

## The Role of a Committee member.



One of the on-going concerns for most committee's and Board's of Management is the recruitment and retention of suitably skilled and interested volunteers in the leadership of a group or organisation. The Wimmera Volunteers Committee Recruitment brochure pack assists by outlining the general duties and obligations expected within each of the main roles. The pack entitled "So you've been asked to join a Committee..." consists of four brochures for:

- The committee member,
- The Chairperson,
- The Secretary
- The Treasurer

This information sheet will expand on the simple and practical advice contained in the "So you've been asked to join a Committee..." brochure.

### Becoming a Committee Member:

Being asked to join a Committee or a Board of Management can be a flattering as well as a nerve-racking opportunity for individuals. A Committee or Board is responsible for the "governance" of a group or organisation. This makes the role of a committee member a very important privilege as the individual is directly responsible for making leadership decisions, jointly with other team members, which will have an impact on the entire membership and the community.

### The benefits of being on a committee:

*The benefits of recruiting new people for the Committee:* Committees are teams made up of individuals who have a vested interest in the success of the group or organisation they lead. These individuals are there to provide input into the decision-making process and are critical for moving projects and opportunities forward as well as minimising risk and fulfilling legal obligations.

It's important that all committees and boards continually seek out individuals with different skills, experience and ideas that will provide valuable insight and new leadership direction to the team. An effective Committee is able to accomplish good outcomes for its membership and for the community.

*The benefits for the Individual:* Committee membership implies responsibility; however, it is important to remember that you would not have been asked if others on the team did not think you had the skills or abilities to contribute. There are significant benefits to being on a committee or board. Examples of the kinds of benefits include:

*Be part of a team:* People who are able to work well in a team are very much appreciated by employers and other agencies. Being able to respond appropriately to different temperaments and personalities in a group and still come to a collective consensus on agreements, despite any issues, is a great skill to have. You will also gain a lot of new friends through involvement on a Committee. The social benefits of involvement are often the most rewarding outcome for many people.

*Learning new skills:* We grow and learn throughout our lives, not just at school. Being on a committee or board can give you plenty of opportunities to develop personally and professionally in a very

practical way, through learning new ideas, skills, and through a growing understanding of process and governance.

*Make a contribution to the community:* Whether the committee or board you belong to is for a small community group or a large organisation, the fact remains that the role of a committee member provides opportunities to make a big difference in your community. You have the chance to make positive change happen which is great for everyone. Far reaching Good is possible through being a committee member; you are helping the team make the critical decisions that can potentially, achieve great results.

### **What skills must a committee member have?**

A well-rounded and diverse committee will include individuals with many different types of skills and abilities. From being “able to type” to being fully versed in financial and organisational management, the skills of individuals can be as varied as the individuals themselves. There are however a few basic prerequisite skills that most groups will want on a Committee, Board or team. These can include:

**A positive attitude:** Teamwork requires an attitude that is positive, proactive, democratic and enthusiastic. Good committee members all have a positive and dynamic attitude which they bring to their role regardless of their personal views. They do not shirk responsibilities but nor do they allow the group to get bogged down in legalities, “red-tape” or bickering. They are happy to work with others to achieve overall agreement on the tricky issues.

**Willingness to devote the time:** Participation on a committee or Board requires a regular commitment. It means that attendance at meetings, fulfilling assigned tasks and accepting that designated responsibilities must be taken seriously. There is no point to being involved in a committee if you cannot devote an appropriate amount of time to it in balance with your other life activities.

**Acceptance of moral, ethical and legal responsibilities:** Much of the work of a committee or a board requires that certain formal procedures and legal obligations are adhered to. It is imperative that the conduct of the whole group is ethical and not subject to any corruption or unscrupulous behaviours. For this reason, committees are very much concerned about the policy direction of the group or organisation and within this process have certain legal obligations that must be followed. Committee members must be mindful of this and be willing to accept responsibility for these very important aspects of involvement.

**Know why you’re joining:** Sometimes, members of the community are asked to be involved in a committee or board without having had a lot to do with the organisation or club which it governs. This is flattering as it means, the prospective volunteer is considered well able to make a significant contribution. However, this also means that they will need to know what the group stands for, what its purpose is in the community and its vision for the future. Generally speaking, Committee members are persons who should know a significant amount about the group or organisation they govern and should value its philosophies and purpose in the community.

**Be Aware of your role:** As a committee or board member you do need to be aware of what duties are yours alone, and what duties belong to others. Committee members who do not fill executive roles, such as Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer generally need to expect that they will be asked to undertake other specific tasks as required by the team. Committee members need to be flexible, enthusiastic and somewhat “hands-on”, ready to roll up their sleeves to chip in and help wherever necessary.

### **In Conclusion:**

Being asked to be on a committee or board of management is both a privilege and a responsibility. There are many benefits to being on a committee, including your own personal development as well as the opportunity to make positive things happen for your group or organisation – as well as in the wider community. It’s a great way to network, make new friends, learn new skills and give something back to the community you live and work in.