

## **Procedures for Meetings and Decision-Making of the Byron Ballina Greens**

### **1. Preamble: Task Descriptions**

**Convenor:** The convenor is appointed at the Annual General Meeting. The Convenor makes the practical arrangements such as organising the venue and providing the necessary resources, including a white-board. Assist and provide feedback to new facilitators.

**Secretary:** The Secretary prepares the agenda and assigns draft times to each item.

**Minute-taker:** The minute-taker is appointed at the beginning of the meeting. The minute-taker note down the decisions arising out of the meeting, and creates a task list for the next meeting. At a minimum the minutes should record the names of those attending, the topics discussed any documents referred to and the decisions reached.

**Timekeeper:** The timekeeper is appointed at the beginning of the meeting. The timekeeper draws the group's attention to occasions when the time limit set for discussion of an item is exceeded. The group can extend the time limits.

**Facilitator:** The facilitator is usually appointed at the previous meeting. S/he should read and understand the procedures in this document. The facilitator helps the members of the group decide what they want to accomplish at the meeting. S/he takes the responsibility for reminding the group of its task, tests for consensus and suggests processes which the group may accept or reject. The facilitator must be aware of the agenda prior to meeting, have read the background papers and know which member of the group placed an item on the agenda, so that person can be called upon to speak to that item. The facilitator is not a chair; the role is not to direct the meeting.

### **2. Procedures Prior to the Meeting**

- The Secretary prepares an agenda ten days before the due date of the meeting after consulting with the other office bearers.
- Members of the BBG may also add items to the agenda at least ten days prior to the due date of the meeting by notifying the convenor.
- The agenda should be distributed to all members' five days before the due date of the meeting.
- The convenor should liaise with the facilitator to assist the facilitator in preparing for the meeting.

### **3 Meeting Protocols**

- Members who oppose a proposal are encouraged to contact the proposer direct or via the Secretary before the meeting to try to clarify any differences.
- No smoking in the meeting room or outside where the smoke blows inside
- Meetings shall observe the 15 points of safe meeting practice
- Meetings start at 6.30 pm with a social half hour
- Meetings end by 9.30 pm unless there is consensus that it continues after that time.

#### **4 Agenda Items**

It is urged that anyone placing an item on the agenda should supply the convenor with:

- some basic information such as: Is the item for information only, or does it require a decision from the meeting? If the item requires a decision from the meeting, a proposal should be submitted (which may include the suggestion of the formation of a sub-committee to report back at a subsequent meeting).
- A realistic estimate of the time to be taken in dealing with the item at the meeting (including discussion) should also be included.

#### **5 Procedures at the Meeting**

A suggested procedure for the meeting (subject to alteration by the consensus of group) is:

1. Appoint minute-taker, and timekeeper.
2. Acknowledgement of traditional custodians.
3. Welcome to new attendees.
4. Those present be asked to announce their names and town of residence.
5. Apologies noted.
6. Circulation of the Fifteen Points of Safe Meeting Practice (see attached).
7. Facilitator asks if there is any additional business to be raised. (It is at this time that emergency and/or important items which could not be notified to the convenor ten days in advance may be added to the agenda. The proposer of an emergency and/or important item should consider supplying the meeting with sufficient copies of a statement of what the issue is and a proposal.)
8. Confirm draft allocation of time to each item.
9. Set the order that items are discussed. The order of items and the time allocated should be written on a white board. Ordinarily the order of business will be:
10. Minutes of Previous Meeting to be confirmed.
11. Business Arising from the Minutes.
12. Correspondence.
13. 30 min discussion item
14. 1 min announcements (no discussion) just prior to mid meeting break
15. 15 min mid meeting break at a convenient time
16. General Business.
17. Convenor, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Officer Reports
18. Report from Councillors.
19. 10 min spot for reports on local issues
20. Other Business.
21. Time and venue for next meeting.
22. Appointment of Facilitator for next Meeting.
23. Closure of Meeting.

#### **6 Consensus Decision-Making**

The Byron Ballina Greens follow consensus decision-making. In consensus decision-making, someone puts forward a proposal. The proposal is then taken up, added to, or challenged. When it is apparent that most views have been expressed and new information has been given, the facilitator or someone else states the conclusion to which the meeting appears to be moving. The facilitator may test for consensus. The facilitator should say: The proposal is X. Does anyone object? Do we all agree?

If all participants agree, a full consensus is achieved.

If disagreement is apparent, objections and concerns should be heard and the process continued until a proposal is endorsed by all. The decision reached may not completely satisfy everyone, but it must be one that all are willing to live with. In some cases it may be appropriate to record the objections and names of the objectors in the minutes.

### **7 Escape From Deadlock: Voting Procedure**

BBG is committed to consensus, so voting should be a last resort option, invoked only when there is an overwhelming need for the meeting to reach a decision on a substantive matter. Overwhelming need is demonstrated by:

1. Urgency: such as an external deadline
2. Overwhelming Advantage or Disadvantage in making a decision on the matter at this meeting
3. Re-referral: where a matter has already been referred back from a previous meeting which failed to reach consensus.

In the case of a deadlock, the Byron Ballina Greens have adopted a procedure modifying consensus: The steps are:

1. Finalise the wording of a substantive proposal.
2. Take a straw vote on whether or not there is an overwhelming need to move from consensus to voting at this meeting
3. If necessary, as a procedural motion, the facilitator takes a vote of whether to vote on the substantive proposal. Three-quarters of those present must be in favour.
4. Vote on the substantive proposal. Three quarters of those present must be in favour for the motion to be carried.