

Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance Inc

Board meeting – MINUTES

Wednesday 29 November, 6.00 – 7.30pm

Landcare and Sustainable Living Centre, 80 Toronto Road, Booragul

Present: Stephen Dewar, Jo Lane, Jean McGarry, Bruce Robertson, Mackenzie Robson, Ingrid Schraner

Apologies: Gabrielle Clappison, Bruce Tozer, Natalia Soeters



MINUTES

Meeting opened 6:17pm (Late start because of storm and traffic)

1. Welcome and Acknowledgement of Country

2. Gab leave and nominate acting Chairperson

Gab is on leave overseas from 26 November – 26 January, and is an apology for this evening's meeting. Mackenzie has offered to act as Chairperson for the meeting.

The board also agreed to appoint a Mackenzie to act as Chairperson for the period that Gab is on leave as well.

Resolution:

Mackenzie to Chair this evening's meeting.

Mackenzie to act as Chairperson while Gab is on leave 26 November – 26 January.

Moved: Jean

Seconded: Steve

Carried.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Purpose for tonight's board member induction:

- Welcome new board members and have opportunity to get to know each other, and the strengths and skills each board member brings
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of board members
- Encourage board to work as a team and agree on procedures and processes

3. Introductions activity

Board members completed a questionnaire reflecting on their experiences as board members, how the board functions, and ideas about how best to work together. Board members also detailed the professional and other skills and experience they bring to the board and the skills and attributes they are keen to contribute.

Questionnaire results were circulated to board members via email.

Board members shared some key points about their reflection on the survey results, and what they want to contribute to the board this year:

- *Agreement that we need to become of interest to younger people*
- *Board meetings are not tight enough to move through the agenda*
- *Need to be more welcoming*
- *Not all board members completed the questionnaire*
- *Look forward to bringing event organising skills to Alliance events and projects*
- *Build up our membership across Lake Mac area, SNGs, Activities and projects*
- *Publicity*
- *Fundraising to become able to make ourselves useful to others*
- *Thinking bigger than my local SNG*
- *Getting across what is possible to achieve*
- *Contributing my environmental knowledge, board history and achievements*
- *Some description need reviewing / review of organisation*

4. Quiz: Board member roles and responsibilities

Rachelle ran a quiz for board members based on this document: [Board member roles and responsibilities](#).

Q1. What should you do if you are expecting to be unavailable for more than 2 weeks?

Alert the Board if you are expecting to be unavailable for a considerable time (eg more than two weeks), or otherwise be unable to participate in Board business as expected.

Q2. When acting as a board member, whose interests are you representing?

Board members are required to represent the interests of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods network as a whole. Board members are not elected to represent just your local Sustainable Neighbourhood group, neighbourhood area, or particular issue of interest.

Q3. What's the maximum number of board members allowed by the constitution?

The Alliance is governed by a Board of up to twelve representatives, elected from the membership.

Q4. What is the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance's legal status?

The Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance (the Alliance) is an incorporated, not-for-profit association under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009. The NSW Department of Fair Trading is responsible for administering the Act. Their website, www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au contains fact sheets and other information about the laws and procedures relating to incorporated associations.

Q5. What is the governing document for the Alliance?

Constitution of the Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance – Adopted 16 November 2021.

Q6. Bonus question: Where can you find a copy of the Alliance Constitution?

- SN website: www.sustainableneighbourhoods.org.au/the-alliance
- Also on the Alliance board's Google drive (for Alliance board members only)

Q7. What is an example of improper use of your position on the board?

Using your position on the board / or using information acquired by virtue of your position on the board:

- to gain material advantage for yourself, or for any other person or organisation
- or to the detriment of the Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance.

Q8. What is a conflict of interest?

A situation where a conflict arises for an individual between two competing interests. This refers to reasonably perceived, potential, or actual conflict of interest.

For example, where your position or influence as board member could result in:

- a financial gain other personal benefit for yourself, or a person, business or organisation you are affiliated with.
- Or where you could be influenced by a competing interest when carrying out your official functions as a board member.

Q9. What should you do if a conflict of interest arises in relation to your position on the board?

Immediately declare any direct or indirect pecuniary interest, or any non-pecuniary conflict of interest, or potential perception of a conflict of interest in any matter before the Board. Conflicts of interests are noted in the Alliance's register and meeting minutes.

