



OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

NCCH TENANT COUNCIL

Aim of Tenant Council

The Tenant Council consists of NCCH tenants, with the aim of increasing communication between NCCH tenants and the NCCH Board and staff, thus resulting in improved services to NCCH tenants. This is in effect a two-way advocacy role between the Tenant Council and NCCH tenants, and the Tenant Council and NCCH. The Tenant Council's operations also aims to result in the breaking down of isolation felt by many individual tenants and promotes tenant participation.

Advocacy is speaking, acting, writing with minimal conflict of interest, on behalf of the interests of a person or group, in order to defend the welfare of and justice for either the person or group.

Membership of Council

The optimum number of members on the Tenant Council is set at seven, but not limited to this number. If more than seven members submit an Expression of Interest to join as Council members, the number and situation will be reviewed at the time. If a substantial number more than seven suitable people nominate to be Tenant Council members, the formation of specialist sub-committees may be considered to absorb interested people, such sub-committees reporting back to the Tenant Council on work in progress.

Eligibility

Any NCCH tenant, over the age of 18, is eligible to apply to be on the Tenant Council. While it is preferable that current members are representative of NCCH tenants, eg. mix of age, gender, ethnic background, living with a disability, etc, it is important that the Tenant Council continues to operate without all potential minority group categories being filled. If this is the case, members are encouraged to take into consideration, to the best of their abilities, the special needs and priorities relating to minority groups.

It will always be an aim of the Tenant Council to have a mix of skills and acumen across the members. However, the lack of individual skills in a particular area will not preclude membership being granted. NCCH has a commitment to upskilling Tenant Councillors in areas in which they have a need or interest to gain additional skills and will do so on a regular basis, according to need and training opportunities. It is preferable that prospective members have access to electronic email. Suggested Tenant Councillor skills include:

Listening skills	Public speaking
Facilitating meetings	Team building
Organisational skills	Computer skills
Sense of humour	

Over time, it is envisaged Tenant Council members will build up a suite of information regarding NCCH and relevant issues, such as information on maintenance, emergency numbers, services provided, staff/contact numbers, handbook, newsletter, etc.

Recruitment to Tenant Council

Every opportunity is to be taken to promote the Tenant Council and recruit new members, to bring the number of Councillors to seven (or more), and maintain this number. Promotion of the Tenant Council and recruitment opportunities includes:

- NCCH website
- Tenant Forums
- Tenancy Managers
- NCCH Newsletter
- Welcome Kit for new tenants
- Tenant Council Fact Sheet
- Induction for new staff (Tenant Participation Module)
- Christmas Party

Tenure of position

Tenant Council members will be appointed for a three year period, at the end of which members can renominate for a further three year period. There will be no maximum term for Tenant Council members. The following timeline and member appointment is recommended:

End of 2014	2 new members appointed (bringing total to 7) for a 3 year term
End of 2015	2 existing members resign and renominate for a further 3 year term
End of 2016	3 existing members resign and renominate for a further 3 year term
End of 2017	2 members new in 2014 resign and renominate for further 3 year term

Elections

Elections to the NCCH Tenant Council will be held at the end of each calendar year to coincide with the NCCH AGM. Voting will be non-compulsory and all NCCH tenants over the age of 18 will be able to both nominate as a candidate and vote in the Tenant Council elections. Elections will be advertised in the Newsletter and with AGM material.

Note: If a position becomes vacant on the Tenant Council before the time of elections, a casual appointment may be made by NCCH, with the approval of current Tenant Councillors, for the remainder of the year. At the time of elections, the person appointed casually must stand down and nominate to be elected for a three year term, in line with member appointment guidelines.

Induction period

An induction period of six months will apply to all new Tenant Council members. This will enable new Councillors to attend three bi-monthly meetings, during which time a range of issues will be discussed, providing the opportunity for a new member to become familiar with business considered by the Tenant Council. New members will also have the opportunity to meet other NCCH tenants in the different locations where meetings are held. During the induction period, new Councillors will be equally responsible and accountable as other Tenant Councillors in terms of adhering to confidentiality agreements and other conditions agreed to at time of induction. These agreements and conditions will be signed off by each new Councillor and records kept accordingly by NCCH.

Code of Conduct

Tenant Council Members shall agree to abide by the Code of Conduct – see Appendix A and will be expected to sign the Code of Conduct at the beginning of their induction period.

Office Bearers

The Tenant Council is a self-regulating entity, with members self-selecting which roles they feel confident to undertake according to skills and availability. The process for appointment of office bearers shall be implemented in two stages, as follows:

Stage 1 - Appointment of office bearers shall continue to be an informal process until the 2015 Tenant Council elections. The role of meeting facilitator (unofficial chairperson) and minute taker (unofficial secretary) can be rotated amongst members over the course of the next 18 months, after which time Stage 2 in the process for appointment of office bearers shall be implemented.

