

Planning for Your Annual General Meeting

A Network SA Planning Resource for Children's Services September 2009

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of a community organisation is an occasion for reporting back to all the 'owners' or members, for complying with government regulations and for spreading the word about your great service. In a nutshell it is about accountability, compliance and communication. The work of putting on an AGM is made easier if you plan ahead.

Check Your Constitution

Your constitution is an essential resource when planning the AGM because this is where you should be able to find rules about the calling of and procedure at general meetings, including

- the business to be conducted at the meeting,
- how much notice you are required to give the members and how this should be conveyed or displayed,
- proceedings at meetings (quorum and chairperson),
- voting at meetings,
- how to conduct a poll if this is demanded at the meeting,
- special and ordinary resolutions,
- whether members are entitled to vote by proxy,
- the appointment of an auditor of a 'prescribed association', and
- the manner in which the rules of the association may be altered.

If your constitution is several years old it may not include rules about all of these matters, and should be reviewed. If your centre is incorporated as an association under the Associations Incorporation Act 1985, as most community based child care services in South Australia are, you can obtain a model constitution and checklist for what should be included in your rules from the Office of Consumer & Business Affairs website, www.ocba.sa.gov.au.

Who Should be Invited

The AGM is essentially a public meeting of all members of the association, called by the management committee or board of the centre. Your members may include two or three groups (identified in your constitution) - parents or guardians of children cared for at the centre, employees and /or persons who have applied in writing and been accepted. You may also choose to invite local dignitaries, people who have supported the centre and other guests.

Your constitution will include a clause about the quorum or minimum number of members required to attend. This may not be a very high number. You are likely to have more members attending if you have a special attraction or if members are very unhappy with the way the centre is running. If everything is going along reasonably smoothly, parents may not see the need to attend and you should not necessarily be discouraged by low numbers. What is essential is that everyone who comes is welcomed and included.

Business of the AGM

The business (agenda) of the meeting should include

- confirmation of the minutes of the last AGM and any special general meeting held during the year since the last AGM,

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- presentation of accounts and reports of the committee,
- presentation of the auditor's report (required if a Prescribed Association),
- election of committee members,
- appointment of the auditor if required, and
- any other business as required.

It is usual in child care services for the Director to present a report as well, but not essential unless you have specifically included a Director's report as a requirement in your constitution or in the policies of your centre. You may decide to add an information or social aspect to the meeting as well, by having a guest speaker or a presentation at the AGM, or putting on a display. How you structure your AGM is up to you as long as you include the essential elements (dot points above) on your agenda.

Election of Committee Members

One of your goals will be to attract new management committee members. Ideally, you will have some new people volunteering to join the management committee as well as a few experienced committee members staying on.

It is helpful to have a hand-out ready for parents or others who may be interested in nominating for a position on the committee. This can be made available before the AGM, as well as at the meeting. It could include some background information about how the committee is structured (e.g. how many parents, who else is on the committee), how often it meets, what it does and its general responsibilities as the governing body of the service. If it is available before the AGM you could also include the contact numbers for one or two of your current committee members who may be prepared to answer any questions about the committee role.

Planning Ahead

Preparation for the AGM should commence at least 3 months prior to the AGM date, with the Chairperson taking a leading role in planning with the committee and the Director. The following checklists will assist in planning a successful AGM for your centre.

Checklist I: 3 months before the AGM

- Confirm the date and time for the AGM and book the venue if necessary.
- Make sure your financial audit is booked in plenty of time to ensure the audit will be ready to be presented at the AGM.
- How many vacancies will you have to fill? Are there people with special skills or networks who could add extra value to your committee?
- Are there any changes that have to be made to the constitution?
- Will you be providing child care and if so will you charge?
- Will you have a guest speaker or a presentation? Book in advance.
- Will food and drinks be served? If so, who will co-ordinate these arrangements? Will you need any special equipment (e.g. barbeque)?
- Will the current Chairperson chair the meeting or will you have an independent Chair?
- Who will organise the invitations / publicity? How much notice will you need to give?
- Review your handbook for committee members. Ask for comments and feedback from current committee members. Who will make the changes?
- Make sure that those responsible for providing reports at the AGM (as outlined in your constitution) understand that they will need to provide a written report of the year's activities, as it relates to their position, at the AGM.
- Contact Network SA to book a Management Committee Orientation session in the first weeks after the AGM.

