



GUIDE TO THE ROLE OF
PRESIDENT



Australasian Land & Groundwater Association

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This guide is designed as a starting point and ongoing reference material for those who take on the role as **President** of the **Australasian Land & Groundwater Association Inc (ALGA)**.

It is not designed as a technical guide, rather to point you in the right direction in the first few weeks and months.

The president of an association is vested with all the powers generally given to the chief executive officer of a corporation. It is generally presumed that he or she will preside at all meetings of the board and the membership. The president will execute contracts, orders and other documents in the name of the association as its agent. When signing documents, the president should indicate the capacity in which he or she is signing in order to avoid any personal liability since the president's signature, under most circumstances, will bind the association under a doctrine of inherent powers.

The president also assumes general charge of the day-to-day administration of the association and has the authority to order specific actions in furtherance of the board's policies. The president serves as spokesman for the board of directors in most matters relating to general association business. Like all officers of the association, the president has an affirmative duty to carry out the responsibilities of the office in the best interests of the association.



Australasian Land & Groundwater Association

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Who are members of the Committee?

The Committee includes executive members, nominated members, elected members and co-opted members. This sounds rather complicated but the list looks like this:

Executive Committee members:

- President
- Immediate Past President
- Vice President
- Secretary
- Treasurer and the
- Secretariat.

Other Committee Roles:

- State or Region Representative
(Qld, NSW-Sydney, NSW-Hunter, Vic, SA, WA, NZ)
- ACLCA/ALGA Coordinator
- Newsletter Editor
- Regulator Representative
- Ordinary Board Member

Co-opted Members

- Members co-opted by the Executive Committee.
(Other people who the Executive believe are important to the Committee's work.)

- ie AIDTC Representative

That sounds like quite a good team to help you, but remember they will be looking to you for leadership.



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Preparing for Committee Meetings

There are three key matters for the President to attend to before a meeting:

(i) co-ordinate with the Secretary and Secretariat to agree to the agenda

The starting point for each meeting must be the outcomes from the previous meeting. These ongoing issues, together with any new issues, will form the key elements of the agenda. There are also likely to be some routine issues due to the time of the year, although it helps to keep these to a minimum.

It is important to encourage all Committee members to tell the Secretary and/or Secretariat at an early stage about any issues that they may wish to raise. This ensures that the meeting can be planned and that issues are included in the agenda. This means that others can think about them and that you, as Chairman, can allocate them time for consideration at the meeting.

Meetings are held monthly via a teleconference, generally same time and day each calendar month.

In planning the agenda you will need to think about:

- the information that members will need in order to come to the meeting prepared (Discussion can focus on the issues if members start with a common understanding. A full explanation either as part of the agenda or in a supporting paper is essential)

(ii) receive the papers

When you receive the papers from the Secretary you know that the papers have gone out and that all members have access to the same information.

(iii) decide how you will tackle each item as Chairman

A lot will depend on peoples understanding of the issue from the agenda, how you introduce each topic and who, if anyone, you brief to lead the discussion.

Whilst you should not prejudge the outcome of a discussion it makes sense to have a clear idea of what is needed. Are you seeking:

- a briefing for the Committee?
- a decision?
- a range of options for further investigation?
- views and/or ideas?

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You also need to be aware of the potential for the Committee to waste its members time by:

- tackling issues that are not part of its business
- straying into the realms of 'red herrings'
- becoming repetitive.

It helps if you time the agenda, allocating a portion of time to each item. In this way you will be able to monitor progress and ensure that the matters of real substance get the largest amount of time.

(iv) working through the agenda

It makes sense to follow tradition and accept apologies for absence and to agree the minutes of the previous meeting first.

Try not to be drawn into discussion on 'matters arising from the minutes'. It is far better to ensure that any item discussed previously that is likely to require further discussion has its own place on the agenda.

Introduce each item clearly, ensuring that everyone is aware as to:

- why is it on the agenda
- the background, including any supporting papers
- what it is hoped to achieve.

Discourage 'tabled papers'. They simply cause a lull in the meeting while people read them. People read at different speeds and so the discussion can so easily start with some Committee members not up to speed.

Next, ask the person directly involved with the issue to speak. Then ensure that everyone who wishes to speak on the topic has the opportunity. One turn each before allowing people to come back in is a good rule of thumb, although it can be helpful to ensure that questions are answered as you proceed.

