Arid Lands Environment Centre

ALEC Board in brief: notes for prospective Board members

ALEC Strategic Directions

Vision: Healthy futures for arid lands and peoples

- Aim1: Create more sustainable and resilient communities in central Australia
- Aim 2: Protect ecosystems and encourage sustainable use of natural resources in central Australia
- Aim 3: ALEC is effective and influential

Role of the Board

Review and monitor ALEC's work and achievements to ensure ALEC is:

- achieving its objectives
- meeting its legal and regulatory obligations

Develop appropriate strategy and policy

ALEC Board Structure

- Minimum 5 members. (Chair, Deputy, Secretary, Treasurer, one other)
- Positions are spilled and filled at the AGM.
- Additional members may be appointed by the Board at any time, as the Board sees fit. The Board has usually had 3 or more additional members, which has been important to spread the workload and ensure the Board can function even when some members are away.
- Board members must be financial members of ALEC
- Board members are encouraged to stay on the Board beyond a single year to promote continuity

Board Meetings

- At least 6 meetings a year; scheduled for the third Wednesday of the month, 5.30pm to 8pm. Held At ALEC.
- Quorum is 4 Board members
- Aim to circulate papers ahead of Board meetings (ideally a week ahead, not always possible).
- 1 or 2 additional meetings per year for strategic planning or review.

ALEC Staff and operations

Jimmy Cocking (titled 'Director') is CEO and is not a Board member

Most staff are part time. They include Nicole Pietsch (Communications Campaigns Manager); Carmel Vandermolen(Business Operations), Alex Read (Environmental Policy) and Alex McClean (Arid Edge Environmental Services Manager).

ALEC's staff manage about 50 different projects/activities.

Priority issues for the ALEC Board include

- Streamline strategic plan, clearer prioritisation, fewer small grants/jobs (or more efficient engagement with them)
- Business planning and risk management to support ALEC's emerging success with the Arid Edge Environmental Services business
- Improving Board processes and practices.

Governance frameworks/responsibilities

ALEC is

- incorporated in the Northern Territory and its collaborative action extends to Western and South Australia such as through the 10 Deserts partnership.
- a registered environmental organisation with deductible gift recipient (DGR) status through the ALEC Fund.
- registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) as a charity (for environmental purposes, which also involves accountabilities to Commonwealth Dept of Environment and Energy).

Duties of Board members

The duties of ALEC Board members are essentially the same as for any other Board:

- **To act with reasonable care and diligence**. You must exercise your powers and duties with the care and diligence that a reasonable person would if they were in your place.

- **To act in good faith in the best interests of ALEC and for a proper purpose**. When acting as a board member you must make decisions that are in the best interest of ALEC and to further its environmental purpose.

- **Not to improperly use information or position.** Any special knowledge that you gain as a Board member must only be used for the benefit of ALEC and never to further personal or other interests. Similarly, you must not use your position as an ALEC Board member to improperly gain an advantage for yourself or someone else, or cause detriment to ALEC.

- **To disclose conflicts of interest**. If your duty to act in the best interests of the ALEC is in conflict with (or may conflict with) your personal interests, you must disclose this responsibly. Section 10 of the ALEC Constitution sets out how ALEC Board members must act when they have a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in a matter under consideration at a meeting of ALEC or the ALEC Board.

- **To ensure that ALEC's financial affairs are managed responsibly**. You need to be satisfied hat there are systems and processes in place that ensure that ALEC's resources are being effectively put towards the ALEC's environmental purpose and are protected from misuse.

- **Not to allow ALEC to operate while insolvent.** You need to be satisfied that ALEC can pay its debts when they are due or will become due and that it does not continue to operate if it cannot pay its debts.

You need to speak up and ask questions if you don't understand something!