

Part 1 ACT Greens meeting procedures

1 Introduction

- 1.1 These procedures have been developed to encourage positive and productive meetings where everyone attending can feel safe to participate fully, express their opinions and disagree if necessary.
- 1.2 The procedures describe:
 - how meeting participants are expected to behave at meetings
 - the role of the meeting facilitator and support people
 - how speaking at Greens' meetings is managed and how decisions are made
 - how disruptions of these procedures are handled.
- 1.3 When attending a meeting of the ACT Greens a member should be conscious of these procedures and be attentive to ensure that they are fostered and maintained.

2 Meeting participants

As a meeting participant you are encouraged to:

- be present in good faith with the best interest of the Greens as your goal
- participate in debate even if you are not an expert — we value all opinions
- be committed to consensus decision-making and attempting to reach consensus
- listen without preconceptions, be open to new ideas
- show respect for others' opinions and for different speaking styles, experiences, skills and knowledge
- use inclusive and respectful language
- demonstrate goodwill towards all participants
- avoid bringing previous differences, difficulties and problems to the current meeting
- address the issue rather than criticising the person raising that issue
- not repeat what other people have said if you agree with them (expressions of agreement are okay)
- avoid aggressive verbal or non-verbal interactions
- not disrupt the speaker by interjecting or making loud asides
- if you want to have a side-conversation with someone else, say it quietly or have it far enough away from the meeting for it not to disturb other participants
- balance your input with others and do not dominate the speaking time
- be attentive to what other people are saying, eg bring a snack if it helps you stay alert
- draw a possible breach of meeting or constitutional procedures to the attention of the meeting as a process issue
- ask the facilitator to call a break if the atmosphere is too tense.

3 Meeting facilitator

- 3.1 The pivotal role of meeting facilitation is the key to the successful functioning of meetings. Ideally, the facilitator will be trained. The facilitator should have excellent listening and observation skills in order to:
 - monitor the flow of speaking and the general atmosphere of the meeting

- facilitate decision making
 - equalise input as much as possible while encouraging wide ranging debate.
- 3.2 Good facilitation means that everyone can participate safely and clear decisions are reached.
- 3.3 There should always be a facilitator and an assistant to manage a meeting (see next section on roles), to prepare together, and to debrief/evaluate after the meeting.
- 3.4 When significant discussions take place around matters in which the facilitator wants to play a major role, the assistant will become the facilitator until discussion of the matter is finished.
- 3.5 The meeting facilitator should:
- prepare for the meeting by familiarising yourself with the agenda, and anticipating the need for refreshments and breaks
 - make sure the room is set up so that all participants can see each other easily
 - sit at the end of the table so that all members can see you, and you can see everyone present
 - make space for the support person/people to sit near you
 - foster a friendly, open, participative culture by welcoming people to the meeting, both personally and again publicly at the formal start
 - draw participants' attention to these meeting procedures
 - encourage all participants to feel acknowledged, safe, comfortable and to contribute
 - explain processes and procedures whenever doubts or concerns arise
 - not give speaking rights to individuals who have previously contributed on a topic ahead of others who have not yet spoken but indicate they wish to speak
 - encourage those who have not previously contributed to the meeting to do so
 - monitor tension/tiredness/hunger levels and call a break in the meeting if necessary.

4 Meeting support roles

- 4.1 If the meeting involves many participants, has a complicated agenda, or has sensitive issues under discussion, the facilitator is encouraged to seek at least 1 other person to take on the following roles at the meeting:
- assistant facilitator
 - speaking list keeper
 - time keeper.

Assistant facilitator

- 4.2 This person:
- supports the facilitator
 - may also act as timekeeper or speaking list keeper
 - is responsible for monitoring the interpersonal dynamics and energy levels at the meeting.
- 4.3 To help people gain experience in facilitation, experienced facilitators may mentor others by taking the role of assistant to support a less experienced person. Alternatively, a member wanting to develop facilitation skills may begin by taking on the role of assistant.

Speaking list keeper

- 4.4 The speaking list keeper maintains a running list of persons wanting to speak to an agenda item or motion. If a separate speaking list keeper is needed then that person should sit next to the facilitator so that the list is kept under the facilitator's eye. This role ensures that everyone who wants to speak gets a turn (depending on the time available).

Time keeper

- 4.5 The time keeper:
- ensures that all agenda items are allocated a time period within the overall time agreed for the meeting
 - monitors the time taken for each agenda item
 - alerts the facilitator when the allocated time is up.
- 4.6 Depending on how many more people wish to speak, the time keeper may ask the meeting to extend the allocated time accordingly and readjust the times for other agenda items within the overall time agreed for the meeting.
- 4.7 If this results in the time available for later items in the agenda being reduced significantly the time keeper should draw this to the attention of the meeting and either seek a rearrangement of the remaining agenda items or an extension of the overall meeting time.

5 Debriefing after a meeting

It is recommended that after meetings close, the facilitator and assistant facilitator take time to check in with each other to debrief and evaluate their performance. The speaking list keeper and time keeper may also wish to participate. This is to support the ongoing development of quality facilitation and other meeting skills and to promote the enhancement of ACT Greens meeting processes over time.

