How To Establish
A
Neighbourhood House
OR
Community Centre
Resource Manual

Adapted from the publication originally written and compiled in 1987 by Vicki Hyde, Ingrid Vorrendt, Liz Becker and Mary Sobotka, and revised in 1994 by Carolyn Starkey.

Written by Kate Reynolds

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HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

This manual is intended to be a guide for community groups. It is divided into six (6) key Sections:

Section 1 - ABOUT COMMUNITY CENTRES SA
Section 2 - ABOUT COMMUNITY CENTRES AND NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
Section 3 - GETTING STARTED
Section 4 - GENERAL INFORMATION
Section 5 - SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT - TICK OFF!
Section 6 - USEFUL RESOURCES

The following symbols are used throughout the booklet to refer you to other sources of information or to highlight important points:

![Symbol]

Useful organisations for you to contact for information on a particular topic.

![Symbol]

Useful resources for you to read about a particular topic.

![Symbol]

Important points for you to consider on a particular topic.

![Symbol]

Refers you to one of the publications from Community Centres SA’s ‘Successful Community Management’ Kit - Section 5 of this Manual.
INTRODUCTION

Community Centres SA is the peak body for 150 community centres and neighbourhood houses throughout South Australia. It was formed in 1981 to provide support to houses and centres and to assist them to deliver the best possible range of opportunities and services to their participants, management committee members and volunteers.

Community Centres SA’s focus remains firmly on encouraging community development by strengthening the networks and skills of the paid and unpaid workers in community centres and neighbourhood houses across the state.

Recent years have seen a rapid expansion of community centres and neighbourhood houses as more and more communities have come to recognise their value. The number of houses and centres throughout South Australia increased from 25 in the mid 1980’s to 81 by 2005.

Community Centres SA receives numerous enquiries from new groups seeking information, support and ongoing guidance during the process of establishing their own centre or house. We have received encouraging feedback from these people on the usefulness of the earlier editions of this manual and hope that this revised edition is helpful to both new and established community development groups.

We sincerely thank all those people and organisations that have contributed in various ways to this publication. We recognise that this manual will not answer all your questions but hopefully it will provide you with some relevant “guide posts” to further sources of information and support.

Rosemary Neal
Former Executive Officer
CANH
SECTION 1

COMMUNITY CENTRES SA INCORPORATED
1. ABOUT COMMUNITY CENTRES SA

Community Centres SA is the peak body for community and neighbourhood houses and centres in South Australia. It promotes and supports the sector and advocates for the needs and interests of houses and centres to a variety of organisations and government departments. CANH also provides support, information and training on an individual and regional basis to the 87 houses and centres throughout metropolitan and rural South Australia.

Community Centres SA is managed by a volunteer Board of Management made up of paid and/or unpaid staff from community centres and neighbourhood houses. The Board meets monthly and is responsible for employing the Association’s team of workers that consists of an Executive Officer, Office Administrator, and a Sector Development Officer. Various project staff are also employed from time to time. Community Centres SA is assisted in its role by funding from various State government (primarily Department for Families and Communities) and non-government sources and also generates its own income from special projects and membership fees.

An annual membership entitles member houses/centres to:

- a quarterly newsletter
- fortnightly electronic newsletter
- access and use of resources
- assistance for established or developing houses and centres
- access to information about the state-wide network
- access to information about the national network
- advice on community management
- advice on program and course development
- access to relevant training programs

Information and support is provided through e-newsletters, mail-outs, on-site visits, publications, website, social media, telephone contact, data base, seminars, training programs and our annual conference.

Highlights of our yearly activities include:

- **National Neighbourhood House Week** (usually coincides with National Volunteers Week in the middle of May each year).
- **Community Centres SAN’s Annual Conference** (which is usually held the week after National Neighbourhood House Week – during the last week in May each year).
- **Adult Learners Week** in September each year.

Community Centres SA provides representation to a range of relevant non-government organisations to ensure that the views of houses and centres are heard at Local, State and Federal levels.
Community Centres SA is also an active member of the national body for community and neighbourhood houses and centres. National Link represents the 1000 houses and centres across the nation and organises an Annual Conference (usually held between September - November).

SECTION 2

COMMUNITY

and

NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSES

and

CENTRES
Community centres and neighbourhood houses are usually incorporated, community managed groups operating in a local setting.

They provide programs and activities that integrate community development and adult learning. Houses and centres are funded and supported through a variety of government, non-government, corporate and community resources.

Houses and centres can be interest or geographically based. They provide a wide range of services and activities for the local community that may include:

- legal services
- playgroups
- occasional child care
- art & craft groups
- community lunches
- community information services
- “Tax Help”
- support groups
- food co-operatives
- youth groups
- meeting facilities
- language and literacy programs
- keep fit classes
- life-skills courses
- resource centres
- after-school care / school holiday programs
- adult and community education programs
- recreational facilities
- community health services
- health promotion services
- referrals to government or non-government services.
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT... Where does it fit in?

Community centres and neighbourhood houses are usually founded on the principles of “community development” - a process and philosophical approach which enables individuals, groups and communities to gain control over the factors that influence their well being in the broadest sense (social, economic, political, physical, environmental and cultural well-being).

Community development processes are about communities gaining the resources needed to take and maintain control over these factors. People working together within and for their community have a great deal of knowledge about the community, the community’s needs and aspirations and can collectively make decisions about solving problems and creating opportunities. Within this type of supportive, open and encouraging structure, the community’s knowledge, values and opinions are considered and projects, services or activities are most likely to be what the community wants and needs at that time.

THE KEY PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ARE:

• community involvement and participation - in research, planning, management and evaluation of services
• empowerment - by sharing information, resources, skills, ideas, responsibilities and decision making
• self reliance - building structures and strategies to increase opportunities for sharing power
• working together - sharing the problem-solving, strategies & workload to increase the sense of community
• advocacy - taking action on behalf of the community
• recognition of community needs - linking activities and services to the needs & directions expressed by the community
• consultation - making use of the community’s knowledge and checking that planned services and activities are what the community wants (opposite to the top-down approach)
• equity - recognition that inequities do exist in communities and society and encouraging opportunities to create a more equitable community
• decentralisation - projects and ideas originating and being managed at the local level
• cooperation - building links between bureaucracies and community groups
• collaboration - community groups & bureaucracies recognising that many factors contribute to a problem and working together to offer solutions and opportunities for social and personal change.

The role of a Community Development Worker is to work with a community, in addressing its needs, issues or problems - by providing information, skills and access to resources to assist the community in the process of organising itself and taking action. Many workers in community centres and neighbourhood houses are employed to carry out both short and long term community development projects. A CD worker is very much an ‘agent of change’, working to redress disadvantage.
Community Development can be:

- a job or a profession
- a part of human services work
- a method or approach
- a social movement
- a philosophical or intellectual approach to the world
- a political activity.

(Adapted from Susan Kenny, ‘Developing Communities for the Future’.)

Community Development is not unique to the field of human services. Community Development principles are applied equally successfully in other fields of human endeavour such as the environmental movement (eg, Landcare) or as part of community based economic development activities (eg, Main Street Programs).

Importantly, community development is not something that allows short cuts. The various components of consultation, collaboration, empowerment and wide participation are essential to the success of enduring community development organisations such as community centres and neighbourhood houses.

There are no “short cuts” in true community development!
Community centres and neighbourhood houses are important to the well-being of communities because they encourage:

- **Links** to be made between all the people which make up a community - young, old, employed and unemployed, established and new cultural groups, long term residents and newcomers, and between people of varying physical or intellectual abilities, and everything between...

- **Involvement** of local people in issues which affect their lives - involvement which frequently becomes a focus for organised community action.

- **Information, advice and encouragement** to be given in a local, friendly setting - rather than through a large, impersonal or distant bureaucracy.

In summary, community centres and neighbourhood houses can be shaped to become anything their local residents want them to be - within the available resources of course!

They are places to:
- learn new skills
- share existing skills
- enjoy social opportunities
- get information, help or advice
- build community networks
- bring about community action

Many houses and centres are run by volunteer management committees drawn from user groups and key decision making bodies such as local government and other community development organisations. All centres are not-for-profit organisations. Some centres receive considerable support (either in-kind or financial support) from their local Council whilst others have yet to establish this kind of relationship. Some houses are located in community owned buildings or rented premises and others are in purpose built Council owned buildings. Some centres have paid staff whilst others operate entirely with volunteer workers.

Some houses and centres generate their operating funds (or “core” funds) from course fees, memberships or fund raising ventures while others receive government funding (either state or local). The State government Department for Families and Communities plays a significant role in providing funding to approximately half the centres in South Australia. Local Government also contributes significant funding to houses and centres. Most centres supplement their operating budget with special purpose grant funds (from time to time) to address particular needs in their communities.

Houses and centres differ greatly in their size, budget, facilities, hours of operation, staffing arrangements, level of activity and type of activity because the communities they serve have differing interests, needs and resources.
# Houses and Centres in South Australia...

