



## **Meetings Made Manageable**

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Most of the time in our grassroots community groups, committee meetings and general meetings run pretty smoothly, and we get away with being fairly informal in the way we manage our meetings.

But sometimes it is necessary to formalise proceedings, whether because we are dealing with particularly important matters, or perhaps we need to 'manage' the behaviour of attendees at the meeting.

So it can be useful to have an understanding of at least some of the basic formal meeting procedures.

Motions – when you want the group to take a particular action, you need to move a motion. The Chairperson shouldn't move motions (as they are supposed to be impartial) but may suggest that someone else do so. Once the motion has been moved and seconded, people can speak to the motion if they wish. Each person can speak only once to a motion (and for a specified time), after which the 'mover' has a right of reply. The motion is then voted upon.

Voting – the Chairperson may call for the vote to be taken in one of a number of ways. Calling for people to say 'Aye' or 'Nay' to indicate their vote may be sufficient. A show of hands giving a general sense of the majority may be necessary in some cases. Or it may be prudent to actually count the hands if the matter is particularly contentious.

If meetings become heated you may need to enforce the requirement for people to speak 'through the chair'. That is, rather than participants slogging it out in an argument across the room, all comments must be addressed to the chair. This can also be a time where you may need to remind attendees that people can speak only once to a motion and that while that person is speaking, other people need to remain quiet!

While these are commonly accepted rules for meetings, it may be helpful for your group to put them (and others) in writing in a Meetings Procedures document so everyone is clear about the expectations.

There are some great resources around too – one in particular that I like is a simple little book called 'Chairing and Running Meetings' by Nina Valentine.

And don't forget to ensure any meeting requirements included in your organisations' Rules are also observed