



# Meeting Guide



**Pony Club  
Queensland**

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# Introduction

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This booklet has been designed as a guide to assist Presidents and Secretaries in their knowledge on meeting/s preparation, procedures and how to conduct meetings.

The information provided is referenced from Club Help website at:  
[www.clubhelp.org.au](http://www.clubhelp.org.au)

## Making the most of Meetings:

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Meetings can be highly productive if participants have read meeting documents prior, the meeting is well Chaired, discussions remain focussed, and action orientated, and minutes are sent out promptly to make people accountable for their actions.

### Some of the must do's for good meetings:

- A detailed agenda dividing items up into "for noting", "for discussion" and "for decision".
- Start on time – a Chair can defer to the "for noting" items while waiting for a quorum.
- Reports, papers, previous Minutes have all been read prior.
- The Chair is given the "green light" to cut off discussions when they are no longer providing new information.
- Finish on time.



## **Purpose of Meetings**

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The primary reason for holding meetings is to allow the Committee to make decisions. However, meetings also serve a range of other important functions:

- Committee members are regularly brought together to focus on their roles and responsibilities, identify problems and plan for the future.
- Members are encouraged and motivated.
- Ideas are shared and discussed and then discarded, improved or implemented.
- Tasks are allocated and reported on.
- Regular updates about relevant issues are provided.
- Members can get to know each other, professionally and personally.

Committee members will be involved in a range of meetings during their term. This help sheet primarily discusses ordinary meetings, but other meetings include:

- Annual General Meetings (used to recap on the year's progress, chart a direction for the future and elect new members or office bearers).
- Extraordinary Meetings (held between general meetings when urgent decisions need to be made).
- Committee Meetings (held regularly or as the need arises to consider particular issues).
- Retreats (held away from the clubroom, often for a full day or weekend, and designed to allow Committee members to take part in deeper discussions or planning).

## **Meeting Structure**

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As mentioned above, meetings can vary markedly from Committee to Committee. Some are quite formal, adhering to strictly defined rules and ensuring all members are addressed by their correct titles ("President Smith," "Madam Chair," and so on). Others are far less formal – usually it will depend on the make-up and function of the Committee, how it was set up and how it has evolved.

- Meetings can be held in a clubroom, or in a more social setting such as a member's house or even a local restaurant.
- Decisions may be made through a range of means, by formal voting or a more informal show of hands or verbal agreement.
- Some meetings are held behind closed doors and are subject to strict rules of confidentiality; others are fully open to the public. Even open meetings may sometimes move into confidential mode, asking observers to leave while certain sensitive issues are discussed.



Good preparation and use of **Meeting Agendas** assist meetings to run efficiently, to time, provides the Committee with a meeting focus, and can assist in keeping members informed and engaged.

## Meeting Agendas

To make optimal use of Committee meeting time an Agenda is developed collaboratively and distributed to Committee Members before the meeting because:

- To make optimal decisions Committee members need time to think about the issues
- It allows for questions to be answered before the meeting if clarification is needed. Then the Committee is able to make an informed decision
- The Agenda includes an estimate of how long an item might take and assists club leaders to prioritise the items.

## Process

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A suggested guide for the development and distribution of the Agenda is for the Secretary to put out a call for Agenda items and for reports requiring distribution.

About 9 days prior to the meeting:

- Agenda closes for next Committee meeting
- Reports due for next Committee meeting
- Draft Agenda (including timings) finalised by Secretary and President using:
  - Previous minute
  - Emailed information from Committee members
  - Committee Calendar

No later than 7 Days prior to meeting the Secretary distributes the Agenda including supporting papers and reports. Committee Members should read reports prior to the meeting.

No later than 2 days prior to meeting Committee members advise the Chair of any extraordinary issues arising out of reports that will require significant discussion (timings may need to be adjusted prior to the meeting)

## **Actual Agenda Headings**

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- Opening (including any formal requirements such as approving Minutes from previous meeting), apologies declarations of any conflicts of interest,
- Business Arising from Previous Minutes / Meeting
- Strategic Issues and Major Items for Decisions (these are based on our Committee calendar as well as any new issues)
- Governance Issues (these are based on the plan from our calendar as well as the tabling of the financial statement for the month and any new issues)
- Other (this is not “general business” – it is specific matters as nominated before the meeting using the process above)
- Tabling and Discussing as Required Reports (including portfolio reports)
- Close (including reviewing and adjusting the Committee calendar)

Note that the order of the items is important to make sure that the most pressing items are given sufficient time. For decision items usually come before items for noting.

## **Practicalities**

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This process works best when:

- You have a time keeper appointed separate to the Chair
- Each Agenda item has a recommended time

If you need to exceed this time to ensure adequate and appropriate discussion, the Chair takes advice from the Committee and then either:

- Has a short extension for the item
- Continues discussion at the end of the meeting
- Defers the matter to a Working Group or other Subcommittee source for final consideration at the next meeting, or
- Divides the item into two sections – what you can agree and progress now and what we must defer to the next meeting and then move to next item.