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<tr>
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<td>Aberfoyle Community Centre</td>
<td>1 Jessica Street ABERFOYLE PARK SA 5159</td>
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<td>Adelaide South West Community Centre</td>
<td>171 Sturt Street ADELAIDE SA 5000</td>
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<td>Lutheran Community Care – Blair Athol</td>
<td>309 Prospect Road, BLAIR ATHOL SA 5084</td>
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<td>MarionLIFE Community Services</td>
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<td>Mid Murray Support Service</td>
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<td>Murray Mallee Community Ed Network</td>
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<td>Northern Area Community And Youth Services</td>
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<td>Cnr Bridge &amp; Kesters Roads, PARA HILLS WEST SA 5096</td>
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<td>28 Symonds Street, PORT PIRIE SA 5540</td>
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<td>1 Thomas Street, NAILSWORTH SA 5083</td>
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<td>Reedbeds Community Centre</td>
<td>19 Fitch Road, FULHAM SA 5024</td>
<td>8235 1644</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Seafood/Moana Neighbourhood Centre</td>
<td>Beechwood Grove</td>
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<td>Southern Junction Community Services</td>
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<td>Southern Yorke Peninsula Community Telecentre</td>
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<td>Surrey Downs Community House</td>
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<td>Tailem Bend Community Centre</td>
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<td>Taperoo Community Centre</td>
<td>14-20 Yongala Street</td>
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<td>The Hut Community Centre</td>
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<td>The Summit</td>
<td>1 Crescent Drive</td>
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<td>Thebarton Neighbourhood House</td>
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<td>Torrens Valley Community Centre</td>
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<td>Trott Park Neighbourhood Centre</td>
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<td>Unley Community Centre</td>
<td>18 Arthur Street</td>
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<td>Vietnamese Community in Australia / SA Chapter</td>
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<td>8447 8821</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wandana Community Centre</td>
<td>48 Wandana Avenue</td>
<td>8369 1886</td>
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<td>West Lakes Community Centre</td>
<td>Cnr West Lakes Blvd &amp; Brebner Drive</td>
<td>8408 1144</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women's Community Centre (SA)</td>
<td>64 Nelson Street</td>
<td>8362 6571</td>
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<tr>
<td>Woodcroft Morphett Vale N/hood Centre</td>
<td>175 Bains Road</td>
<td>83840070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yankalilla Youth &amp; Community Centre</td>
<td>181 Main South Road</td>
<td>8558 0200</td>
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</table>

Contact Community Centres SA for information about which houses or centres might be useful for your planning group to visit, or, you can make direct contact with a house or centre near your community.
SECTION 3

GETTING STARTED
3. FORMING YOUR PLANNING GROUP OF INTERESTED PEOPLE

**Steps...**

1. **Before** you can start the hard work of finding a base, exploring funding sources, selecting programs and organising volunteers and paid staff, you will need to ensure that there are enough people who are interested, willing and able to do the considerable amount of work involved.

2. **Establishing** or expanding your planning group involves making contact with local community groups for example,
   - parenting groups
   - groups for unemployed people
   - health professionals
   - pensioner clubs
   - support groups
   - special interest groups
   - environment action groups
   - local council staff and/or elected members
   - recreational, social and sporting groups
   - resident groups etc.

   Representatives of such groups may be aware of particular needs and resources, have skills to assist your group, or be able to recommend other people interested in setting up a centre or house in your community.

3. **Expanding** your awareness of needs and resources and involving skilled, energetic and interested people will mean that you are able to form a PLANNING GROUP to get together to discuss the project and focus on the tasks needed to establish a centre or house.
4. **ISSUES** which the Planning Group will need to consider and discuss include:

   - **WHY** does your group want to establish a centre or house?
   - **WHAT** community needs does it want to meet?
   - **WHICH** services does it want to provide?
   - **IS** there any other service already in existence in the area that could be adapted to meet these needs?
   - **HAVE** you widespread support from a range of local people?
   - **WHO** can provide support and resources?
   - **WILL** anyone oppose you?
   - **WHERE** should your centre or house be based?
4. ASSESSING COMMUNITY NEED AND SUPPORT...

Your Planning Group will have been formed in response to a perceived need for services, facilities or activities not available in your local area. Before you can approach funding bodies for assistance, it is essential that you have both evidence of local needs and a significant level of local support for a community centre or neighbourhood house to meet these needs. In other words you must show that your perceived needs are actual needs.

1. DEFINING AREAS OF NEED

- **List** the perceived need in your area.

- **Gather** facts as evidence of these local needs eg, Australian Bureau of Statistics data, other Local, State or Federal government reports, information from your local community health service, reports from TAFE, University staff or students, data from your local schools, preschools or child care centres, Family and Youth Services offices and other recent studies or project work. Often what may seem at first to be an unlikely source can be most useful - for instance your local Landcare group might be able to give you valuable information about the needs of rural men.

- **Gather a mix of quantitative data** (describes the quantities ie. population or cultural backgrounds or income levels) and qualitative data (outlines attitudes, beliefs and experiences). For examples, a mix of factual information such as statistical data about birth rates in your area from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and anecdotal information from your local CYFHS nurse will give a better picture of your community’s needs in terms of services for young mothers than just one or the other.

- **Collate** a list of people who know about these needs and collect any material they may have, eg, newsletters, articles in local papers or lists of group activities.

Social Research/Needs Assessment resources available from Community Centres SA:

Getting up-to-date and relevant information is not easy. It requires persistence and ingenuity because often organisations do not realise the value of the information they have stored “somewhere in the back room”. Phone Community Centres SA for ideas if you are hitting brick walls!
5. ORGANISING A COMMUNITY MEETING

Once you have gathered initial evidence to demonstrate that there are unmet needs in your community, your Planning Group will now need to gain formal recognition and support.

1. GAINING RECOGNITION and SUPPORT

   o Begin generating ideas for programs which the centre or house may run.

   o Advertise for interested people to attend your planning meetings.
     Use Notice Boards, school and community newsletters and make contact with the local newspaper.
     Be sure to include a name, phone/fax numbers and postal address on your notices.

   o Plan a Community Meeting to publicly launch the ideas generated by your Planning Group.
     At this meeting you can formally elect interested people to become your Steering Committee that will carry out the next steps of getting the house or centre “up-and-running”.

2. PLANNING THE COMMUNITY MEETING

2.1 COST

You will need money and/or resources to cover the cost of the venue, advertising, printed material, refreshments, etc. Approach your local school, church or Council to find a venue for a reduced fee or, with a bit of luck, free.

Some local Councils provide grants or donations for community development projects. Contact either your local ward Councillor(s) the Council’s Community Services Department, or, where appropriate, the City Manager and ask if they will contribute to the cost of the community meeting.

Local businesses, politicians or other service providers may be able to provide refreshments, photocopying etc. or small stationery items for your meeting.

Don’t forget to acknowledge all contributions and donations at your meeting!
2.2 VENUE, TIME and DATE

Choose an accessible, local venue. The venue should be close to transport, have sufficient parking available, be well sign-posted, (well lit if your meeting is at night) and easy to find. (A room in the middle of a large Council office building can be off-putting to some people.)

If possible, organise and advertise that transport will be available to the meeting, especially if it is to be held during the evening.
If possible, organise and advertise that supervised child care will be available at the meeting.

Choose a time most suitable to the majority of people you hope to attract to the meeting - you will never satisfy all of the people all of the time but you must consider issues such as sporting and recreation activities, public transport, seasonal activities etc.

Give your Planning Group enough lead time to organise and advertise the meeting - a minimum of 6 weeks is usually required.

2.3 ADVERTISING

It is essential that the Community Meeting attracts a reasonable number of people, especially local residents. Numbers and the range of groups attending will be evidence of the need for and interest in the project.

Clearly advertise the purpose of the meeting not less than two weeks in advance. If you advertise more than three weeks in advance, you may need to repeat your advertising. Remember to always put the names and telephone numbers of your key contact persons on all of your advertising and promotional material.

Advertising is promotion you pay for, for example:
- Advertisements in your local papers
- Advertisements on Community Radio
- Postage Paid letter-box drops

Promotion is everything else you do to get your message across:
- Posters on Notice Boards
- Letters to the Editor
- School and Community Newsletters
- Display in local library or at the local shopping centres etc.
- Announcements at community events and meetings of other organisations.
- Letter box drops
Local paper and local radio announcements

Don't forget to check out the cost beforehand, as advertising in the local paper or radio can be expensive! Inquire about free community announcements. Ask a journalist to interview and photograph someone from your Planning Group about the project and advertise the meeting in this way. Invite your local press to the Community Meeting.

Posters

Put up bright and lively posters, preferably in local shops, meeting places, schools, kindergartens, hotels etc. 2-3 weeks before the meeting. (Don't forget to remove the posters after the meeting!)

Invitations

Send invitation letters to all local community groups, health services, churches, schools, sporting and recreation clubs, service clubs, the local Council staff and elected members, your Members of Parliament and the Managers of potential funding bodies or service delivery agencies in your area (eg. Family and Youth Services, Legal Aid). The best support often comes from unlikely places and you may find that many of these groups will happily share their resources or skills with your group - if they support your general aims.

If you know where your centre is likely to be located, door-knock and personally deliver invitations to local residents in the near vicinity.

Spread the work and Lobby

Talk to as many people as you can about your plans at the Community Meeting, particularly those who may become actively involved.

