

The role of the Chair*

The Chair of the Committee of an Incorporated Association has an important role because the Chair guides the culture of the organisation. An effective Chair ensures that time is spent on things that matter.

What should a chair do?

If you are a Chair or are about to become one, you have a critical role within the organisation.

A good Chair:

- provides leadership for the committee members and any staff
- is self-aware
- facilitates meetings (and Agenda setting)
- ensures effective governance by making sure essential policies are in place
- is alert to possible conflicts of interest within the committee
- guides considered decision-making within a group or organisation
- avoids bias or favouritism in decision making
- sets an example for the rest of the Committee on how to behave to meet individual duties

What should a Chair be alert for?

Often because the organisation is small, operating locally and relying on everyone pitching in to get the job done, derailers can pop up. Things such as:

- Committee members interfering in operational decisions when staff have been employed to do this
- Conflicts of interest which have not been declared or dealt with
- Factions or disharmony within the Committee or the organisation's membership
- Overbearing Committee members blurring the distinction between steering the organisation by setting strategic goals and doing the work to achieve the goals.

The Chair should be alert to these and guide active discussions before the issues cause distraction and even dysfunction.

Practical tip: If your not-for-profit is a company limited by guarantee, the Chair of the board has a similar role.