



# Leadership Lessons for Committee Success

## Collaborative and Effective Committees

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**Conference - June 2025**  
**Armidale**

# "The Committee" -- Leslie Lipson

Oh, give me your pity!  
I'm on a committee,  
Which means that from morning to  
night,

We attend and amend  
And contend and defend  
Without a conclusion in sight.

We confer and concur,  
We defer and demur,  
And reiterate all of our thoughts.

We revise the agenda  
With frequent addenda  
And consider a load of reports.

We compose and propose,  
We suppose and oppose,  
And the points of procedure are  
fun,

But though various notions  
Are brought up as motions,  
There's terribly little gets done.

We resolve and absolve.  
But we never dissolve,  
Since it's out of the question for us  
To bring our committee  
To end like this ditty,  
Which stops with a period, thus.

# What is your purpose?

A Committee can be the governing body of an association or a subcommittee.

A 'governing body typically establishes subcommittees:

Which are either:

- A standing committee which is ongoing;
- An ad-hoc committee taking on a special project for a limited amount of time.
- Don't let the tail wag the dog!
- **Regardless the same principles apply.**



# Committees can be great!

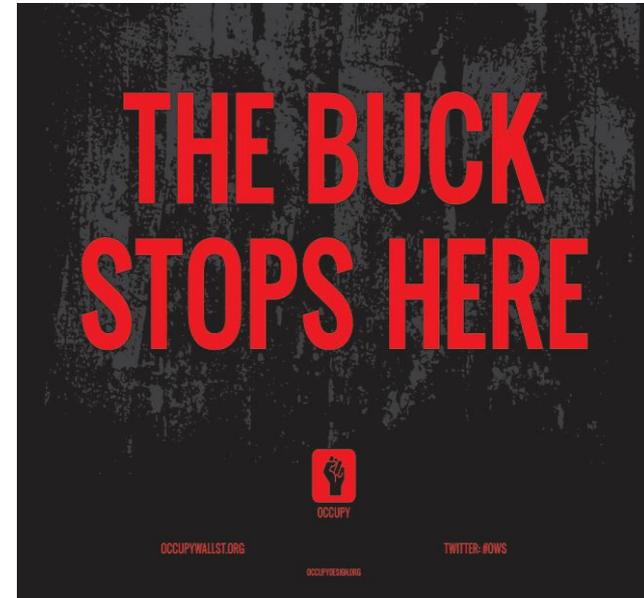
1. Bring together a cross section of knowledge and experience to generate value
2. Provide valuable advice, recommendations and undertake delegated workload
3. Provide opportunities for members to:
  - a) Get involved with the association
  - b) Contribute to their expertise
  - c) Develop leadership skills
  - d) Network with others with shared interests
  - e) Make friends!
4. Produce a successful event or outcome!



# Let's get serious

If you are the governing body of your association there are legal responsibilities:

- Fiduciary duty to act in the best interests of the association
- Care and diligence to ensure good, safe decisions are made
- Not misuse position or information for personal gain
- Not allow the organisation to trade insolvent
- Manage conflicts of interest



# The Guardrails – Constitution, Rules, ToR

1. Clear and relevant, not ambiguous, not operational
2. Include required tax rules to be eligible for tax benefits
3. Should be reviewed every few years
4. Constitutions should enable a Committee, not restrict them
5. The Committee members should know what is in it!
6. Subcommittees must have clear Terms of reference
7. Clear Code of Conduct



# Some committee pitfalls

1. Not understanding the role
2. Cliques forming
3. 'Representation' vs common purpose
4. Bringing external conflicts
5. Unclear delegations and authority to make decisions
6. Poor culture
7. Burnout
8. Entrenchment and lack of renewal of members
9. Misunderstanding of relationship with staff, if any



# Why do people join Committees?

- They are ‘joiners’ – it’s in the DNA
- They want to make a difference
- They want to be more influential
- It looks good on their CV
- They felt obliged
- Personal development
- An opportunity to leverage their own interests
- They enjoy the social interaction
- They are angry about something
- It is suited to their area of expertise



# Size Matters!



VS



Many hands make light work

Too many cooks spoil the broth

# Attracting new Committee Members – and making them stick

1. Committee Members benefit from personal development, training, networking
2. Efficient structures that maximise the use of a Committee Member's time and facilitate ability to participate
3. Clear expectations of level of commitment expected and limits
4. Clear purpose and direction
5. Encouragement to join for the RIGHT reasons
6. Publicly acknowledge and thank
7. REPUTATION IS KEY



# KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

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# Good Financial Governance

1. **Not just the Treasurer's job!**
2. Committees must know at least the 'big picture' of finances
3. Aware of financial history
4. Maintain high standard of financial reporting: timely and accurate
5. Budgets must follow and be linked to Plans
6. Have documented financial delegations and monitor
7. Get professional advice on investments and other important decisions
8. Be alert to the risk of fraud



# Risk Management

## What you should ask:

- What could happen that would affect our ability to meet our objectives?
- How likely is it to occur (**likelihood**)?
- How serious might it be (**impact**)?
- What should we do to reduce the risk (**controls**)?
- How can we be prepared to respond to problems?
- How do we prevent voiding of our insurance?