Networking is a vital part of community development - you will gain important information and create enthusiasm for your goals, as well as gaining better access to the skills and resources of other groups and individuals.

2.4 FINDING A GUEST SPEAKER(S), ELECTING A MEETING CHAIRPERSON AND MINUTE-TAKER

For your Community Meeting choose a Chairperson who has had experience with chairing meetings. Ask your Chairperson to give a brief history of the Planning Groups activities and outline its broad goals at the beginning of the meeting.
You may like to have two speakers:

- Someone who has had experience with setting up a community centre or neighbourhood house
- Someone who knows a lot about the local area and its needs. (This could, however, be covered by the Chairperson if they have this knowledge.)

Discuss the aims and format of the meeting with both the Chairperson and Speaker(s) well before the meeting. Ask them to keep their presentations short, eg, 10-15 minutes each. Consider using maps and diagrams to make the information as clear as possible. Allow and encourage discussion time.

Circulate an attendance sheet at the meeting, so that everybody present can record their name, address, phone number and email address and special interests. (This list can then be used as a mailing list.) Apologies should also be recorded. Nominate a Minute-Taker from your Planning Group prior to the meeting. The Minute-Taker should record all statements of interest, evidence of needs and ideas (or concerns) from the floor. These statements can later be used as supporting information for funding submissions.

Circulate and display information at your meeting about what a neighbourhood house or community centre might look like in your local area. Provide lively and interesting information about other centres in your locality, or in communities that are similar to yours. The idea is that you highlight the benefits of a community managed centre, not just the hard work that it will take to get it established - although of course this mustn’t be forgotten!

### 2.5 ELECTIONS

Indicate on your advertising material that nominations for a Steering Committee or Working Party to help establish the centre will be called for at the Community Meeting.

Make sure that you have enough interested members to form the basis of a Steering Committee. You will need to do some lobbying prior to the meeting to encourage a cross-section of people in the community to nominate.

The ideal size for a Steering Committee is 7-10 members, but be flexible. If you are lucky enough to get more nominations, it may be better to have a bigger committee to retain people’s interest and spread the workload. Remember, the group will need many small sub-committees to undertake the tasks needed when setting up the community centre or neighbourhood house.
2.6 FORMAT OF THE MEETING AND THE AGENDA

Make sure everyone at the meeting has a copy of the agenda - so that they can follow the order of proceedings but also to help jog their memory when they talk about the meeting to other people.

Below is an example of an agenda for a Community Meeting.

A planned and well-run meeting allows all the business to be dealt with and creates an impression of professionalism for your group, but remember, some people also come to meetings to socialise. Allow time for informal exchanges of ideas (networking) after the close of the meeting - important discussions and decision-making about following up on ideas can occur during this less formal part of the meeting.

COMMUNITY MEETING
To discuss proposed
SEAVIEW HILLS COMMUNITY CENTRE PROJECT

7:30 pm, Monday 7 October 2005
Resource Centre, Seaview Hills Primary School

AGENDA

1. Introduction by Ms Stefanie Jones
   Chairperson, Ocean View Region Community Services Forum

2. Guest Speakers
   1. Ms Pam Smith, Community And Neighbourhood Houses And Centres Association Inc
      (10 minutes)
   2. Mr Joe Condello - Chairperson, Mount Beauty Community House (10 minutes)

3. Video presentation of “Open Doors And Pathways” (8 minutes)

4. Discussion & Recommendations for Action

5. Election of Steering Committee

   9:15-9:45 pm - Refreshments
3. **AFTER THE MEETING...**

☑ Organise press releases for articles in the local paper and newsletters etc and for an announcement on your local radio/television.

☑ Send thank-you letters to all those who contributed to the meeting, eg, donors, guest speakers, child care staff and participants, and gently remind them about any action they promised to take to help your Steering Committee achieve its goals.

- ‘Making Your Mark - A Guide To Promoting Neighbourhood Centres & Their Services’ by Local Community Services Association of New South Wales.

Contact Community Centres SA for information about speakers, relevant videos or overhead presentations for your Community Meeting.
SECTION 4

GENERAL

INFORMATION
6. DECIDING ABOUT PROGRAMS

Neighbourhood houses and community centres can be put to a number of different uses, according to the needs and resources of each community. For example, they may be the venue or base for:

1. **SERVICES, PROGRAMS or COURSES** organised by the centre or house and funded by a variety of sources including government agencies, as an example,
   * Adult Literacy and Numeracy programs funded by the ACE Community Partnerships Unit, Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST).
   * See next page for further examples under “House Projects”

2. **PROGRAMS or SERVICES** funded by Local, State or Federal government, and provided as an outreach service, eg,
   * Child & Youth Family Services (CYFS)
   * Community Health Services
   * Community Legal Service

3. **LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUPS**, eg,
   * Residents' Associations
   * Historical Societies
   * Cultural Groups
   * Environmental Action Groups
   * Art, Craft and Drama Groups
   * Discussion and Support Groups

4. **“ONE-OFF” MEETING VENUES** for other groups in the area, eg,
   * Special Event Planning Meeting
   * Community Information Night.

*Houses and centres vary their programs throughout the year according to community interest - most have a range of activities that come from each of these categories.*
The following diagram shows how the programs and activities might fit into the Management Structure of a typical community centre or neighbourhood house.

(Diagram adapted from an original publication by Prospect Community House.)
7. PROGRAM RESOURCES

Before you can approach other organisations to obtain staffing or other resources for your centre or house, it is necessary for you to be clear about what resources you need in the early days. You will need to carefully consider questions such as:

- How many workers (paid and/or unpaid) are needed to run the centre on a daily basis in its early days? This includes considering what their roles might be, eg, Program Coordinator, Bookings Officer, Group Leaders and Tutors...

- Which programs and activities will be held at the centre, when and where?

- Which programs will you be able to begin immediately and which may need to wait until the house is more established?

- How many people are likely to participate in the centre's activities at any one time?

- Check that you are not duplicating existing services or activities.
- Approach local groups and ask in what way their members might use the house or centre.
- Draw up a timetable of what you think a typical week of the centre's activities will be.
- Initially organise the courses/programs that are easiest to set-up/maintain and require the least resources, and/or programs that have high demand.

- The ACE Community Partnerships Unit of Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology can help you plan programs to get you started. They will also be able to help you with funding applications (after you have become an incorporated body) for relevant courses and may be able to put you in touch with tutors or group facilitators for specialised topics. Contact the ACE Unit on 08 8226 1725 for information.
- Community Centres SA also maintains information on tutors and programs for your use.

- “Making Your Mark - A Guide To Promoting Neighbourhood Centres & Their Services” by Local Community Services Association of New South Wales.
- Various publications by the VET Equity & ACE Unit.
8. HUMAN RESOURCES - VOLUNTEERS and PAID STAFF

1. PAID STAFF

Some community groups operate successfully with unpaid or volunteer coordinators and volunteer Management Committees. However, in recent years, State and Local governments have recognised the need for providing financial resources to community centres and neighbourhood houses to assist them in their work. This funding has allowed many centres and houses to employ at least part-time paid staff.

Funding for a Co-ordinator (sometimes called the Team Leader, or Community Development Officer) means that volunteers are no longer expected to take on the major responsibility for the day to day running of the centre or house and its projects.

Paid community development workers are expected to have many skills: submission writing, financial management, business planning, volunteer management, risk management, program development, social research, administration, marketing and promotion, report writing etc. It is increasingly difficult to find (and keep) workers who have the skills, knowledge, networks and time available to carry out this work in an unpaid capacity!

The availability of project funding from State, Federal or Local Governments to provide additional staffing for new programs and activities will be covered later.

- Community Centres SA
- Community Employers’ Association
- Employing Handbook, SACOSS
- See “Employing Staff” and “Selecting Staff” from Community Centres SA’s “Successful Community Management” checklists
2. VOLUNTEERS - UNPAID STAFF

Volunteers are crucial to the healthy functioning of a centre or house because they:

J **take democratic responsibility** for the overall management of affairs of the centre through the Management Committee

J **extend** the centre or house activities beyond the knowledge, skills and available time of the paid staff

J **facilitate** groups and courses

J **act as a bridge** between the centre and the community, ensuring that the programs and activities are meeting community expectations.

J **assist with** (or are responsible for) day-to-day administrative tasks

J **carry out a myriad of tasks** associated with raising funds, promotion, maintenance etc.
People volunteer to become involved in the community centres and neighbourhood houses for a variety of reasons. It may be that they wish to:

- **have a say/input** into how the centre or house is managed
- **maintain/develop** skills and experience
- **get to know** other local people
- **become** more involved in their local community
- **become** involved in social action about a particular issue.

**P**

- Recruiting, retaining and managing volunteers is not easy, especially if you are also an unpaid worker. Investing some time and energy early in your centre’s development to understand the broad principles of good volunteer management will make everybody’s task easier and less frustrating! It will also give an excellent impression to the wider community of the way your house or centre intends to ‘look after’ its most important asset.

**Com**

- Community Centres SA can provide you with details about in-house training sessions.
- Volunteering SA.
- Your local council may have specialist staff that can help you develop recruitment strategies.

