our facilities for an event, or to come to one of our famous and friendly training sessions.

We are located in Derwent Park, Hobart. We have meeting and training room facilities that your House can use, and our Southern regional meetings are held here. You may also want to use our facilities to have Board meetings away from the hustle and bustle of your House at times, such as for planning sessions.

We also have a wonderful teleconference capacity should you want to hook up with other Houses.









Neighbourhood Houses  
Tasmania

[www.nht.org.au](http://www.nht.org.au) | [nht@nht.org.au](mailto:nht@nht.org.au)  
[facebook.com/neighbourhoodhouses](https://facebook.com/neighbourhoodhouses)