



How to Chair an Effective Health & Safety Committee Meeting

Many workplaces in NSW have a Health & Safety Committee either as a permanent body or as one that is set up from time to time when needed to deal with specific WHS matters. Often a H & S Committee is composed of one or two management representatives and workers who are not HSR. But other workplaces may also have some worker members who are HSRs. And in some workplaces all the worker members are HSRs.

This article was written specifically for the consideration of the Chairperson of a Health & Safety Committee.

Successful Committee Meetings that Run Smoothly

The basic actions listed below are the actions that Chairpersons in general have found to be valuable in helping them to successfully deal with items on the Agenda of the Committee meeting. You may care to look them over to see if there are any actions in the list that you would find useful in your Health & Safety Committee meetings.

- Prepare and circulate a draft agenda before the meeting so that members can prepare themselves to discuss what is on the agenda.
- At the start of the meeting get the Committee to agree on the draft agenda - review, revise and reorder sequence of items on the agenda if necessary.
- During the meeting ensure that the agreed agenda is followed in an orderly manner.
- Give Committee members equal opportunity to put forward their point of view about each item on the agenda.
- Clarify members' views and the facts they rely upon when necessary.
- Ensure that what is presented as fact is actually correct.
- Ensure the Committee focuses on progressing and resolving each agenda item and does not get sidetracked into talking about irrelevant issues.
- Identify any points of disagreement and work for a general agreement.
- Ensure the Committee arrives at clear recommendations for each agenda item covering what should be done, who should do it and by when.

In addition a Chairperson's ability, and the ability of the Committee members, to be effective would be enhanced by understanding and being able to work in the context of matters such as:

- the functions and purpose of the Committee
- the purpose of the Committee meeting
- the Chairperson's role and purpose
- how to resolve disagreements and reach a consensus on issues
- the WHS duty of care of the PCBU, Officers, Workers, and Others; the process of WHS consultation, the process of risk management, and the WHS Management System in their workplace.