**Volunteer Management Manual** - Volunteering SA.
- Examples of Volunteer Handbooks developed by various centres are available from Community Centres SA.
- Active Australia handbook on recruiting, retaining and managing volunteers.
9. TRAINING

In order to encourage growth, good practice and a sense of belonging, the house or centre should use all the training opportunities that are available. The management committee, paid staff and volunteers will need a myriad of skills to run a house or centre.

You will need to consider providing training in the following types of areas:

- administration
- writing funding submissions
- meeting procedures
- customer service
- program development
- volunteer management
- occupational health, safety & welfare
- promotion and marketing
- basic counselling & referral skills
- recording and reporting
- desktop publishing
- financial administration
- first aid
- policy development
- staff selection
- fund-raising

Not all of this can be achieved immediately but your group will need to develop a basic training/orientation program for all volunteers and staff members.

There may be training opportunities already available in your local community through organisations such as:

- Schools, kindergartens & health centres
- Service organisations/clubs
- Sporting & recreations clubs
- TAFE colleges
- Economic development boards
- Religious & welfare groups
- Neighbouring houses and centres
- Local Council
• Contact Community Centres SA for information about conferences, seminars and training programs in your local area and “issues” based training programs offered by other agencies.

• Volunteering SA and Community Employers’ Association also offer training programs.

• “Just a tick!” A Best Practice Survival Guide for Committees and Boards of Management is available for purchase from Community Centres SA, SACOSS or Volunteering SA.

• Volunteer Manuals, including training and orientation programs developed by other centres may be available for loan from Community Centres SA or Volunteering SA.
10. PREMISES

Some groups already have access to a building when they start - others will need to find a suitable building.

You may have started looking for premises as soon as your group formed, or perhaps have chosen to wait until you feel that you have established sufficient community support. You will of course have to consider what financial resources may be available to you, the responsibilities of entering into lease agreements etc. before you make any final decisions.

1. FINDING PREMISES

If you don't already have a building in mind - take a walk/drive around the local area, looking for vacant houses, office or community buildings and halls.

When you find a building you think you can use, find out who owns the building.

If the owner is a state body such as the Housing Trust, begin by approaching the Regional Manager or perhaps lobbying the Committee/Board members if it is a community managed organisation such as a Hospital.

You may be able to begin your activities in a building which is already in use by another organisation - shared arrangements can work very well and decrease the burden on the community to maintain two separate facilities.

It would be useful for members of your Planning Group to approach the following types of organisations who often own or lease properties or may consider sharing their facilities with your group:

- Local Council (via elected members and/or staff)
- Service Clubs, Returned Services League, Country Womens Association etc.
- Local schools, kindergartens and child care centres
- Hospitals and religious organisations
2. **CHECKPOINTS**

When looking for a building or hall, keep the following points in mind:

- Is the building accessible to local people? Is it on a public transport route or will most users walk or use their car? Is it important to be close to other facilities such as shops or a school? Will people feel safe entering and leaving the premises at night? Does the building have access and facilities for people with a disability? If not, can it be adapted? Can the building be made reasonably attractive reasonably easily? Is it light in the day-time, warm in the winter, cool in the summer?

- It can be difficult to find a venue that will have the space to run all the programs that you would like. Consider whether other venues nearby, or other venues perhaps in other suburbs or towns can be used in conjunction with your centre or house to run some of your programs, activities or services.

3. **NEIGHBOURS**

Some people are apprehensive about having a community centre or neighbourhood house next door.

They may be worried about issues such as:

- noise levels
- parking
- hours of operation
- who will be using the house or centre.

Their concerns may be real or based on their perceptions of what houses and centres are - or are not! Sometimes you won’t be able to do a great deal about their concerns, but it’s a good idea to make contact with your potential neighbours and assure them that the Planning Group will listen to their concerns and do its best to promptly address any problems that may arise.

You may like to take your neighbours to visit an established centre or house so they can understand what your Group is hoping to develop.

If you find your potential premises prior to the Community Meeting - invite the neighbours along to express their views. They might even offer to become actively involved in the centre or house management or activities!
11. MANAGEMENT OF YOUR GROUP

1. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

Once a Steering Committee has been elected at the Community Meeting you will need to give your group legal status by adopting a Constitution and becoming an Incorporated body (this will be covered briefly in the next section). This will take you to the next stage of giving your group status as a formal and legal Management Committee to manage the ongoing affairs of the house or centre. (Sometimes another incorporated group can act as an “auspicing body” in the short term until your group becomes incorporated in its own right. This can be particularly useful if you want to apply for seeding funds or grants.)

2. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES

Responsibilities

The Management Committee needs to undertake the following types of activities and tasks to ensure that the centre/house functions effectively. These may sound overwhelming, but remember the jobs are shared between a number of members.

Broadly, the Management Committee will need to:

♦ **Examine** the needs of the local community and plan, maintain and evaluate programs, services and projects to meet those needs

♦ **Determine** the goals, aims and policies of the centre or house

♦ **Encourage** the involvement of local people, paid and unpaid staff and key local organisations in the short and long term planning, management and decision making activities of the centre or house
Employ and supervise staff and ensure that adequate provision is made for both paid and unpaid workers eg. Insurance, Industrial conditions, leave provisions, Superannuation etc.

Ensure that records of the centre or house's activities are maintained eg, financial statements, regular newsletters, Minutes of meetings, reports to funding bodies etc.

Arrange adequate funding for the house or centre through preparation of submissions, budgets etc.

Purchase or lease premises, equipment or supplies as required by the centre or course

Ensure that all administrative tasks are undertaken eg, Insurances, memberships, subscriptions etc.

Ensure that the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act are fulfilled (see next section)

Participate in appropriate networks with other houses and centres, regional bodies etc.

Plan for grant applications, publicity and fundraising activities

Prepare and implement a Strategic Business Plan to ensure that your long term goals are met.

Prepare and implement a Risk Management Plan to identify and manage risk.

Ensure that OHS & W requirements are fulfilled.

Representation

Your Management Committee should be representative of the local community, ie, the people whose needs the house or centre aims to meet.

Members should, therefore, be sought from:

- Local residents.
- Representatives from local groups, clubs and associations eg, Neighbourhood Watch, Playgroups, Youth Groups, Senior Citizens Groups etc.
- Local council and other key decision making or funding bodies.
- The people who use the house or centre (participants).
Ideally, your representatives will:

- Have particular skills, knowledge and expertise to bring to the house or centre.

- Be willing to undertake the various roles and tasks of the Management Committee or Sub-Committees to ensure the centre or house runs smoothly and meets community expectations.

- Be willing to represent the house or centre as required eg at community functions, or when lobbying for resources and funding.

Accountability

Accountability is being responsible for what you do, how you do it, what you spend etc. Members of the Management Committee, staff, volunteers and participants are accountable to:

- Other users of the centre or house.

- The community.

- Funding bodies.

- Other organisations with which you have formal links.

Accountability is achieved through:

- Informative Annual Reports
- Audited accounts
- Open, accessible records of meetings
- Clear policies and guidelines
- Effective management and meeting procedures
- Regular information about services provided, aims and philosophies
- Community participation in decision making
- Open meetings
- Regular evaluation, reviews
- Participation in long and short term planning by a wide group of interested organisations
To be effective a committee needs clear roles, good leadership, meeting procedure skills and excellent communication structures. It also needs to understand its various obligations and how it can meet those obligations in a timely and cost effective manner, whilst still achieving its day-to-day goals. The following references provide valuable assistance to a new group.

- “Just a tick!” A Best Practice Survival Guide for Committees and Boards of Management is available for purchase from Community Centres SA, SACOSS and Volunteering SA.
- “The Meetings Manual” by Francis Walsh.
- “Committee Handbook”, SACOSS.
- “Constitutions Handbook”, SACOSS.

Community Centres SA’s “Successful Community Management” checklists
12. CONSTITUTIONS and INCORPORATION

1. CONSTITUTIONS

A Constitution is a legal document that sets out how your group will function - it is your set of model rules. All Constitutions cover similar topics such as the objectives of the group, membership, management structures, voting procedures, financial management and the procedures to change your rules or dissolve the group, and more!

A Constitution is necessary because it:

☑ encourages you to clearly document the aims and purpose of your group.

☑ describes the management structure for your group, the role of the key members and sets out the rules of operation so that everyone knows what can be expected.

☑ assists your group to become an incorporated body.

2. INCORPORATION

An incorporated body is an association of individuals, created by law, which has a continuous existence irrespective of that of its members, and powers and liabilities distinct from those of its members - incorporation gives your group its own single legal identity.

The Associations Incorporation Act 1985 covers non-profit organisations such as community centres and neighbourhood houses and regulates how Associations are formed. It also specifies which powers, duties and responsibilities can be given to the Association and its Committee.

Once incorporated the Association will also need to apply to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for an Australian Business Number (ABN) and also decide whether to register for the Goods & Services Tax (GST). When applying for any grants or funding you will need to supply your ABN otherwise 48.5% will be withheld as tax and sent to the ATO.
After the community centre has become incorporated and has an ABN, the Management Committee can:

- Buy, sell or lease property
- Enter into contracts
- Operate bank accounts
- Invest or borrow money
- Apply for grants
- Employ staff
- Receive bequests
- Sue and be sued.