Managing conflicts of interest - depends on significance of conflict

- Explanation and board agreement that conflict is not significant
- Withdraw from consideration of or decision making in relation to the matter

Q10. What should you do with the agenda and background papers that are circulated prior to a board meeting?

Read all documents and consider issues before the meeting.

Bonus points for researching and circulating additional relevant background information and supporting ideas for discussion.

Q11. On what basis should you consider, debate, and vote on issues before the board?

Consider, debate, and vote on issues before the Board on the basis of the best interests of the Alliance and the Sustainable Neighbourhood network only.

Q12. Who is responsible for understanding and regularly reviewing the Alliance's financial position?

All board members.

5. Vision for the board 2024

Alliance Board 2024 - Imagine it's November 2024 and the board is presenting the Annual Report for the previous 12 months. The board were the absolute best and you achieved everything you wanted to!

What did the board actually deliver? Who benefitted from our work? What has changed as a result? What events or activities happened? How were you involved? How did we work well together?

Board members' key ideas from the prompts above are summarised below.

Volunteer support

- *Reinvigoration of SN groups / local groups expanded / gain strength / increase member activation*
- *Increased volunteer and member numbers*
- *Board known as group who can support and guide SNG and community ideas*
- *Coordination between groups – Exchange of assets and skills*
- *Training, forums, fundraising, grants, collaborations for local groups*
- *Visioning workshops for local groups*
- *Board supports local groups in their activities, and helps overcome their bottlenecks*

Visibility

- *Increased visibility of Sustainable Neighbourhoods, publicity, promotional events, value of SNGs is understood*
- *Recruit new members and volunteers, including younger people*
- *Local groups benefit and are celebrated*

Financial

- *Improved bank balance / stronger financial position*
- *Develop alternate funding sources*

Impact

- *Focus on circular economy theme (eg Repair Cafe, stalls, key days etc)*
- *Waste to Art in 3 sites*
- *Trees and Landcare projects, ReLeaf*
- *Events with SNGs*
- *Environmental benefits*
- *Partner with other networks to co-deliver projects / gain new collaborations*
- *Work with schools*

Working as a board

- *Board sets 12 month goals and KPIs. Achieve planned specific SNAP*
- *Good review resulting in feasible objectives.*
- *Spontaneous working groups formed that prepare summaries of actions taken and proposals for next steps for productive board meetings.*
- *Ability for board to discuss ideas, seek improvements and disagree respectfully*

6. Secretariat role and Council support

Rachelle summarised the role of the Secretariat, and Council support: [Secretariat tasks and Council support](#).

Note two key Council strategies:

- [Community Engagement Strategy](#). This applies to Sustainable Neighbourhood Groups as well as all other community groups, volunteers, and individuals.
- [Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2027](#).

7. Meeting procedures and decision making

Draft meeting procedures were circulated among board members.

The board agreed to follow the rules and expectations outlined in this document throughout the board's term to help us work together effectively.

Some additional points were discussed and agreed:

- Chair to decide what can be included on the agenda, or whether certain topics need to be deferred.
- Time limits for each agenda item will be helpful.
- Aim for consensus decision making. However, if the board is unable to reach consensus, then a majority vote can be taken. If there is no clear outcome, the Chair has the final say.
- Noted board member responsibility to ensure their communications are a true reflection of board consensus and decisions. Board members must be careful to avoid misrepresenting the consensus or a decision of the board.
- Day to day items of business such as oversight of risk assessments, grant applications, award nominations will be routinely managed via email. Positive responses from 3 board members will be adequate for day to day items to be approved. Rachelle will note any items out of the ordinary that may require further consideration or consensus. At any time a board member may alert the board of any concerns or questions or seek a more comprehensive discussion.
- The meeting quorum is defined in the Constitution: A quorum of 50% (rounded up to one whole person) of the Board membership is required for the meeting to be recognised as an authorised meeting for the resolutions or recommendations to be valid.
With 9 current board members, the meeting quorum is 5.

8. Key procedures and resources – for board member reference

These resources are available in the Board Member's Google Drive.

- Contact lists
 - **Board member contact details.** That document also includes a list of the public email addresses for SN groups and key projects.
 - **"Sustainable Neighbourhood Key Contacts"** – This is an email list Rachelle manages that goes to ~2-5 committee members from each SN group (+ Alliance board members). Main channel used to communicate to SN groups. Depending on the content, there is often a request for Key Contacts to pass on information/requests to their members.

