

POLICY NUMBER: 2 MEETINGS

(replaces Meeting Procedures, Apologies, Leave of Absence, Absences, Attendance and Participation, Childcare, Parental Leave, Retirement Leave and Members, Staff and Volunteers 36.)

Version No. 05

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define a set of clear guidelines for all meetings the Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative Ltd (NGRHC).

SCOPE

This policy applies to all volunteers, staff, renter-members and non-member Directors of the NGRHC regarding all aspects of meetings which include but are not limited to:

- All types of Meetings (including on line and hybrid)
- Apologies
- New renter-member guidelines
- Leave of Absence (Short Term and Ongoing)
- Absences from meetings
- Attendance and participation
- Childcare (excluding volunteers)

RELEVANT CO-OPERATIVE OBJECTIVES

Housing Registrar Performance Standards for Registered Housing Providers.

POLICY STATEMENT

NGRHC recognises the importance of holding well run effective meetings which can be dynamic in nature and therefore need structure and relevance. All meetings shall be held in accordance with NGRHC's contractual, legal, and regulatory obligations.

Purpose of a Meeting

A meeting helps every individual understand both the collective aim of the group and the way in which their own and everyone else's work can contribute to the group's success.

A group meeting is not the correct forum to air grievances and talk about one's own circumstances to the extent that they take the focus off the original intent of the meeting. All renter-members should remember the rules of civility and be courteous to one another and be respectful to the staff facilitating the meeting.

General Meetings (this also includes Special General Meetings SGM)

A general meeting is any meeting of the membership other than an Annual General Meeting. The meetings must be properly convened with due notice having been given as per NGRHC Rules.

The Committee of Management (CoM) may, whenever it considers appropriate, call a special general meeting of the NGRHC. Accordingly, the members of the NGRHC can request a Special General Meeting, when at least 15% of the total number of votes able to be cast at a meeting of the Co-op request this in writing.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

An Annual General Meeting must be held each year, at a place and on a date and time decided by the CoM, within 5 months after the close of the financial year of the NGRHC or within the further time allowed by the Registrar of Co-operatives. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting must be sent to all members.

Committee of Management Meeting (CoM)

The Committee of Management (also referred to as the Board of Directors) meets at least 10 times a year. This group of elected renter-members and non-member Directors are constituted as the decision-making body of the Co-operative to represent the wider view of the renter-members.

Sub Committees and Working Groups

The NGRHC Governance Manual outlines Terms of Reference which have been developed for all Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups of the Northern Geelong Rental Housing Co-operative.

Terms of Reference outline the purpose, scope and function of the group, its decision-making process, its responsibilities, and procedures for review.

Reports must be presented to the CoM by all active working groups and sub committees when the CoM meet. These reports should give a summary of issues discussed by the various groups and committees and contain any resolutions which require approval by the CoM.

Online

NGRHC facilitates online meetings so that staff and members have the flexibility to attend online or in person. Online meetings come with technical issues and challenges which include difficulty hearing, camera settings, internet connections etc.

NGRHC etiquette

- Advise the meeting facilitator of any technical issues
- Camera must stay on unless you advise the facilitator that you need to turn it off or leave the meeting
- Mute microphone unless speaking
- Speak clearly so everyone can hear
- Do not speak over other people, wait for others to finish so that the microphone can pick up the person speaking
- The facilitator should observe all meeting participants so that the remote attendees are also heard and engaged
- Be aware of your surroundings and ensure that the contents of the meeting remain private & confidential

Please refer to the NGRHC Governance Manual for up-to-date Terms of Reference.

New renter-member guidelines

New Renter-members are in the privileged position of gaining housing with NGRHC and they are expected to honour their promise of participation. Upon joining this Co-op and becoming a member you will be expected to join the **Member Engagement Committee** after settling into your new home. This committee enables new renter-members to facilitate the following important functions:

- join with others in planning social events,
- meet new people,
- give fresh ideas to engage better with existing renter-members

NGRHC understands there may be commitments around work or school, however, where a household is made up of two adults, at least one renter-member is expected to represent the household and be a part of this committee.

Statistics show that once new renter-members move in, if they do not participate straight away there is less likelihood that they will participate. Therefore, it is vital that new Renter-members are engaged with the life of the Co-op as soon as possible.