An unincorporated body has the following problems:

- Debts incurred are the responsibility of some or all the members
- Some or all members can be sued
- Group has multiple identities
- Group cannot apply for grants etc in its own right.

To become an incorporated body, the group must:

- Consider the best time to make its draft constitution available for comment
- Agree on aims and objectives
- Agree on rules (Constitution)
- Agree on a name
- Check if the name is available for use
- Submit all prescribed forms to the Office of Business & Consumer Affairs
- Pay the prescribed fee for incorporation
- Pay fee to register a trading name (if trading name is different from name of group)
- Await approval and certificates, then,

- Conduct elections
- Purchase common seal
- Appoint Public Officer
- Conduct business according to the Constitution....
• Documenting your group’s aims and objectives in your draft constitution will require careful consideration so that you are not too restrictive, or too broad, or too demanding of your available human and financial resources. Once you have got that sorted out, developing the rest of the constitution is fairly straightforward.

• Office of Business & Consumer Affairs (part of the Attorney General’s Department) - Incorporation application forms, Business Name registration etc, fee schedules etc. (all forms are available on [link])
• Community Centres SA staff can help you with short training programs about incorporation and can offer suggestions about the wording of your aims and objectives etc in your Constitution.

• Constitutions Handbook, SACOSS.
• Draft Constitutions may be available on [link] from SACOSS.
• “A Guide Associations Incorporation Act 1985” Office of Consumer Affairs

Special note about Local Government Controlling Authorities

Local Government has its own rules about how it establishes “controlling authorities” - which are effectively sub-committees of Council with certain powers and requirements for accountability.

If your group has a good relationship with Council and/or if it using Council owned premises, and/or if the group is hoping to receive funding from Council, you should investigate the advantages and disadvantages of becoming a formal committee of Council, instead of being a separately incorporated body.

• Local Government Association or your Council’s City Manager for more information about Controlling Authorities.
• Community Centres SA to find out which houses or centres near you are Controlling Authorities so that you can discuss the advantages and disadvantages with their Co-ordinator or Chairperson.
13. FUNDS

Once you have decided staffing requirements, investigated the availability and cost of premises and furnishings, estimated your initial running costs and considered which activities you want to offer, you will need to consider how you will seek the necessary financial resources and/or in-kind support.

Making use of your community networks means you can negotiate for payment “in-kind” (eg, free of charge use of computers and photocopiers, loan of furniture or payment of telephone connections etc.) or you could ask relevant groups for donations (eg, stationery, craft items, hardware or maintenance items). You may also be able to “barter” for some services or equipment.

Sponsorships and Fund Raising

Many small organisations such as community and neighbourhood houses and centres seek sponsorships from the private sector or other community groups. All centres raise additional funds (the amounts vary greatly!) from their local communities through a wide range of ‘tried and true’ and innovative events and activities.

Types of Funding

Funding for community development activities falls into two broad categories:
- Core funding
- Project funding

The mix of the two categories varies from centre to centre, and sometimes from year to year.

There are also “variations” on the two categories that impact on the ability of small community based organisations to plan and implement the goals determined by their communities. And of course, policy decisions made by the major funding bodies frequently impact on the potential of community groups to effectively and efficiently provide services at the local level.
Purpose

Funding (whether sponsorships, traditional fund-raising, core funding, a project funding or tenders and contracts) is needed to meet a wide range of expenses for houses and centres, eg:

- employing staff
- running programs
- memberships and subscriptions
- training volunteers & staff
- purchasing equipment
- power, gas, rates etc
- rent/mortgage
- publicity and promotion
- purchasing insurances
- renovating and maintaining premises

Major Funding Sources - Core Funds

STATE GOVERNMENT

The Social Justice & Country Division, Department of Families and Communities provides funding for community centres and neighbourhood houses in South Australia, for those communities who meet the criteria of the current policy. In broad terms, that is those communities who meet the current definitions of “disadvantage”. Funding is usually through “Neighbourhood Development” or Families and Low Income Support.

For some of these communities the funding is provided directly to the house or centre. In other communities the funding is provided in “block” grants to the local Council who usually “match” it with a similar amount and then allocate it to the house or centre’s budget.

Department of Education and Children’s Services

Some houses and centres are eligible for funding to offer Occasional Care programs. This may assist the centre to meet some of its operating costs.

- Funding from Department for Families and Communities is only available within their current policy framework. This has not been reviewed or updated for some years. Community Centres SA is currently lobbying for additional funds for the Neighbourhood Development portfolio area.

(Occasionally the Regional Managers have small amounts of funding available for one-off community development projects - enquire at the regional office.)
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Department of Family and Community Services

Some houses and centres are eligible for funding to administer the Home and Community Care (HACC) program to local residents. This may assist the centre to meet some of its operating costs.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Many (but not yet all) Local Governments work closely with houses and centres to meet the needs of residents in their area. This support could be given by providing a suitable building; donating or loaning equipment, providing grants towards employing staff and meeting operating costs etc.

Making contact with the Council’s Community Services Officer or Chief Executive Officer, requesting copies of the Council’s relevant policies will give you an indication of your group’s eligibility to apply for core funding. The Council may have application forms available for community grants or you may need to prepare a full submission, including a verbal presentation to the elected members. You will need to think carefully about how you approach your Council - whether you ask for ongoing core funding for an agreed period, or whether you ask initially for small project based funding or in-kind support.

(Local governments often support small project-based applications for either cash or in-kind support. In fact, many small project funding bodies now require a certain percentage of funds to be matched or either support to be provided by Council before they will approve your application.)

Minor Funding Sources - Project Funds

PHILANTHROPIC TRUSTS and FOUNDATIONS

Trusts and Foundations (such as the Morialta Trust) usually offer smaller grants for specific purposes and may only partially fund your program, assuming you meet their criteria. See Useful Resources at the end of this section for more information about the names of trusts and foundations.

SERVICE CLUBS

Service clubs (eg, Lions, Rotary, Jaycees, Apex and Kiwanis) often prefer to give capital equipment and physical labour. It is best to approach them with ideas on potential projects you could work on together as a ‘joint venture’ and which require active participation, for example, making or purchasing equipment, painting, landscaping. You may also be able to help the Club achieve some of its existing aims for specific groups in the community.
GOVERNMENT GRANTS

A wide range of federal or state government grants are available throughout the year for specific groups in the community or to achieve specific aims within the broader community addressing issues such as poverty, mediation, family violence and reconciliation. Grants are also available for supporting activities such as the arts, recreation and adult learning. Most of these grants are advertised in Saturday’s newspaper “The Advertiser” and local and regional papers. Some grants are for short or one-off projects and others may be for 1-3 year long projects.

The ACE Community Partnerships Unit of the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology provides a significant amount of funding to community groups, and in particular houses and centres, for adult learning programs. A grant handbook is available from the Unit.

Community Benefit SA administers a grants scheme on behalf of the State government that can be used for a wide variety of community-based activities. At least one centre has successfully applied for a seeding grant to establish their community centre.

From time to time other grants are available from departments such as the South Australian Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission, National Landcare Program, Parenting SA, Grants for Seniors etc.

You can ask to be included on your Member(s) of Parliament’s mailing list - they often send out reminder notices and sometimes entire application forms to community groups.

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATIONS

Large non-government organisations (NGOs), (such as some of the church based organisations which have successfully tendered for government monies) often work with smaller organisations such as houses and centres to implement the specific strategies of the project or will deliver a service through your centre. These funds are usually advertised by the NGO and written applications from smaller groups are invited. Projects such as this might be one-off or long term.

PRIVATE PROVIDERS

In recent years some government departments have “outsourced” or “contracted out” their service provision activities to private providers - private enterprise businesses who have entered into a contractual agreement with the government. Sometimes the private providers need to work with community-based organisations to deliver the service to the client group. There may be opportunities that arise from time to time for your house or centre to lease your facilities or ‘sell’ your expertise to a private provider.
• Establishing a neighbourhood house or community centre can be very difficult when you are not able to predict what funding sources may be available in the short or long term. It takes considerable perseverance to achieve the right blend of funding sources to get your house or centre up and running, and then more perseverance to keep going when your group doesn’t know what the future might hold...

• We can’t offer any quick answers about where you might gain start-up funds because every community, its resources and its needs are different. The funding environment for community development is still in a period of great change, but Community Centres SA staff can identify some initial contacts for your group to investigate, and can assist you with negotiations with potential funding bodies such your local Council.

• South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS).
• Community Centres SA - ask about current grant opportunities.
• ACE Community Partnerships Unit, Community Liaison Officer, Dept of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology.
• CYFS Regional Officer.
• Local Council staff and elected members.
• Local Members of Parliament.