## Conducting Meetings

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Well planned meetings are the secret of a successful Committee. The ability to engage the Committee ensure that their valuable time is well utilized, and that everyone is informed requires a good Chair and procedures for before, during and after meetings.

**Remember that most club personnel are volunteers and many are time poor, so do not call a meeting:**

- To explain something to one person
- When a memo or report could as effectively be distributed
- To address relatively minor issues – give someone the responsibility to make a decision
- To solve a problem for an individual when the person concerned could make the decision
- When an email could be sent inviting people's approval or comments. Stipulate a reasonable 'reply by' date after which you will proceed even if not all members reply.



## Conducting an AGM

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The Annual General meeting (AGM) is an important event for every organisation and an essential requirement for incorporated organisations. It gives its members, the general public and the committee a broad overview of the organisation's current directions and financial health and confirms its purpose. It is also the time to revitalise the organisation through the official engagement of members into key elected positions. Most importantly, the organisation should try to make the AGM a positive experience, ensuring that people go away firmly committed to the organisation and its goals.

## Benefits of holding an AGM

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An annual general meeting will assist your organisation to:

Comply with government regulations If you are an incorporated association, the legislation in most Australian states requires you to hold an AGM annually. Tasks that need to be carried out during the AGM can include:

- Elections – At the meeting you need to validly elect key office-bearers. Usually, legislation will specify that you must elect a Public Officer. Depending on the size and nature of the organisation, the AGM is also the time to publicly elect the Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and other executive and management committee members.

- Presentation of Accounts – You will need to present the annual accounts to the members in a standard format. Again, legislation in most states provides that you must have your accounts audited if your budget is above a certain level. If you are below this level, you can still have your accounts audited; it may be more expensive, but it provides some assurance that nothing has been overlooked that is likely to damage the organisation. **You will also have to appoint your auditor for next year so have your nomination ready by asking the person you wish to nominate.**
- Documentation – Most Australian states require you to send in an annual return after your AGM. The content varies from state to state – some just want the accounts, some ask for a list of office bearers, some charge extra for the forms or the lodgement.

## Preparation

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The AGM is usually organised by the Secretary. It is important, though, that everybody in the organisation knows who is responsible. The date of the AGM may be set by legislation – e.g. within three months of the end of the financial year.

Advertisement: If you are an incorporated association, the legislation in most Australian states requires that you advertise your AGM with a specified lead in - check your Constitution as to the number of days and methods of advertising.

Executive Committee Members and Office Bearers: Confirm which of your current members and office bearers (Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Treasurer) will be re-nominating for the coming year and who will be retiring. Check your constitution to see if anybody is ineligible to stand. If there are vacancies, make sure that you have approached people who are willing to fill them BEFORE the AGM and remember that there may be people who come forward at the meeting itself. Most importantly, try to ensure that you have enough good nominations to fill the available positions. If people are to be nominated in their absence, have them sign a document saying that they are willing to stand.

If you are required or decide to present an audit of your accounts at the AGM, leave enough time for the auditor to go through your books and prepare your accounts. Make an appointment well in advance; this is a busy time for auditors. Ensure that the auditor knows the exact date of the AGM. Have a nomination ready for the position of next year's auditor from somebody who you have approached and who is willing to act.

Publicity If you are intending to put on a bit of a show for your members or the press – with a guest speaker, a video showing, or an important announcement, for example – organise it well in advance so that you can be sure that everybody knows what they are supposed to be doing and you have all the necessary technical equipment in good working order.



## Meeting Papers

Prepare the following documents and post/email them out to all members and office bearers in advance of the meeting:

A set of accounts (balance sheet and financial statement) in the required format.

The Annual Report, containing:

- The accounts
- a summary of the year's activities
- a record of the year's achievements
- a preview of what is planned for the next year
- a re-statement of the organisation's vision.

An Agenda consisting of:

- Welcome by President
- Apologies
- Confirmation of minutes of the previous AGM
- Business arising from the minutes
- President's report
- Treasurer's report and presentation of audited financial statement
- Election of Office Bearers
- General business
- Guest speaker (if any)
- Date of next meeting (if known)
- Close
- Minutes (the relevant minutes are the minutes from the previous AGM, not the previous Executive/Management meeting)



## Meeting Procedure

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The procedures at the AGM are basically the same as those at an ordinary committee meeting.

Motions: Motions must be moved:

- to accept the minutes of the last AGM
- to approve the President's report (the Annual Report)
- to approve the Treasurer's report (the Financial Statement)
- to appoint ... as auditor for next year.

Motions must be seconded, and a vote (generally a show of hands) taken.

Nominations for Executive Committee members and office bearers must be called for from the floor. If more than one person nominates for any office, or if there are more nominations than there are places on the Board, there must be an election. An election can take place through a show of hands or by secret ballot. The only special procedural provisions at an AGM are that:

- the quorum may be different (consult your constitution).
- if the position of President is being contested, the President should stand down during the election and be replaced by an acting Chair (someone who is not standing for any position) specially elected just for the period of the election.

## Guest Speaker

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Guest speakers can be people you want to impress during the meeting (an important funder, for example), or people you want to be impressed by at the meeting (an inspiring speaker, for example), or both.