APOLOGIES

The NGRHC expects all renter-members to participate in the **life** of NGRHC and to meet all participation and attendance requirements. Renter-members who are unable to attend a meeting or working group meeting can 'apologise' for non-attendance so they will not be marked as absent. To prevent renter-members from continually apologising for non-attendance, there are restrictions on the number of apologies accepted. To effectively and fairly determine if a member is absent or an apology, a clear system is required to facilitate administration of attendance records.

Renter-members must make an apology if they are unable to attend meetings or working groups. If Renter-members do not make an apology (and are not exempt for any other reason) they will be marked as absent.

Apologies must be given before the start of the meeting or at the meeting, when the Chairperson calls for any apologies.

Apology Procedure

Members can make an apology by:

- Contacting the office or a staff member before the start of the meeting.
- Contacting a renter-member who is attending the meeting and ask that renter-member to give an apology at the meeting on your behalf.
- Writing to the CoM stating what meetings you are unable to attend.

Minutes of the meeting will be kept by the relevant staff attending and those minutes shall reflect apologies given or committee members absent without apology. Discretion may be applied in exceptional circumstances.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE – Short Term

Renter-members may at times experience a genuine limited ability to actively participate in events, due to factors such as health, mobility, parental leave, family issues or other life events. NGRHC recognises that it may be appropriate for Co-operative renter-members to seek a period of leave from participation within the Co-operative. A leave of absence should have a **defined period of time** and acknowledgement of when the renter-member will return to full participation.

Leave of Absence Procedure

Renter-members can seek a leave of absence by:

- Writing to the CoM stating what the reason is for requesting a leave of absence.
- Supply evidence such as a doctor's letter if the leave of absence is health or mobility related.
- Give details of when the member will return to full participation.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE – Ongoing

Renter-members may experience a genuine inability to actively participate in events due to factors such as age, health or mobility. NGRHC recognises that it may be appropriate for Co-operative renter-members to seek an ongoing leave of absence from participation within the Co-operative.

NGRHC is made up of renter-members from a variety of age groups. The Co-op is structured to mentor new renter-members to ensure they progress at different levels of participation and take a fair share of work on committees and working groups. As new renter-members gain experience, older renter-members can step away from their duties but still enjoy social functions and participate in the life of the Co-op.

*An ongoing leave of absence is not a blanket exemption from participation on all levels but rather recognition of limitations that come with the ageing process and health issues which may prevail.

Leave of Absence – Ongoing - Procedure

Renter-members can seek an ongoing leave of absence by:

- Writing to the CoM with their request for an ongoing leave of absence which includes their individual circumstances.

ABSENCES, ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Unlike a Leave of Absence, an absence can be regarded as non- participation. All renter-members are expected to participate in the running of the NGRHC and to meet all attendance and participation requirements. Attendance records are used to prove if renter-members are meeting their requirements. **Letters may be sent to renter-members who have excessive absences recorded and are obviously not meeting attendance and participation requirements, and this will be recorded on their file.** The CoM may also seek further explanation regarding excessive absences.

In accordance with the Residential Tenancies Act 1997 a Residential Rental Provider can give a renter-member notice to vacate in certain circumstances which include:

‘The landlord is a government housing authority and the renter misled the authority so they could be accepted as a renter.’

<https://www.consumer.vic.gov.au/housing/renting/ending-a-lease-or-residency/if-the-landlord-or-owner-wants-the-tenant-to-leave/landlord-giving-notice-to-vacate>

For a renter-member to obtain the full benefits of belonging to a Rental Housing Co-operative they should fully participate in the general life of the Co-op which includes some or all of the following:

- Annual General Meetings
- General Meetings
- Social events
- Celebrations involving multi- cultural festivals
- Scholarships
- Working Bees
- Personal Development
- Opportunity to become a committee member, which most importantly leads onto a direct contribution to the Co-op community by becoming a CoM member; and
- Being part of a community

NGRHC recognises that the spirit of the Co-operatives growth depends on the participation of ALL renter-members and does not believe it is fair that some renter-members do participate and attend meetings while others do not.

Renter-members who are not meeting the attendance and participation requirements will be seen as not fulfilling their responsibilities as a renter-member of the NGRHC and may be asked to attend a meeting of the CoM to discuss their circumstances in this situation.

It is a condition of membership of the NGRHC to meet all attendance and participation requirements. This is explained in the following table:

Attendance and Participation Guidelines

Renter-members are expected to participate by:

- Attending AGM's and SGM's.
- Participate in Working Groups and/or Sub-Committees when appropriate.