**Everybody's business!**

# THE ROLE OF CHAIRPERSON

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# As a leader - who are You??



# Ideal personal characteristics of Chair

1. First among equals
2. Emotional intelligence
3. Able to reconcile opposing views
4. Strength and clarity of purpose
5. Ability to lead and motivate
6. Impartial
7. Do the work required
8. Self aware (knows when to step aside)



# Committee Members Behaving Badly

1. Missing, being late and/or being unprepared for meetings
2. Dominating discussions or going off on irrelevant tangents
3. Distracted during meetings
4. 'Pushing their own barrow'
5. Bullying, intimidation and abuse
6. Not supporting meeting decisions
7. Not following up on assigned tasks
8. Breaking confidentiality
9. Incessant emails between meetings
10. Directing staff, if any



# Chair's role in Committee culture & performance

1. Setting the tone and being clear on expectations
2. Building trust amongst Committee and forming a team.
3. Being consistent
4. Encouraging all Committee members to contribute (disagree without being disagreeable)
5. Bringing Committee to consensus (where possible)
6. Be willing to act quickly and respectfully to address poor behaviours



# EFFECTIVE MEETINGS, DECISIONS & MINUTES

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# Before Committee Meetings

1. Advance notice to Committee members of timing and processes
2. Prepare and circulate agenda papers to allow sufficient preparation time
3. Chair (and key others) meet prior to the meeting to discuss agenda and to flag important issues
4. On the day, check that all arrangements are in place
5. Using technology? - check before the meeting



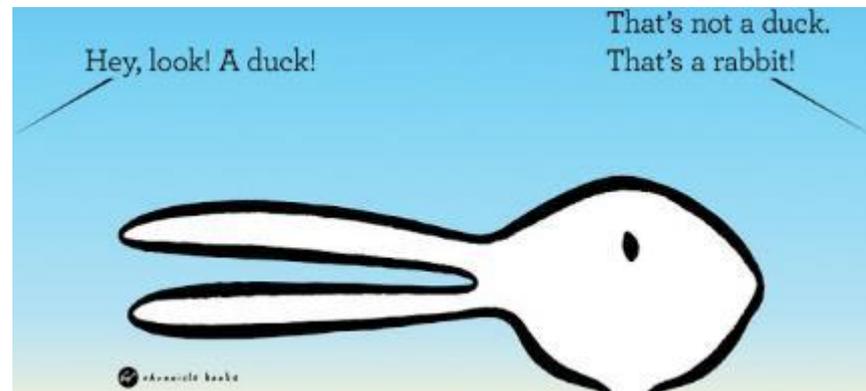
# Agenda preparation – the key to a productive meeting

1. ***Agenda should follow the purpose***
2. Chair may invite other Committee members to contribute agenda items.
3. Structure the agenda to optimise the time spent on important items and decision-making
4. Avoid ‘business arising’ but consider an Action Tracker
5. If possible, specify the expected outcome: decision, discussion or for-information only
6. Use “Other business” with care



# Managing conflict of interest

1. Fundamental need to act in best interest of association
2. Association's codes of conduct provided guidance
3. Understand the difference between an interest and a conflict.
4. Involves a relationship of real substance to the matter under consideration either direct or indirect.
5. Capacity to influence the decision (vote) of a Committee Member
6. Must be able to say decisions have been made fairly and impartially
7. Have a standing agenda item on conflicts
8. Have a clear management process in place.



# Chairing Meetings

1. Agendas – keep it on track and on time
2. Concentrate on items that require discussion and decision
3. Include time for social interaction
4. Manage conflicts of interest
5. Sense the flow of the meeting: speed up? go into detail? kill it?
6. Ensure full participation and facilitate decision making
7. Manage behaviour of committee members
8. Chairs need personal authority, attendees' respect



# Decision-making



1. All Committee members should be prepared and involved:
  - Read any papers beforehand
  - Contribute to the discussion
  - Ask questions
  - Be aware of personal biases and “group think”
2. Robust but respectful discussion
3. Once the Committee makes a decision:
  - All Members should support the decision “cabinet solidarity”
  - Maintain confidentiality
  - Don’t keep revisiting the decision unless something has substantially changed

# The deadlocked decision

- What if the Committee is evenly split?
- How is this resolved?
- Should a chair have a casting vote? No!



# Committee minutes

1. Minutes show attendance, date and decisions
2. No names no, pack drill
3. Minutes are not verbatim transcript
4. Minutes record decisions and summary of context and logic, but do not attribute individual comments unless formally requested
5. Do minutes live rather than audio record
6. Minutes are confidential



# Evaluation

- Committee evaluates itself annually
- Individual committee members should be asked to:
  - self-assess own performance
  - assess performance of the Committee including effectiveness, working relationships, quality of papers, workload
  - check the purpose is still valid



# Conclusion

1. Set good committee practices before problems occur
2. Have a good induction
3. Focus on succession planning
4. Keep Rules and TOR relevant, clear and current
5. Use meeting agendas to drive decision-making and minutes to inform action
6. Have a purpose and plan that is referred to often
7. Establish roles, responsibilities and boundaries of Committee & staff (if any)
8. Have some fun!



Thank you....



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