



## HOW TO CONDUCT A BUSINESS MEETING - 101

### **Opening the Meeting**

The meeting begins after the Chairperson declares the meeting opened.

### **Apologies**

The first item of business is to list those unable to attend.

The Chairperson states the names of those members who formally notified that they were unable to attend the meeting.

### **Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The secretary will read the minutes of the previous meeting (or members will have been given the minutes to read when they received the agenda).

The Chairperson moves that the minutes of the previous meeting be accepted or adopted.

The Chairperson tables the minutes of the previous meeting making them open as a topic of discussion. At this point the Chairperson will ask members to adopt the minutes. If the members do not agree that the draft minutes are accurate, changes may be suggested.

The Chairperson should then ask the meeting to vote on those corrections. If there are only a few minor corrections, the Chairperson may ask the members to accept the minutes with the corrections. The vote to adopt the minutes can then go ahead on that basis.

Once the Minutes have been adopted, the Chairperson should sign every page of the minutes and hand them to the meeting secretary for filing.

It is not appropriate at this time to indulge in debates on decisions which were made at the previous meeting. Anyone who wishes to change a motion should wait until the same subject arises in the general business of the current meeting or raise it in the part called "Any Other Business."

The most important advice about the minutes of a previous meeting is to make sure you read them.

### **Business Arising from Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Often the issues for Business Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting are listed in the agenda. Any reports, pieces of information or other matters of substance that were requested at the previous meeting are debated and a vote is taken on the appropriate action to take.

### **Correspondence**

Letters that have been sent to the meeting are tabled and debated, if the meeting wishes to do so.

Any letters, facsimiles, emails etc, which have been received by the committee, are discussed here. The Chairperson should summarise correspondence which covers similar issues, or express similar opinions and discuss them as a single issue.



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The Chairperson presents a piece of correspondence to the meeting by putting a motion that the meeting "receive the correspondence." This is an acknowledgment by the meeting that the correspondence as been formally received and that it may now be discussed and acted upon, if necessary.

If correspondence sent to the meeting is considered offensive, the meeting can vote on a motion, "not to receive" it. Alternatively, the meeting can decide that the correspondence should be "received and lie on the table." This means it will not really be dealt with. It is effectively in limbo until such time in the future that it is "taken from the table" and discussed.

### Reports

Reports written for the meeting are tabled and debated, if the meeting wishes to do so.

Reports and submissions that have been written for the meeting or include information relevant to the work of the meeting are tabled and discussed.

A motion is required to be put that a report be received. This means that the report exists, as far as the meeting is concerned, and a discussion or debate may now take place on the contents, interpretation and recommendations of the report.

Motions are able to be put for or against the recommendations of the report or ask the author to consider further issues or reconsider issues on the basis of particular information.

A member of a meeting can even put forward a motion to change the wording of a report or submission.

### General Business

Items listed on the agenda are debated. The debate usually begins with the Chairperson calling on someone to move a motion.

General business items are announced singly by the Chairperson, and a discussion or debate follows each one.

Motions that suggest methods of resolving issues are put forward and to a vote. Once the motions receive a simple majority, or a majority as defined in the standing orders, they become resolutions. Sometimes amendments to a motion are put forward. Only after the amendments are debated and voted upon can the revised substantive motion be brought to the vote.

In the case of more formal meetings, general business consists of motions that are moved and seconded by participants of the meetings. A seconder is someone who agrees that a motion should be debated. In most meetings, however, the need for a member to support a motion is ignored.

### Any Other Business

When all items on the agenda have been debated, the Chairperson may call for items not listed in General Business.



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It is at this point, that members are able to raise issues they feel are important. These include any items which were not listed on the agenda.

No extremely important or complex issues should be raised unannounced during this part of the meeting. If an urgent matter must be dealt with by the meeting, the Chairperson should be informed before the meeting begins. A revised agenda can then be drawn up in the time that remains before the meeting is due to begin.

If the Chairperson feels that any of the issues brought up for discussion are too complex or troublesome, he may call for another meeting to discuss the issue or alternatively, put it on the agenda for the next scheduled meeting.

### **Close of Meeting**

Once all the issues have been put forward and discussed, the Chairperson advises members of the date and time of the next meeting. The meeting is now officially closed.

(Walsh, F., *The Meeting Manual*, AGPS, Canberra, 1995)