One of your biggest challenges will be to keep speakers to the point and to discourage repetition. A good way is to warmly congratulate anyone who, when you ask them to speak, tells you that their point has already been made.

It is your job to summarise the discussion. You will certainly need to do so:

- in order to bring a phase of a discussion to an end (Summarising is a way of drawing a line and ensuring that the topic moves forward.)
- before a decision is made (People need to be clear what they are being asked to decide.) Most decisions can be achieved by consensus but just occasionally a formal vote may need to be taken.
- at the conclusion of the item

(It is essential at the end of the discussion that the Secretary can make a clear record.)

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Everyone needs to know:

- what has been decided
- who needs to take action
- when the action will happen.

(v) closing the meeting

You clearly need to thank everyone for their contribution to the meeting and to send them away feeling positive about the outcomes.

It makes good sense to ensure that the date and time of the next meeting is clear.

Most people have full diaries, so it is useful for the Committee to have a calendar of meetings for the year. It means that people know what they are committed to.

Making a change to a planned program, if a meeting needs to be changed or even cancelled, is much easier than trying to find a date that several busy people can make at relatively short notice.

After and in between meetings

(i) evaluation

When you have been in the chair it is good practice to take a short while to ask yourself some questions after a meeting. You should ask yourself:

- did the meeting go according to plan?
- did everyone feel that they had been able to contribute and that their contribution was valued?
- were the outcomes clear and in particular are those who need to take action fully aware of what is required?
- what will you do differently next time?

(ii) the minutes

Whilst it is the Secretary's job to produce the minutes you need to agree to them before they are circulated. Negotiate with the Secretary and/or Secretariat when the minutes will be ready and when you will be available to go through them.

Minutes should be no longer than necessary and include:

- the topic being discussed
- the key facts or issues
- the key points from any discussion
- the decision reached or the matter reported
- what action is to be taken, by whom and by when.

Minutes should be circulated as soon as is practical following the meeting, normally within two weeks. These can be distributed by the Secretariat electronically.

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The Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The association is required to hold an Annual General Meeting as soon as possible after 30th June each year.

The meeting is held to:

- adopt the Annual Reports
- adopt audited accounts
- elect office bearers for the ensuing year.

The AGM also provides an opportunity to promote what the Association has achieved in the past year and its plans for the future.

The biggest challenge is often to get people to turn up. They won't if it has a history of being a long drawn out meeting. There is, however, a need to conduct the formal part of the meeting in a proper fashion.

The formal part of the meeting should be conducted in an open and efficient manner. Having everything stage-managed may look efficient but can cause people who are not 'in the know' to feel excluded. There needs to be a balance.

It is a good idea for the report and accounts to be circulated in writing. This means that you can concentrate on the highlights in your comments. You may choose to send out the report and accounts in advance. In any event a written report is useful to send to those who were not at the AGM to let them know how active the Association has been.

What you arrange besides the formal part of the meeting needs to be enjoyable to everyone who attends and of benefit to the Members.

You may decide to invite a guest speaker, or invited guests .

You will also need to ensure that you are well briefed and able to introduce them properly.

Sub-Committees

When a major piece event or a complex issue needs to be tackled, a large Committee will not always produce the best result. This is an opportunity for a Sub-Committee.

A Sub-Committee has the advantage of being:

- small enough to meet as frequently as needed and function quickly
- able to deal with matters of detail
- able to draft in those with special knowledge or skill.

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Sub-Committees (cont.)

There are, however, some key issues to bear in mind when setting up a Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee needs:

- a Chairman who is a member of the main Committee
- a well defined job to do
- clear limits of its authority.

The Chairmen of Sub-Committees need to be added to your list of key people. You will want to keep up-to-date with their work and they deserve your support and guidance.

Typical Sub-Committees (if you choose to have them) might be:

- State or Region Branches
- EcoForum Organising Committee, and
- SuRF

Association Bank Accounts

The Association has two (2) bank accounts with Westpac, an operating account and an interest earning account for money not immediately required.

The Association bank account/s are operated by the Secretariat under the direction of the Treasurer and other persons authorised by the Executive Committee, and is based on TWO signatures.

It is usual that the other people authorised by the Executive Committee to operate the bank account/s include the President, Secretary and the Secretariat.

The requirement for two signatures on each cheque and or online authorisation exists to safeguard both the association and you, the individual. Members of the Executive Committee who fail to operate the system correctly may find themselves personally liable for any losses.