• Grants Book, SACOSS.
• Grants Book, Australia Council.
• Various Resources from Community Centres SA about writing Funding Submissions.
• Various Resources from Community Centres SA about Fund-Raising Ideas.
• Local Library for books on Fund-Raising.
• www.ourcommunity.com.au
EXAMPLES OF FUNDING SOURCES FOR HOUSES & CENTRES
(Adapted from Developing Communities for the Future, 1994, Susan Kenny)

**Internal Funding Sources**

- Commercial Investments
- Fundraising Activities
  - Traditional types (raffles, quiz nights etc.)
  - Contract professional fundraisers
- Alternative Economic Systems (eg, LETS)
  - Small business enterprises (eg, craft & produce shop)

**External Funding Sources**

- Project funds (local, state federal govts, NGOs)
- Philanthropic Trusts
- Sponsorships (corporate or community)
- Government Contracts
- Negotiated Agreements (eg, local government)

**User Pays Programs & Activities**

- Some short courses and events
- Facilities hire, equipment use etc.
14. LOBBYING

Lobbying the “Decision Makers” to generate support for your group is an inevitable, and ongoing, part of life in a community centre or neighbourhood house. The simple suggestions contained in this letter from a Decision Maker (or Very Influential Person!) can make your lobbying more effective and less time and energy consuming as your Steering Committee works over many months (or even years) to establish your centre.

(Adapted from a publication by the Victorian Association of Neighbourhood Learning centres.)

Dear Community Group Member,

I might be your local FACS Manager, Mayor, Community Services Manager, Landlord, Local Business Operator, Newspaper Editor, State Politician...

Whoever I am, I am probably very willing to see you, but I am very busy and have 5 other meetings to go to on the day you ring me... and my desk is already overflowing (much like yours!) and my diary is bursting at the seams...

In order to maximise your chances of getting what you want from me:

1. I need to know clearly what you, the lobbyist, want from me, and why you’ve chosen me!

2. Help from me, the decision maker, usually takes two forms:
   a) Where I am able to help you directly myself.
   b) Where I am able to help you by:
      - pointing you towards a second person or agency
      - by making supportive statements or submissions on your behalf.

3. In either of the above circumstances the need for me to know clearly what you want from me is of paramount importance.

4. So, it is very good idea if your first approach to me is made in writing. Set out, clearly and simply:
   a) Who you are.
   b) What organisation you represent.
   c) Exactly what help you are seeking.
   d) A telephone number and best times that you can be reached.

Continued...
5. Putting your request in writing early helps me in 2 ways:
   a) It lets me know, in advance of a personal meeting, the likely substance of that
      meeting. Then I can do my homework in order to better help you.
   b) It helps you to formulate your request clearly and briefly and ensure
      that you are asking the right person.

6. Even if your first approach is verbal (in person or by telephone), please try to get a
   written summary to me before we meet or before I visit your premises.

7. When we actually meet:
   a) Bring 2 or 3 people to form a small deputation. (More than one person is
      useful to spread the questions and answers and provide a good recollection of
      our meeting but too many people can be intimidating for me...).
   b) Plan in advance who will say what so that:
      - no important points are missed
      - I am not told the same thing 2 or 3 times
      - the most informed person speaks on any particular topic
      - everyone gets a chance to speak.
   c) Don’t waste my time or bore me by going over old ground.
   d) Keep your presentation, clear, simple and brief.
   e) Allow time for me to ask questions of you.
   f) Be reasonable, polite and friendly (not angry or bullying) and hopefully I will
      respond in the same way.
      If I seem a bit stupid or unhelpful, be patient. I might be new to this field.
      Remember - a teaspoon of honey is usually more effective than a cup of vinegar
      - even for me!

8. Give me some idea of the time frame you are working to and suggest a date for me to
   get back to you. Eg. “Would you be able to advise us by the end of next week of your
   decision or any action that you can take?”

9. Make it very clear to me who is the contact person from your group.

10. Make sure that I receive a note of thanks within a couple of days of meeting with your
    lobby group. This letter can also tactfully remind me of what action I promised to take
    and the time frame for my response to you.

11. Assuming this process has all worked well and everybody has got what they want (or
    even close to it!), write another short letter of thanks so that I am enthusiastic about
    supporting you next time.

   • Community Centres SA - ask about joint lobbying campaigns and additional ideas or contacts for your group.
15. CHILD CARE

Making child care services available is generally accepted as one of the objectives of Community centres and neighbourhood houses. If affordable and accessible child-care is available nearby, more parents will have the opportunity to attend activities at your house or centre and become involved as volunteers, tutors or group facilitators.

There are essentially four main types of child-care - long day care, occasional care, family day care and creche services. The provision of child-care is governed by the state Children's Services Act - requires that child-care providers comply with relevant Regulations under the Children’s Services Act. The aim of the regulations is to ensure that basic standards of quality care apply in every centre or provider’s home.

The regulations cover areas such as:

- Staff to Child ratios
- Staff qualifications
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Programming
- Equipment and facilities
- Health and hygiene
- Design and maintenance of indoor and outdoor areas
- Services for children with special needs.

Some centres provide creche services and others have Occasional Care Programs which are subsidised and licensed by the Department of Education and Children’s Services.

- Whilst we support the provision of appropriate care for children while their parents attend programs and activities at centres, this is a very complex issue and involves a great many financial and legal implications. We strongly urge you to investigate the feasibility of establishing any kind of child-care, including a creche, with CANH staff before you make any commitment to your community to offer childcare as part of your centre’s activities.

- Community Centres SA.
- Department of Education and Children’s Services.
- Your local childcare centre or preschool to discuss how you can work together.
16. INSURANCE

Selecting insurance can be a complicated and costly business. The types of insurance you will require will depend on your house or centre’s staffing provisions, range of activities, stock of equipment, ownership of premises etc...

The following insurances are essential to responsibly manage both your legal obligations and your risks:

- public liability
- volunteer insurance
- contents insurance
- property insurance (eg, fire, glass breakage, burglary)
- WorkCover (if you employ any staff)
- Associations liability
- Volunteer Personal Accident

The following insurances may be necessary:

- money in transit insurance
- special events insurance
- vehicle insurance
- child care insurance
- fidelity insurance

Your committee might also want to consider:

- professional indemnity insurance
- directors liability insurance
• As you can see the list of potential insurances is considerable!

• It is worth investigating insurances early in your establishment phase so that at all times you know that your most important resources - your volunteers, are protected, as well as your first precious pieces of equipment etc.

• Your local Council may be able to help you with purchasing insurance at a cheaper rate.

• Community Centres SA staff can give you contact details for insurance companies and bulk insurance scheme details.

• Insurance Handbook, SACOSS.

• See ‘Insurance’ pages in Community Centres SA’s Successful Community Management checklists.
17. THE GRAND OPENING!

Some houses and centres have not made a great splash when they ‘open for business’ - preferring to evolve quietly, responding to early demands and building their resources slowly...

Others have chosen The Grand Opening - written invitations to everyone (yes everyone, even those people who opposed you!), speeches, cutting of ribbons, media coverage - the lot!

There are advantages to both styles: the first reduces the pressure on the organising group and doesn’t commit them to programs or events they, or the community, may not be ready for. But it can take considerably longer for the community to know that you even exist and for the decision makers to understand what you are trying to build.

The second option is a great deal more work but offers valuable opportunities for promoting your house or centre. If your group has practiced the broad principles of community development - advocacy, empowerment, collaborative planning, wide participation... you will have already generated considerable goodwill and support for your group’s goals and that is certainly worth celebrating!

You might consider asking other community groups or services to be involved in the Grand Opening with shared activities such as:

- displays
- give-aways
- health checks
- vouchers
- art or cultural events etc.
- exhibitions
- exhibitions

One community house invited the local residents, key decision makers and service providers to their ‘House-Warming Party’ and asked that guests bring a house-warming present - they suggested (and received in abundance!) items such as indoor plants, tins of coffee and packets of tea and biscuits, consumables (such as toilet paper and cleaning equipment), stationery items (such as reams of paper, Textas etc) and kitchen equipment... The list is as endless as your imagination!

- Celebrating its achievements is an important part of the life of a community group - it builds energy, enthusiasm and goodwill for both the group and its goals.

- Despite the headaches, obstacles and hard work, it is worth taking the time to publicly celebrate overcoming the hurdles you have faced, counting your successes and acknowledging the efforts of all the people involved. Building and nurturing “social capital” - the ability of communities such as yours to address their own issues through shared planning and decision making and personal and community effort has a ‘ripple effect’ through communities and is worthy of mutual celebration!
How To Set Up A Community Centre or Neighbourhood Centre

An Overview…

✓ Form a Planning Group of people interested in establishing a house or centre.
✓ Begin informal networking with key decision makers and other community groups and service providers.

✓ Conduct a community needs assessment.
✓ Consider ‘start-up’ programs/activities and potential funds.
✓ Identify potential premises.

✓ Organise a Community Meeting to launch your ideas and get community support.
✓ Elect your Steering Committee.

✓ Adopt your Constitution and apply to become an Incorporated body - when incorporated apply to the ATO for an ABN.
✓ Formalise the membership of your Management Committee.
✓ Decide on ‘start-up’ programs or projects.
✓ Consider funding needs, role and numbers of volunteers, role and numbers of paid staff (if any), equipment needs, insurances etc.
✓ Purchase relevant membership and subscriptions.
✓ Identify potential bodies and begin applying for funding or in-kind support.
✓ Begin recruiting additional volunteers.