- **[“Sustainable Neighbourhood News”](#)** – Formatted monthly e-newsletter ~1600 subscribers. Main communication and promotion that goes direct to individual volunteers, Alliance members and wider network of supporters.
- **Meeting minutes** – Alliance board draft meeting minutes are routinely emailed to board members and a list of ~30 other recipients who have asked to receive them. Anyone can ask to be added to this list. Once the minutes are approved at the following board meeting, they are [publicly available on the website](#).
- **Alliance policies and procedures.** All Alliance policies, guides and other resources are available publicly on the website: [Resources \(sustainableneighbourhoods.org.au\)](https://sustainableneighbourhoods.org.au/resources)
- **Shared Google Drive**
Encourage sharing draft documents and proposals in this drive to enable access to the most up to date version and enables commenting and editing by all in real time.
- **Bank signatories**
Current bank signatories are Jean, Gab, Steve, and Mackenzie.
All withdrawals require authorisation by 2 signatories.
- **Alliance important information**
This document details important information about the organisation including ABN, INC number, Insurance details etc. It is not for general circulation but is available for board members to view.
- **Register of interests**
A record of any actual or perceived conflicts of interest involving board members is kept on the board’s Register of Interests and noted in the meeting minutes.

FOR DISCUSSION

9. Alliance submission to NSW Plastics Plan consultation

Steve prepared and circulated a draft submission to comment on the current NSW Plastics Plan consultation.

Encourage individuals and groups to submit their feedback to the consultation.

Resolution: Approval for Steve to submit the submission on behalf of Alliance.

Moved: Steve

Seconded: Mackenzie

Carried.

10. Council staff invitation to February board meeting

Invitation to Andrew Bryant (Manager, Community Partnerships) and Chris Harle (Coordinator, Sustainability Engagement) to attend February board meeting. Key items of interest:

- Meet the board for 2024

- Progress on delivery of Council's [Volunteer Engagement Strategy](#)
- Other relevant Council strategies, eg Community Strategic Plan, Operational Plan and ESSAP

Resolution: Invite Andrew and Chris to attend February board meeting.

Moved: Steve

Seconded: Jean

Carried.

FOR INFORMATION

11. Risk assessments and requests

- Greater Charlestown SNG – Visioning workshop 11 November. Risk assessment circulated and approved via email.
- Cardiff Area SNG – 3x Waste Free Christmas workshops, 3 December. Risk assessment circulated and approved via email.
- Toronto Area SNG – Market stall, 17 December. Risk assessment circulated and approved via email.

12. Treasurer's Report

Not available as its' not the end of the month yet.

ACTION: Jean to prepare a report that covers November 2023 – January 2024 to present to the February board meeting.

ACTION: Rachele to prepare quarterly report at end of December to circulate to board members.

13. Previous meeting minutes

Draft meeting minutes from 1 November were circulated via email.

Proposed resolution: Confirm that the previous meeting minutes are an accurate record.

Moved: Steve

Seconded: Ingrid

Carried

14. Correspondence

26 October – 23 November 2023

- AGM reminder and background papers sent to RSVPs
- Enquiry from The Fullerton Hotel Sydney seeking assistance to compost their coffee ground waste. Directed to Sydney City Council.
- Invitation to attend SN Celebration Event, 25 November – Sent to SN Key Contacts. Also reminder and request for groups to prepare a short report.

- Congratulations from Keep Australia Beautiful NSW – Awarded Highly Commended for Plastic Free Cafes project. They also provided some valuable feedback about the project design and delivery.
- Draft AGM minutes and Annual Report sent to Meeting attendees, SN Key Contacts and Meeting minute recipients.
- Invitation to nominate for the Hunter Environment Advisory Group – Sent to SN Key Contacts
- Nomination for Repair It Lake Mac submitted to the Lake Mac Awards, Environmental Leader category.
- Sustainable Neighbourhood News – November 2023
- Invitation from NSW Office of Environment, Energy and Science with complimentary tickets to attend AdaptNSW Forum

15. Next meeting:

Wednesday 7 February 2024, 6.00 – 7.30pm

Landcare and Sustainable Living Centre, Booragul

16. Meeting close 7.50pm