6 Speaking rights

- 6.1 Members have the right to participate in any Greens' meeting, except meetings of working groups where there has been a decision by the party to restrict their membership.
- 6.2 At Greens meetings *process issues*¹ and members' rights to equally participate have priority over content or substantive ones. Persons wanting to speak to an agenda item or motion can indicate this to the speaking list keeper at any time, so that an order of speakers can be maintained.
- 6.3 Participants will be given only 1 opportunity per motion to put an opinion, until all others who wish to speak have had their turn. Persons may make short interjections, outside of the speakers list once a speaker has finished, about a process issue to seek clarification from the facilitator or to briefly correct any factual errors made by the speaker.
- 6.4 The facilitator may interrupt and terminate a speaker when necessary if these meeting procedures are not being followed.

¹ A process issue is a concern or question about how a decision is being made (e.g. whether the constitutional rules or these meeting procedures are being followed) rather than the substance of the arguments for or against the decision

7 Participation of non-members

Non-members are allowed to attend a Greens meeting, either by invitation or on their own initiative to find out about Greens' activities, under the following conditions:

- non-members may only speak to the meeting if agreed by the meeting participants
- the facilitator may ask the non-member to leave at any time if sensitive issues are being discussed, or if the person's attendance at the meeting is questioned by a participant.

8 Consensus decision making

- 8.1 The Greens generally follow standard meeting procedures with the major exception that decisions are always first attempted to be made by consensus before any form of voting is proposed. In doing this the Greens accept that the process of consensus is not necessarily a quick process.
- 8.2 Proposals for the Greens to take a particular action or adopt a particular approach to an issue must be put forward to the meeting in the form of a motion. Any motion must be seconded by another member for it to be debated by the meeting.
- 8.3 Consensus is achieved when all members present at a meeting agree with a proposed course of action or, if some members disagree with the proposal, these members decide not to oppose the rest of the members' agreement. Consensus is blocked if at least 2 members oppose agreement to a proposal.
- 8.4 In attempting to reach consensus, sufficient time must be allowed for discussion of different views on a proposal and to make amendments to a proposal. Non-binding straw voting may be held to gauge the meeting's opinion about a proposal or amendment to a proposal.
- 8.5 Any voting required at a Greens meeting must be conducted by a show of hands except for contested elections which must be determined by secret ballot. Voting by proxy is not allowed.

9 Dealing with urgent issues

- 9.1 If a meeting cannot reach consensus about a proposal, the matter must be deferred to a future meeting, unless a member proposes an *urgency motion* that the proposal must be decided at the meeting and not be deferred, and the meeting agrees to this urgency motion.
- 9.2 This section describes the process set out in the ACT Greens constitution. If there is a disagreement about the application of this process, the constitution wording takes precedence.
- 9.3 An *urgency motion* to be successful requires the consensus of the meeting or, if consensus is blocked, a vote of those members present with at least 2/3 in favour of the motion.
- 9.4 If an *urgency motion* is passed about a proposal and consensus on the proposal cannot be reached at the meeting, a vote on the proposal must be held before the end of the meeting. A vote on the proposal to be successful requires 2/3 of those members present in favour. If this is not achieved, then, if there has been no previous decision on the issue, a subsequent vote may be held that may be decided by a 50% majority of those voting. If possible, the meeting should be adjourned before using the option of a 50% majority vote.

10 Dealing with disruptions of meeting procedures

A disruption of meeting procedures can occur by:

- someone becoming upset during a meeting, which may be distracting for other people
- someone breaching meeting procedures, either inadvertently or intentionally.

11 Dealing with upset people

- 11.1 Anyone claiming to have been misrepresented or falsely accused should be given an opportunity to speak to the meeting as a whole.
- 11.2 If someone is clearly uncomfortable or upset, the facilitator must stop the business before the meeting and ask the person whether they would like to make a point of *process* or leave the meeting and talk to a friend or the assistant facilitator.
- 11.3 If someone feels too upset to stay in the meeting and leaves unexpectedly, the facilitator must ask the assistant facilitator or a volunteer to speak to the person outside the meeting as a priority.
- 11.4 In extreme cases, a break may be called by the facilitator, with the facilitator or the assistant facilitator speaking privately to affected or involved participants during the break.
- 11.5 After the break the whole meeting, led by the facilitator, must review the event and decide on how to proceed.
- 11.6 If an interpersonal issue cannot be resolved satisfactorily at the meeting the facilitator may suggest that affected people contact the support and mediation group for assistance.

12 Breaches of meeting procedures

The following actions should be undertaken by the facilitator when a breach of meeting procedures is identified:

- ask the person/people involved to not do so again
- if a person breaches again, give a formal warning to the person
- if a person breaches again after a formal warning, the facilitator may move a motion that the person leave the meeting. This will be treated as an urgency motion requiring at least two thirds present to agree
- if there is an organised attempt to disrupt the meeting such that formal motions regarding removal of persons are unlikely to be successfully and effectively debated, the facilitator may suspend the meeting and reconvene it at a later time or date
- a participant who thinks that the facilitator is breaching meeting procedures may move a motion against the facilitator — either to reverse an action the facilitator has taken or to cease being facilitator of the meeting. In this case the facilitator must be immediately replaced by the assistant facilitator or another experienced facilitator who will take control of the meeting at least until this motion is resolved.