## After the AGM

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Make sure that the minutes are written up shortly after the meeting. If (as sometimes happens) they are left to the evening before the mail-out for the new meeting, the Secretary may have difficulty finding last year's notes. Ensure that you send any necessary documentation, for example the audited statement and change of public officer, to the appropriate state/territory government department.

Retiring office bearers must hand over the operations to the new person, together with all documents, rubber stamps, bank details, etc. Retiring officers should also give their successors briefings describing key processes and current priorities and challenges.

Banking - If any of the people who are retiring from the Board are signatories to the organisation's bank account, try to have the necessary forms on hand so that the new signatories can be authorised after the meeting.

## Minutes

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Best practice for minute taking is by a Minutes Secretary or a technological solution (digital recorder which then converts to a Word document). It is efficient to have a Minutes Template prepared and to take your laptop. A Minutes Secretary does not replace the Committee Secretary. The Minutes Secretary is anyone who can accurately take minutes and provide a first draft quickly and efficiently to the Secretary.



The Secretary then checks the Minutes for accuracy and releases them to other Committee members.

Minutes should **NOT** record who said what unless someone distinctly requests to go on the record. The Minutes should provide a record of the proceedings of the meeting just sufficiently to be useful and transparent. E.g. the Minutes do not need to detail all the points of discussion, rather summarise and provide the resultant decision.

Motions, decisions and other formal aspects are recorded. It is very important that:

- Motions and any actions have a designated person responsible, and this person is recorded in the Minutes.
- Minutes must be disseminated electronically to the Committee within seven working days of the meeting.
- The “What Do We Tell Our Members from This” summary for publishing to members is disseminated.
- If a delegate or Committee Member presents to the Committee, the topic, actions and outcomes need to be provided within the Minutes.
- The Secretary on behalf of the Committee maintains a Record of Key Committee decisions and a Committee Action Tracking List as below.

## Reporting to the Committee

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Reports to the Committee should be simple and brief. Reports should be in writing, e.g. a simple bullet point report, or an email. These should be distributed and READ prior to the meeting so that time in the meeting can be used effectively.

Standard reporting helps keep things simple - use of the questions below could help to keep reporting focused:

- What is the issue?
- Is the issue for the Committee to understand (for noting) or for the Committee to make decisions about (for decision)?
- Why is it important – likely consequences?
- What are the options or choices?
- Who has this already been discussed with?
- What is the recommendation for the Committee to adopt?

Verbal reporting is inefficient and should be discouraged. Discussion should be action focused: what do we need to do or decide?



## Committee Records

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In order for a club to run efficiently, it must keep records. Most records will be generated through the activities and decisions of the Committee, or member data. All records should be accurate, current and readily accessible. The person with the task of maintaining records is the generally the Secretary.

Some legislation requires records be kept for a minimum period, it is recommended that clubs retain records for 10 years. Some records, such as rules and certificate of incorporation (if relevant), should be permanently filed.

The following present some of the records and record keeping methods adopted by clubs. Note that electronic records, data bases are optimal but should be backed up adequately to avoid loss.

- A book or a set of cards for the register of members
- A minute book and notebook or pad for taking notes at meetings
- A filing system suitable for keeping records
- Stationery - plain or embossed with club's name, address and logo.
- A book to record assets and liabilities
- Membership application forms and other standard forms (e.g. Committee nominations)
- A calendar for recording dates of meetings, activities and deadlines
- Accounting records - the Treasurer takes charge of these
- A manual of procedures - this can be the club's most valuable asset. Many tasks have to be completed at the same time each year and should be recorded in standard form.

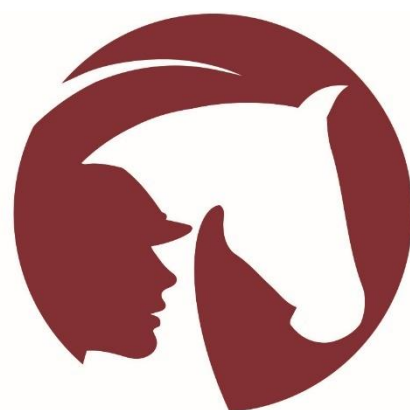


# Meeting Checklist

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- ☐ Does your club have a meeting agenda?
- ☐ Is your meeting agenda circulated before the committee meeting?
- ☐ Do you have a meeting agenda note, new & previous business items?
- ☐ Do your business items arrive at the committee table with discussion papers?
- ☐ Does your club refer to a strategic or operational plan each meeting?
- ☐ Is it clear on your agenda what business is for discussion, decision or noting?
- ☐ Does your agenda have timeframes to help control the meeting duration?
- ☐ Does your agenda have meeting rules to help define appropriate behaviours?
- ☐ Does your meeting conduct discussions through the Chair?
- ☐ Does your Chair/President ensure everyone gets to voice an opinion?
- ☐ Do your Committee Members send an apology if they can't attend?
- ☐ Does your club have a schedule of meeting dates advertised to members?





# PONY CLUB

## QUEENSLAND

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