✓ Finalise lease/purchase of premises, clean, paint and make friendly and inviting.
✓ Purchase relevant insurances.
✓ Promote, network, promote and network again!
✓ Finalise first program and prepare information brochure.
✓ Begin work on key policies (volunteering, hire of premises etc).
✓ Revise planned budget for first year of operation.
✓ Plan Grand Opening Day – invitations and media coverage.

✓ Celebrate your achievements!
✓ Begin developing Centre’s 1 and 3 Year Strategic Plans.
✓ Everyone have a holiday – but not all at once, you have a community centre to run now!
19. SUMMARY

This Manual is intended only as a guide to the establishment of a community centre or
neighbourhood house. We have tried to cover the major areas you will need to consider when
deciding to establish a house or centre in your suburb or township. We hope you find the
information a useful starting point...

Every endeavour has been made to ensure that all information contained in this manual is
correct at the time of publication. We have included the contact numbers for CANH but we
have avoided giving addresses and telephone numbers of other organisations throughout the
manual because these frequently change. All the organisations referred to can be found in the
telephone directory (some have toll free numbers) or by contacting CANH. Some
organisations also have information (including application forms for membership or grants),
on the Internet.

We have also included at the back of the manual:

- A copy of Agreement Neighbourhood Development.
- A Community Development Resource Guide that outlines the major resources held at
  Community Centres SA’s office (resources available for loan to members).
- An application form to become a member of Community Centres SA.
- An order form for “Just a tick!” – A Best Practice Survival Guide for Committees and
  Boards of Management.
- Sample statistics forms to record your activities (can be e-mailed and also available on disk
  from Community Centres SA).
- Anything else we thought might be helpful to your group!
- Sample policies are not included, however, many examples are available from Community
  Centres SA.

Community Centres SA staff are always willing to provide as much information and support
to new groups as possible - bearing in mind that our staff all work part time and on a shoe
string budget - just like most community groups our enthusiasm knows no boundaries but our
resources do!

To all of you who are embarking on the sometimes frustrating (but always worthwhile) goal of
establishing a community centre or neighbourhood house, we would like to take this opportunity to
wish you every success! We look forward to meeting with you at one of the network’s regional
meetings or working parties, at a training program or at our Annual Community Centres SA
Conference...
Successful Community Management
Have you considered the following?

- The management structure best suited for your organisation
- Development of a constitution
- Incorporation of your organisation
  - lodge an application to the State Business & Corporate Affairs Office including your organisation’s constitution and payment of a fee
- Requirements of the Association Act (available from State Information Centre)

(1) Appointment of a Public Officer who needs to fulfil obligation of Incorporation by notifying the State Business & Corporate Affairs Office when there is a change to the constitution when there is a change in Public Officer; when there is a change in the name of the Association

(2) Adequate minutes must be prepared for the Association and signed by the Chairperson

(3) Accounting records that correctly record and explain the transactions of the Association and the financial position

(4) Associations with a budget of more than $200,000 must have accounts audited. However, the Management Committee of a smaller Association may require that the accounts be audited.

More information about Incorporations can be obtained from:

- Community Centres SA resource files
- SACOSS Constitution Handbook
- State Business and Corporate Affairs Office (Information and pamphlets)
Successful Community Management

The importance of an Annual General Meeting and consequently the priorities and planning will vary from one organisation to another. The following would be considered essential by most centres, to stage a successful AGM. You may decide not everything listed here is appropriate for your centre, but:

Have you considered the following?

Develop timetable of actions
Choose date and time
Check other local events to ensure no clash
Venue date, size, type, facilities required
- parking
- access for disabled, toilets
- tables, chairs
- whiteboard or similar
- kitchen, stove, microwave, food warmer, fridge, urn, cups & saucers, glasses etc.

Prepare a checklist to cover all areas of planning the event
Budget
- Check last years figures, add 10% contingency
- List all possible costs
Develop invitation list or Mailing list to include:
Mayor, Councillors, local dignitaries
- funding bodies
- other organisations and agencies
- sponsors
- users
- tutors
- volunteers
- students
- or others
Annual report
- How many?
- Printed or photocopied, quotes
- Written reports and other information for inclusion, deadlines
- Auditor deadline
Committees
- check current status of committee
- find out which positions need to be filled
- invite nominations or head-hunt if required
- provide information to potential candidates, if they need it, on organisation or roles
- prepare appropriate nomination forms or procedures

Promotion
- how best to promote, and who to
- will it cost? Check the budget

Press Release
- check deadlines
- send to a particular person if possible
- ensure it has a contact name and number
- keep it brief, typed and double spaced

The Event
Catering
By committee or volunteers, or professionally catered for, cost? Check budget
- prepare shopping list
- food, coffee, drinks
- other requirements, sundries, gifts etc

Guest Speaker
- theme?
- choose, decide if publicity will be helped by choice of speaker
- or if speaker represents a particular agency or a topical issue

Agenda
- plan the event and timetable
- choose Returning Officer
- check Constitution regarding formalities
- ensure Minute Secretary is available

On the Day – Check the Checklist!!
- make sure the venue is clean
- have support staff or volunteers assigned to help set up
- be aware of special guests
- ensure everyone signs Visitors Book
Successful Community Management

- provide name tags if appropriate
- have spare pens & paper
- have some information about your centre on display
- display the centre’s Constitution
- have the list of apologies prepared
- have speeches ready
- don’t forget to thank everyone

After the event
- don’t sink into a chair just yet!
- thank those who had helped
- debrief
- update your checklist; ensure you have sufficient information for next year
- write official letters of thanks as needed
- send out Annual Reports to funding bodies, organisations, local council etc
- have the next committee meeting as soon as possible for the benefit of new members

Additional things you may wish to do

- have a fundraiser or have raffle tickets to sell
- decorate with fresh flowers and/or have a display of crafts or other activities
- have a display of photo, clippings or flyers to promote your events
- take some photos and make a collage later

More information can be obtained from:

- Community Centres SA resource files
Successful Community Management

Accurate recording of daily, weekly or monthly activities at your Centre is vital in these days of increased accountability. Senior staff members, management committees, potential and actual funding bodies and key organisations within your community all want to know at various times exactly how many people are using your service.

A clear, simple and user friendly system will make this part of your accountability requirements much less painful and will also assist with strategic planning, budgeting, program planning and general reporting. Accurate consumer data will also assist in the promotion of your House/Centre.

Have you considered the following?

1. Those Centres which receive funding from the ACE Community Partnerships Unit of DFEEST are required to use the AVETMISS system for these programs (and may choose to extend this to other events). Further information about this system is available from the ACE Unit.

2. Some Houses have created their own recording system, based on different factors (numbers of rooms booked per week, bookings for classes, attendance at sessions). These systems might meet the Centre’s basic information need but often under record usage as they don’t they don’t record community development activities or anything that isn’t a program/group based function.

3. Community Centres SA produced a DAILY STATISTICS SHEET (DSS) which can be used by any House or Centre. The system provides a simple way of providing an overall picture of a Centre’s daily incoming contacts (and has been endorsed by the Department of Family and Community Services).
   - The DSS is divided into key areas of activity – Information/Referral Services – House/Centre Based Services – Regular Events – Special Events and the Other. It aims to capture everything from attendance at Pottery classes to use of the Community Information Service; from use of the photocopier to referrals.
   - The Houses using this system are how able to report more accurately on all of the business dealt with during a day, including administrative contacts, which are time consuming but often unrecorded part of our work.
   - The DSS system is ‘volunteer friendly’ and can be used by casual tutors as well as centre based staff. It also incorporates an area to record volunteer hours and tasks.
Successful Community Management

• AVETMISS and DSS are compatible – AVETMISS summaries can be easily transferred to the DSS system to show all data on one page.

Other Points To Consider

• It isn’t necessary to record personal details such as address, age, gender etc. for general purpose statistics. However, some Centre’s keep a POSTCODE BOOK (which might be part of a VISITORS BOOK). This can be particularly useful if you are dealing with more that one local government body. Others carry out an additional record keeping process for a week or month each year to provide a ‘window’ of detailed information (this might be part of a wider consumer survey for evaluation or strategic planning purposes).

• A DAY BOOK might be used to record significant events (bee hive in the crèche, visit by local Councillors, stove broke down…) to complement the Daily Statistics System and the Centre’s BOOKINGS DIARY.
Have you considered the following when employing staff?

- know why you are employing a worker (what are the reasons)
- job description and specification (clear understanding of what is expected in the position)
- recruiting, advertising, selection, interviewing, feedback
- letter of appointment
- contract of employment
- award information (Social & Community Services Award, Clerk’s Award)
- wages and taxation information
- superannuation
- union information (Australian Services Union)
- insurances (WorkCover, professional indemnity)
- delegated authority (clear outline of who the worker is responsible to and what the worker is responsible for)
- appropriate supervision
- police checks

These requirements may also need consideration:

- performance appraisal
- grievance procedures
- dismissal procedures
- reporting requirements
- information on conflict of interest for workers
- access to policy documents (study leave, time off in lieu, smoking, building security procedures)
- current driver’s licence and insurance details

Have you considered the following?

