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## ***Yoorala St Community Garden Inc.***

### ***Governance***

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## ***Yoorala St Community Garden - Governance***

### **1.0 Aims**

The aims of the Yoorala St Community Garden Inc. (the garden) are to:

- To provide opportunities for people of all ages, abilities, skills, experience, cultural background and income level to grow organic fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers.
- To be an open, welcoming, inclusive, sustainable, educational, creative, community resource.
- To foster trusting, sharing, respectful and co-operative relationships between members and with the wider community.
- To promote and demonstrate environmentally sustainable practices such as organic gardening, recycling, reusing, seed saving, water conservation and energy efficiency.

### **2.0 Establishment of garden governance**

The wider membership (i.e. *the Committee* together with non-committee members of the garden):

- Affirms the Governance arrangements for the garden outlined in this document, including the roles and responsibilities of the:
  - The *garden Committee*, including the specialised roles and responsibilities of the *Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Treasurer, Secretary, Membership Secretary*; and
  - *Garden Pods* (*Note: A Garden Pod is comprised of a Pod facilitator and Pod Persons*).

The governance arrangements outlined in this document will continue from year to year. They may be reviewed and modified at an AGM providing that notice and details of proposed changes are given to all members at least 6 weeks prior to the AGM. If there is a request for interim changes to the governance arrangements, the Chairperson or a majority of the Committee may

hold an extraordinary meeting to consider the proposal if all members are given at least 6 weeks' notice together with details of the proposal and an invitation to attend. However, the meeting cannot proceed unless at least 75% of the Committee are present. The decision making process at such a meeting will be the same as outlined below in 3.0 and 4.4.

### 3.0 Decision making

There are two main interconnected levels of decision making – *Pods* and the *Committee*, which will undertake decisions under the following framework:

- *Pods* (sub groups of members – see 5.0) are responsible for decisions in a specific area as designated by the committee;
- The committee is responsible for co-ordination between different pods and the overall management of the garden;
- All pod and committee meetings are open to all members with the objective of seeking consensus among all of those present. (consensus is defined in more detail at the end);
- **At a pod meeting** - Should a *Pod* together with any other members in attendance not be able to achieve consensus, the issue under discussion should be referred to the committee;
- **At a committee meeting** - If the committee together with any other members in attendance are unable to achieve consensus, the issue can then be decided by a consensus of the elected committee present. If a consensus is still not achievable the issue is to be decided by a majority vote of the committee. For major issues, such vote can only be undertaken when at least 75% of elected members of the committee are present;
- More important decisions may be reviewed if further relevant information comes to light or after implementation and further assessment;
- The operation and voting of the committee and pods should be consistent with the Governance arrangements and be cognisant of Rules and Guidelines of the garden.

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## 4.0 The Committee

### 4.1 Composition of the *Committee*

The *Committee* will comprise:

- *Chairperson;*
- *Assistant Chairperson;*
- *Treasurer;*
- *Secretary*
- *Membership Secretary;* and
- Up to eight but not less than four other persons, preferably but not necessarily, who are involved in different *Pods*.

### 4.2 Appointment of the *Committee*

At each AGM:

- The garden *Committee* will stand down so that a committee can again be elected by the garden membership. Those standing down may be eligible for re-election subject to the following dot points.
- The newly elected committee should be comprised as per 4.1 above.
- There is a preference that a person currently holding the position of Chairperson; Assistant Chairperson; Treasurer; Secretary or Membership Secretary should not be nominated and re-elected to the committee for a second term unless they are rotated to a different one of these positions or to any other position on the committee. After serving a second consecutive year on the committee, such person should not be re-nominated for a third consecutive year on the committee. However, they may again be nominated and elected to any position on the committee after a one year break.

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- There is a preference that a person appointed to a committee position, other than Chairperson; Assistant Chairperson; Treasurer; Secretary or Membership Secretary, remain on the committee no longer than two consecutive years. That person may be nominated and re-elected to any position on the committee after a one year break.
- Decisions at AGM will be made by consensus with all members in attendance but should consensus not be reached, a matter will be decided by a majority vote of all members in attendance, providing they have been financial members and involved in garden activities for at least 3 months prior to the AGM.

#### **4.3 Role and responsibility of the *Committee***

The committee will:

- Have the authority to raise, consider and decide issues, ideas and proposals affecting the garden. However, it has an explicit objective of encouraging input and discussion from the wider membership on garden issues, ideas and proposals and to involve them in the decision making process;
- Have ultimate authority to decide on significant issues and proposals affecting the garden not resolved by consensus;
- Consider the information, people skills, resources and finances needed to assist the operation of the garden;
- Consider and decide the major projects of each Garden Pod and what pods are required;
- Review and refine the rules and guidelines of the garden to deal with the evolving issues and needs of the garden and its members;
- Will ensure garden finances are regularly reported. It may arrange an audit of garden finances at any time, but it is preferable that no more than one audit be undertaken per year except when a substantial concern is raised about garden finances at another time outside of the annual audit process.

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The following members have additional specialised roles:

- **Chair** – role is to facilitate meetings of committee, but if not present, may appoint another member to chair a meeting. Liaison with key external bodies. Assists (with the help of the assistant chair) the facilitators of other pods to carry out their roles.
- **Assistant Chair**– assists the chair to facilitate meetings and shares the liaison role with external bodies. Has a special focus on recognizing and setting up conflict resolution processes.
- **Treasurer** - handles garden finances; maintains ongoing record of accounts, including of receipts and expenditure by the garden; and presents a statement of accounts at the monthly meetings and at the AGM and as requested.
- **Secretary & Membership Secretary** - ensure the record keeping of membership, correspondence, and the minutes of all committee meetings and AGMs, and maintains lists of email addresses of garden members and other relevant contacts.

