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# In the Chair - The Role of a Chairperson

## **Series: Effective Governance for Executive Bodies of Strata Communities**

### **Part 5 of 12: The Role of a Chairperson**

The chairperson of an owners corporation is an important position. Normally a chairperson is a figurehead and leader of an organisation and is closely identified with the organisation's success or failure. It is normally quite a powerful job. However, in an owners corporation the chairperson's only power is to chair the meetings. Beyond that, the power rests with the committee and the owners at large.

In a practical sense, the chair of an owners corporation, despite legal constraints, has the opportunity to be a figurehead and leader. The chair of an owners corporation can be a sounding board for the owners corporation manager, a facilitator of effective meetings and a steward of the organisation's standards of governance. All of this depends upon the personality of the chair and the relationship with the owners corporation manager.

At a committee level, one of the most important things that a chairperson can do is to encourage active debate. Some of the techniques for doing this include:

- Asking a member who has made a long speech to summarise their main points;
- Inviting a quiet member to contribute if they have tried unsuccessfully to get into the discussion;
- Asking a member who is continually disagreeing what suggestions they have that they would like to see taken up by the meeting;
- Giving a summary when the meeting is getting bogged down; and
- Request a colleague, whose body language indicates disagreement, to make their views known.

A good chairperson will:

- Read meeting papers carefully in advance;
- Arrive early for meetings and be there to greet members;
- Listen to what others are saying;
- Be willing to question and challenge but be supportive of others' contributions; and
- Agree to accept special assignments between meetings so that substandard issues can be progressed.



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## In the Chair - The Role of a Chairperson

At the annual general meeting, the spotlight will be very much on the chairperson. Here are 11 points that will contribute to a successful annual general meeting:

2. Start on time out of respect for those in attendance at the appointed time;
3. Manage the meeting so it finishes on time out of respect for those present with other commitments;
4. Follow the agenda and pace yourself against a pre-prepared meeting timetable;
5. Do not read the motions – they are published in advance and can be taken as read to save time;
6. Allow people to speak once on each issue and limit them to five minutes each if necessary;
7. Prepare people for bad news in advance if motions have to be ruled invalid;
8. Be sensitive to peoples' feelings and don't publicly embarrass those ineligible to vote;
9. Avoid delays in counting votes by making sure the returning office or those responsible for counting votes prepare as much as they can before the meeting;
10. Never raise your voice or lose your temper – the meeting will take its tone from the chairperson;
11. Thank people for their attendance and contributions and name any outstanding contributors; and
12. Encourage some form of fellowship following the closure of the meeting to encourage community spirit.

**Next week: Risk Management**



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