- acts that may be needed at the workplace (Occupational Health & Safety, Sexual Harassment, Equal Opportunity)
- organisational information (constitution, Associations Act, policy manual, annual reports, induction manual)
Other issues that may need consideration when employing staff:

- requirements for working in a multidisciplinary team
- requirements for contracted workers
- co-location issues (who is responsible for workers, space available, resources available, supervision)

More information about employing staff can be obtained from:

- Community Centres SA resource files
- SACOSS Employing Handbook
- Community Employers Association
  - Problems in the Workplace (dealing with conflict, resolving disputes, good employment practices, contracts, staff training)
  - Industrial relation issues (awards, leave, superannuation, policies)
  - WorkCover
  - Occupational Health & Safety
Have you considered the following essentials?

The importance of fundraising as a means of supporting community centres and their programs is not new. It is important that in these tough times committees have strategies to maximise their centres fundraising capacities.

**Essentials**
- establish clear goals and priorities
- develop a strategic plan
- nominate a fundraiser, (An individual or committee who will be responsible for how and what for funds are raised)
- decide if you want one main event or ongoing activities
- identify your focus
- identify potential donors
- inform people about your organisation
- plan an appropriate strategy to reach your target group
- select a method that relates to what you want to achieve
- know your legal requirements for raffles, liquor licences, using public parks, shopping centre malls etc

**Other factors you may need to consider:**
- don’t waste time, money or effort on projects which are:
  - too ambitious, too risky, too small, beyond the resources available
- find out what works
- research and learn from other organisations
- use the energy and interests of volunteers and committee members
- use appropriate methods for the desired goal. If you need a substantial amount consider aiming for a few big sponsorships rather than endless cake stalls, unless you have boundless energy and commitment among your members
- brainstorm potential ideas
Successful Community Management

Community Houses and Centres are obliged to provide and promote safe working conditions for all employees and volunteers. Management Committees need to formally acknowledge that every employee and volunteer has the right to carry out their work without fear of injury or ill health from any condition within the control of the Committee. This formal acknowledgement and any supporting statements and procedures are usually contained within the House/Centre’s Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

The following sample Policy sets out the basic information you will need to consider when formulating or reviewing your own policy (adapted, with many thanks, from the policy developed by Goodwood Community Services Inc.):

1. **Statement of Intent**
   The friendly Community Centre is committed to the promotion of the occupational health, safety and well-being of all of its employees and volunteers, as outlined in Statute Law and Common Law through the Occupational Health and Safety Welfare Act of 1986.

   The friendly Community Centre endorses the positive and preventative definition of occupational health as outlined by the International Labour Organisation and accepted by the SA Government in Code of General Principles, namely:

   **Occupational Health** should aim at the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations; the prevention among workers of departures from health caused by their working conditions; the protection of workers in their employment from risks resulting from factors adverse to health; the placing and maintenance of the worker in an occupational environment adapted to his (her) physiological and psychological ability and, to summarise, the adaption of work to the worker and of each worker to the job.

2. **Occupational Health and Safety Goals**
   2.1 To ensure the existence of a healthy and safe work environment for all staff, volunteers and community members using the services of the friendly Community Centre, as far as it is practicable.
   2.2 To develop and promote health and safety awareness among all employees and volunteers.
   2.3 To liaise and encourage the active involvement of all employees and volunteers in identifying and monitoring the health and safety needs of the centre.
   2.4 To encourage the use of healthy and safe work practices in accordance with the Occupational Health & Safety Act.
3. **Responsibilities**

3.1 **Employer Responsibilities**

The Management Committee accepts responsibility and accountability for the health and safety of all employees of the *Friendly Community Centre.*

The senior employee will be delegated the responsibility to ensure all reasonable steps are taken to:

- Coordinate, implement and monitor health and safety activities and programs
- Bring to the attention of the Management Committee all matters and actions taken regarding health and safety
- Review the Health & Safety periodically, in consultation with staff (and their Associations and Unions) and volunteers of the Centre
- Establish healthy and safe work practices and provide ongoing information, instruction and supervision to employees and volunteers
- Set up and monitor First Aid and Emergency Procedures
- Ensure that fire fighting equipment is provided and maintained and that employees and volunteers are trained in the use of such equipment
- Investigate all accidents and incidents of staff, volunteers and community users, and keep records of such in an Accident and Incident Book
- Consult with staff, volunteers, Health and Safety Representative and the Management Committee to ensure proper implementation of the Policy

3.2 **Employee & Volunteer Responsibilities**

- Employees and volunteers are responsible for observing all health and safety instructions, acting sagely and avoiding unnecessary risks to themselves or others
- Except for an approved maintenance or repair procedure, they must not interfere with, remove, displace or make ineffective any safeguard, safety device, equipment or appliance provided for safety or health purposes.
- They must identify hazards and report them to the senior employee and/or Health and Safety Representative in accordance with Section 25 of the Occupational Health Safety Act.
4. **Functions of Health & Safety Representatives**

Health and Safety Representatives can:

- inspect the whole or part of a workplace and carry out any investigations
  - (a) at any time after giving reasonable notice to the senior employee
  - (b) immediately, in the event of an accident, dangerous occurrence or imminent danger to risk to the health or safety of any person
- discuss any health and safety matter with any workers at that workplace
- accompany any inspector during an inspection of a workplace
- investigate hazard complaints relating to occupational health, safety or welfare made by workers at the Centre
- receive information regarding the results of inspections
- at the request of a worker, be present at interviews concerning occupational health, safety or welfare between an inspector and a worker and/or the senior employee and a worker
- make representations to the senior employee and/or Management Committee on any health and safety matters

Other duties that may be required:

- (a) keep confidential agreed upon matters particular in relation to personal information

5. **Management Committee**

- The Management Committee expects to hear as soon as practicable of accidents, hazards and any measures or actions that have been taken and will take corrective action whenever necessary
- Occupational Health Safety and Welfare will appear as a regular item on the Agenda for Management Committee meetings

6. **Reporting and Rehabilitation**

Accidents, claims and compensation are covered by Workcover provisions or Volunteer or Public Liability Insurance. Employees or volunteers who have an accident at work must report it immediately to the senior employee and complete the appropriate forms. Failure to do this may involve a loss or right to compensation if subsequent treatment or absence from duty becomes necessary.

The friendly Community Centre will provide to any employee or volunteer suffering injury or ill-health, every assistance and encouragement towards an early recovery and return to normal duties.
### Successful Community Management

**Continued…**

Other Checklists refer to:

- Volunteer Manual
- Employing Staff
- Insurances

Other resources:

- WorkCover Corporation Occupational Health and Safety Bookshop
- Department for Industrial Affairs (State)
- Relevant Industrial Awards
- Community Centres SA resource file
Successful Community Management

Do you have the following essential insurances?

- Public liability
- Volunteer insurance
- Property insurance (fire, burglary, glass)
- Contents insurance
- Child care insurance

The following insurances may be necessary for Houses/Centres:

- Special events insurance
- Computer insurance
- Money in transit insurance
- Comprehensive vehicle insurance (if transporting people)
- Fidelity insurance

Other insurances that may need to be considered:

- Professional indemnity insurance (for staff members and volunteers giving information or advice to users or participants)
- Director’s indemnity or associations and officials liability insurance (provides indemnity with respect to claims made against management groups for any wrongful act committed in the management of the organisation)

More information about insurances can be obtained from:

- Community Centres SA resource files
- SACOSS Insurance Handbook
- Community Centres SA Group Insurance
Volunteer Manuals are used by Community And Neighbourhood House and Centres to provide a clear written guide about the workings of your particular Centre, to complement (but definitely not replace) the orientation and then ongoing supervision and training of all volunteers.

It is important that the manual is compiled as a team effort – volunteers, paid workers, committee members should all be given the chance to have some input.

At least one copy should be accessible at all times, near the phone or somewhere where the actions happens! The manual should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis and needs to be clearly indexed and above all, user friendly!

Have you included the following headings?

- Purpose of Manual
- General description of Houses/Centres
- History of Centre
- Centre’s Aims and Objectives
- Management Committee information
- Centre’s volunteer policy
- Rights of volunteers
- Responsibilities of volunteers
- Rights of the Centre
- Job descriptions for volunteers
- Orientation checklist
- Sample time sheet for volunteers
- Conflict resolution policy/process for volunteers
- Volunteer Roster
- List of volunteers and paid staff (and roles)
- Morning/Unlocking procedures
- Afternoon/Locking up procedures
- Other security procedures
- Troubleshooting directions for equipment
- Hire of facilities Procedure
- Occ. Health & Safety policies & procedures
- Location and use of first aid kits
- Location and use of fire extinguishers
- Emergency evacuation procedure
- Emergency contact names & numbers
- Centre’s program
- Description of activities
- Daily statistics procedure
- Handling enquiries and bookings
- Telephone procedures
- Messages procedure
- Site map showing emergency features etc
- Policy/procedure for handling money
- Location map including bus routes etc.
- Description of regular volunteer events
- Description of training opportunities
- Cartoons
- Next review date for Manual
Successful Community Management

Other Point to Consider:

Investigate Manuals from other Centres – someone else has probable done most of the hard work for you (remember to acknowledge their work in your own version!)

Keep your wording simple and friendly
- *be descriptive not prescriptive.*

Use clear headings, cartoons, maps and diagrams to break up the text.

Don’t forget to number all the pages and keep your index up-to-date!