In the event of ongoing **non**participation:

- Staff will keep accurate records of meeting and social gatherings attendances.
- The CoM will write to the renter-member advising them that they have breached the NGRHC's attendance and participation expectations and ask for further explanation regarding excessive absences in person or in writing.
- The CoM will work with the renter-member to come to a resolution which will assist with the renter-member's future attendance and participation where possible.
- Nonparticipation may result in a renter-members inability to apply for a transfer or a scholarship.
- Renter-members who have been granted a leave of absence will not be penalised for non-attendance during the approved leave of absence.

CHILDCARE

NGRHC recognises that all renter-members of the NGRHC must meet all the participation and attendance requirements. This is often difficult for renter-members who have young children unless there is some childcare available.

NGRHC can contribute to the costs of childcare incurred when Members attend:

- Committee/Sub-Committee Meetings,
- SGMs,
- AGMs,
- Working Group meetings,
- Workshops.

NGRHC recommends that parents make other arrangements for childminding when they are required to attend meetings, however, this may not be possible and so long as children are in good health and well behaved, they may accompany their parents. Sometimes childminding is not an option and NGRHC will work with renter-members and be flexible in their approach to how they can participate in meetings, e.g. via video attendance.

Childcare payment contribution Guidelines

- Give sufficient notice prior to the meeting and estimate a cost.
- Maximum of four hours.
- The CoM must approve childcare payments.
- At, or soon after the meeting, renter-members requesting childcare costs contributions must complete a “REQUISITION FOR PAYMENT WITHOUT INVOICE” form which they can get from staff.
- Supply bank account details for payment by electronic funds transfer.
- No family member will be paid for childcare.
- **If the renter-member does not attend the scheduled meeting and does not cancel their childcare arrangement, the NGRHC will not contribute to the childcare costs.**

What to Do at a meeting:

- ✓ Participate in the meeting
- ✓ Be respectful
- ✓ Provide feedback in a respectful manner
- ✓ Be aware of the community that you are a part of
- ✓ Allow others to speak
- ✓ Learn more about the Co-op
- ✓ Ask questions
- ✓ Participate in active listening
- ✓ Pool and develop ideas
- ✓ Solve problems
- ✓ Make decisions
- ✓ Create and develop understanding
- ✓ Understand the common purpose
- ✓ Be patient
- ✓ Maintain order
- ✓ Remember your opinion isn't always right

What not to Do at a meeting:*

- ✗ Don't Partake in mobbing of facilitator, staff or other members
- ✗ Refrain from magnifying your own circumstances in a group setting
- ✗ Don't Disrespect other attendees
- ✗ Don't Go off on a tangent, stay on topic
- ✗ Don't Interrupt others
- ✗ Don't Tune out
- ✗ Don't Repeat what others have said just to be heard
- ✗ Don't Look through a lens of bias

*If any of the above ‘detrimental’ behaviours occur you may be asked to leave the meeting, the convenor of the meeting reserves the right to make this decision. Further instances may result in the instant cessation of the meeting. The aims and goals of a meeting should not be jeopardised by a small amount of members who disregard the greater good of NGRHC.

DEFINITIONS

In this policy:

Terms of Reference	Terms of reference define the purpose and structures of a project, committee, meeting, negotiation, or any similar collection of people who have agreed to work together to accomplish a shared goal. Terms of reference show how the object in question will be defined, developed, and verified.
Active Listening	Involves listening with all senses as well as giving full attention to the speaker. A way of listening and responding to another person that improves mutual understanding. Using nonverbal skills and paraphrasing. Provide feedback and defer judgement
Governance Manual	An internal NGRHC document which sets out the framework, standards and procedures required to effectively govern as a Registered Housing Agency
Mobbing	Collective aggression or group bullying in which one or more people covertly attack another; and/or a deliberate attempt to force a staff member out of their workplace because of humiliation, general harassment and emotional abuse.
Registered Housing Agency	Not for profit organisation’s that provide affordable rental housing for low-income households
Renter-member	A person listed on the Rental Agreement who is the primary person responsible for the tenancy with NGRHC

RELATED DOCUMENTS

NGRHC Rules

NGRHC Governance Manual

NGRHC Committee of Management Policy

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

- Residential Tenancies Act 1997
- Housing Registrar Performance Standards

Transparency and accessibility

This policy will be available on the NGRHC website www.ngrhc.org.au/policy