Checklist 2: The month before the AGM

- Confirm previous arrangements.
- Check that the food and drink is organised.
- Confirm the guest speaker.
- Check that you will have enough adult sized chairs for the meeting.
- Prepare nomination forms. Check if people must nominate ahead or can they nominate on the night (see your constitution)? This should be mentioned in notices.
- How will you encourage parents to come to the AGM and to consider joining the Management Committee? Ask staff to discuss this with parents (only if they feel comfortable) as staff have the most contact with parents.
- Consider distributing a flyer to all parents about the benefits of joining the Committee with an outline of the role of a Management Committee.
- Prepare an AGM invitation. Include information about time, date, venue, guest speaker, any other attractions, and include a return slip with the invitation. Invitations could be personally addressed. Perhaps the children could be involved in decorating invitations for their parents.
- Send out invitations, agendas and nomination forms.
- Check nominations received.
- Prepare voting slips in case 2 or more people nominate for the same position.
- Place notices about the meeting in strategic places.
- The present committee members can assist by talking with other parents as they arrive and leave the centre.
- Roster committee members to welcome other parents on the night.
- Ensure copies of the constitution and minutes of the previous AGM will be available on the night . If there has been a Special General Meeting since the last AGM those minutes should be available too.
- Ensure that the annual report will be ready for the night. If you are planning to use fancy paper or to bind the report, ensure that the appropriate stationery has been ordered in time and that you have thought about how long it will take to collate the reports and who will be responsible for this. At a minimum, the annual report should include Chairperson's report and the End of Year Financial Report and Statement.
- Ensure that any other information that is required is prepared.
- Collect information folders from outgoing committee members so that they can be reviewed and updated.

Checklist 3: AGM Day / Night

- Put copies of the agenda and reports on seats or have someone hand them out at the door. Have spares of all relevant information
- Provide name tags/stickers and markers for all attending. Have current committee members available to welcome parents and introduce people to each other as not everyone may have met. If numbers are high, make a time for people to turn to the closest two people and introduce themselves.
- Keep a record of attendance. People can sign as they arrive.
- Arrange chairs in a way that encourages participation.
- Keep meeting time to a maximum of 1 hour.
- Keep speakers' times to a maximum of 5 minutes each unless talking on major topic.
- Combine the business of the meeting with an opportunity for people to socialise.
- At the end of the meeting ask the new committee (continuing and new members) to meet briefly to confirm the time and date of their orientation meeting and their first business meeting.

Checklist 4: After the AGM

- Send a brief letter to the committee members welcoming them and confirming the date and place of their next meeting.
- Ensure that the Public Officer has sent the relevant forms and paperwork to the Office of Consumer & Business Affairs, with fees as required.
- The minutes of the AGM should be written up as soon as possible after the AGM and safely stored in an AGM file (paper and electronic copies).

Voting

In its simplest form, voting is a 3 stage process.

1. Following presentation of a report it is usual for the Chairperson to ask if anyone (must be a member) is prepared to move that the report should be accepted.
2. If someone is prepared to move the motion, then the Chairperson seeks a seconder (another member). If there is no seconder, the motion lapses.
3. Once the motion is moved and seconded, the Chairperson may ask if there is any further discussion on the motion, then put the motion to a vote.

Ordinarily, the members will vote by a show of hands or a secret ballot. You should check your constitution for rules about voting in your organisation.

A motion is declared 'carried' if a majority of the members present and voting are in favour of it.

If a majority of the members present and voting are against the motion it is declared 'defeated'.

If the vote is tied, your constitution may allow for the Chairperson to break the tie with a casting vote.

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