#### 4.4 Committee decision making

- The garden membership entrusts the committee to make all major decisions affecting the garden (This includes major decisions about generating income, project prioritisation, design, development, maintenance and expenditure.
- The committee will seek to inform and engage the wider membership in considering major decisions affecting the garden. All meetings are open and all members are encouraged to participate in discussions and decisions on any issue.
- Committee decisions will as much as possible be made by consensus.

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- If the committee together with any other garden members in attendance are unable to achieve consensus, the issue can be decided by a consensus of only the elected committee members.
- If a consensus of the committee is not achievable (e.g. dissent by one member) an issue or proposal may be decided by a majority vote being more than 50% of the votes by committee members who are present - subject to the following process:
  - Step 1. Where consensus is not achieved and there is still significant interest in an issue or a proposal, the committee will postpone a decision until a later meeting to allow time for gathering more information;
  - Step 2. At the subsequent meeting, if there is still no consensus (i.e. no consensus on dismissing or taking action on the issue or proposal), the matter may then be decided by a majority vote of the committee.
- Committee decisions must be consistent with the governance arrangements and be cognisant of the Plot Holders Rules and Guidelines of the garden.
- The Committee may make decisions about revoking allocation of an individual plot to a plot holder. For example, the decision may be made because a plot holder failed to pay their plot fee by the due date or because of a serious breach of the rules or guidelines for general garden members or those specifically for plot holders. Such a decision should follow any relevant process outlined in the aforementioned rules and guidelines.
- It is desirable that important decisions are made across several meetings, so as to give time for more people to be involved. Reviewing and revisiting important decisions after a period of time will also help.
- The committee may review any important decision if further relevant information comes to light or after implementation and further assessment.
- The committee may decide to suspend or reactivate *Pod* activities e.g. depending on availability of participants, resources or stage of a project.

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## 5.0 The Garden Pods

### 5.1 Role and responsibility of the Pods and Pod Facilitators

#### *Garden Pods*

- Will, through the designated *Pod facilitator* or a nominated *Pod Person* (e.g. if facilitator is absent), as determined by members of the *Pod*, seek *-Committee* discussion and direction on any major *Pod* proposals;
- Will report progress of *Pod* activities to the *Committee*;
- Although unlikely, the *Committee* has the right to consider and decide modifications to a *Pod* project during planning or development or after implementation;
- All pod meetings are open to all members and the objective is to seek consensus among all of those present. The Pod facilitator is not the final arbiter of decisions but rather should seek to facilitate a consensus of all pod members on any issue;
- It is a strong preference that the role of Pod facilitator be rotated with other Pod members annually.

#### *The Pod facilitator* should engage garden members in:

- Recruiting *Pod* members who are interested in the pods activities. *Pods* may expand or contract e.g. depending on level of activity or stage of a project;
- Deciding for themselves how to perform and proceed with *Pod* activities within the boundaries agreed by the wider membership at *Committee meetings*;
- Ensuring that *Pod* decisions and activities are consistent with the Aims, Rules and Guidelines of the garden.



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## 5.2 Meet the Pods

Possible and or required pods include:

(Required members are in brackets)

- *Herb, flower and other communal beds*
- *Plot holders*
- *Maintenance & Construction*
- *Water*
- *Seed saving and propagation*
- *Mulch compost and worms*
- *Recording – minutes, photos, membership (Secretary & Membership Secretary)*
- *Conflict resolution- peacemaking (Chair and Assistant Chair)*
- *Grant writing, submissions and fundraising (Chair, Treasurer)*
- *Social events*
- *Education and workshops*
- *Kids area*
- *Health and safety*
- *Welcoming*
- *Liaison with external bodies (Chair and Assistant Chair)*
- *Finance (Treasurer, Chair, Assistant Chair, cheque signatories)*

It will be helpful to have on display a list of current pods and the members involved so new members can see where they can get involved and who they need to contact.

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## 6.0 Meeting Frequency

*Committee* - (With an open invitation for the wider membership to attend) will aim to meet monthly - aligned to the Sunday working bee timetable. However, the committee should meet no less than 6 times a year;

*Pods*- May decide when to meet as needed. All *Pod facilitators* are explicitly encouraged to attend committee meetings to provide feedback on progress of *Pod* activities and/or *Pod* proposals.

*AGMs* - An annual general meeting of all members to elect a new committee and review the governance arrangements for the garden. AGMs shall happen no later than 14 months after the last AGM.

## 7.0 Notes on decision making

### 7.1 Major and minor decisions

- A major decision is one that impacts on a number of people or the garden as a whole. Major decisions may have long term or costly consequences and therefore, should first be subject to consideration by the *Committee*.
- A minor decision that may not be subject to committee scrutiny is one with short term consequences or affecting a limited area of the garden. E.g. a minor decision, such as a person taking a different approach to an agreed planting of perennial flowers, has short term consequences and may be easily reversed.

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## 7.2 Consensus

Consensus is a position reached by a group as a whole without voting. As a goal, consensus tries to ensure everyone's views are heard and taken into account in any decision. A consensus process should operate through members being open, honest and mutually respectful and sensitive to each other. Issues get fully and frankly discussed and any concerns are considered before an agreement can be reached. All members must be able to live with a decision. Where disagreement or conflict remains unresolved, it may be agreed to postpone a decision and to gather more information or involve other relevant people.

Conclusion of the consensus process is knowing when a position is satisfactory to the group as whole and reasonable needs of the garden, and that it is time to stop and not reopen the discussion until such time as the group determines a need for revision.