Stage 2 – Appointment of office bearers will change to a more formal process, with Councillors nominating for and voting on the roles of Chairperson and Secretary. These positions will be fixed for a period of twelve months and have clearly defined roles and responsibilities, as follows:

Chairperson

The role of Chairperson shall:

- Convene Tenant Council meetings and any Extraordinary Council meetings
- Chair Tenant Council meetings and facilitate the business of the meetings
- Maintain a quorum at all meetings
- Act as the official representative of the Tenant Council or delegate this responsibility
- Follow up decisions made at Council meetings and in consultation with the CEO, to ensure implementation of such decisions
- Be responsible for coordinating the work of other office bearers and members of the Tenant Council

Term of Office: (a) The Chairperson (or Vice-Chairperson) will hold office for a period of twelve months from the Council meeting where he/she is elected.

(b) The Chairperson cannot be re-elected to the same office for more than three (3) consecutive years.

Vice-President

- If the Chairperson is unable to attend a meeting, the meeting is chaired by the Vice Chairperson or in the absence of the Vice Chairperson, the meeting may elect one of their number as the Chair, or this task may be delegated to another Tenant Council Member by the Chairperson
- The Vice-President is entitled to undertake all of the above responsibilities in the absence of the Chairperson, unless otherwise directed by the Chairperson

Secretary

The role of the Secretary shall:

- Take minutes at all meetings or ensure that minutes are taken
- Distribute a copy of the minutes to all Tenant Council members and NCCH
- Take responsibility for any Tenant Council correspondence, incoming or outgoing
- Maintain a register of Tenant Council Members and note changes to appointments

The Secretary shall also be appointed for a period of twelve months and cannot be re-elected to the same office for more than three (3) consecutive years.

Frequency of meetings

Six Tenant Council Meetings are held each year, preceded by a Tenant Forum on five occasions. Meetings will occur every two months, with the 2014 calendar being:

Month (2104)	Location	Other
February	Lismore	Tenant Forum
April	Tweed Heads	Tenant Forum
June	Byron Bay	Tenant Forum
August	Murwillumbah	Tenant Forum
October	Maclean	Tenant Forum
November	Lismore	
December	Tweed Heads & Byron Bay	Christmas Parties

A proposed 2015 calendar will be drawn up at the November meeting in Lismore.

Location of meetings

Meetings will be held across the geographic area covered by NCCH, being Tweed Heads to Grafton. Every effort will be made to support Tenant Council members travelling to a spread of locations, in order to give NCCH tenants the opportunity to have relevant issues discussed, advocated on and resolved. Over time, changes in the way meetings are conducted, ie. accessing Skype, will be explored by NCCH and members of the Tenant Council.

Quorum for meetings

A quorum for Tenant Council meetings shall be set at three members, regardless of the number of current Tenant Councillors.

Attendance at meetings

In addition to Tenant Council members, the Housing & Communities General Manager, or a senior delegate, shall also attend all Tenant Council meetings to represent NCCH. The CEO of NCCH and the Board representative shall also attend, at his/her discretion, especially in the case of an Extraordinary Tenant Council meeting being called or an agenda item under consideration which requires input from the CEO. If a Councillor fails to attend three consecutive meetings, for reasons other than illness, it shall be deemed that she/he is no longer a Tenant Council Member

Reimbursement

There is no payment to Tenant Councillors, the role being voluntary and self-nominating on the part of each Council member. Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses will be paid in the case of travel to meetings.

Agenda/Meeting format

The meeting Agenda will be drawn up from notification of new business issues received from Tenant Council Members, NCCH tenants or NCCH staff. The meeting will start with Business Arising, consisting of unfinished issues from previous meeting/s that require further discussion and resolution. There will be Standing Item/s consisting of:

- Business Arising
- Reports from attendance at external meetings, eg., NSW Tenant Network meetings
- Key priority goal/s currently under consideration
- Forward planning for the next meeting and Tenant Forum

The meeting will close with a formal agenda item being 'Strategic Gossip-Hot Topics'. This dedicated time will focus on issues that may have an impact on company business. There will also be an opportunity for Tenant Council members to have a formal ending where discussion can focus on 'What have we learned from today?'.

Minutes of meetings will be distributed to Tenant Council Members and relevant NCCH staff and Board members within two weeks of the meeting date in order for decisions to be actioned in a timely and appropriate manner.

See Appendix B and C for recommended process for meetings

Key goals

Each year the Tenant Council shall work in collaboration with NCCH on three to five issues which have been identified as priorities. Such issues include:

Activity in 2014/15	Partners/ Stakeholders	Expected Outcome	Time frame
Participate in the development, approval and implementation of an Operational Plan for TC Note: To be reviewed annually to implement identified stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCCH Staff• Tenants• Consultant	Operational Plan for Tenant Council	End August 2014
Orientation of new Tenant Council Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• NCCH• Housing & Communities General Manager	New TC members conversant with NCCH core business and the role of the TC	Ongoing

Activity in 2014/15	Partners/ Stakeholders	Expected Outcome	Time frame
Making written communication with tenants more user-friendly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCCH • Tenants • Tenancy Managers 	Increased range of NCCH Fact Sheets	Priority – reviewed annually
Increasing efficiency in terms of repairs and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy Managers • Housing & Communities General Manager 	Reduction in terms of complaints and/or feedback re repairs	Ongoing
Communication with neighbours – ways to improve tenant communication, avoiding conflict, dispute resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants • NCCH staff 	Improved relations between tenants	Ongoing
Recycling, waste minimisation, green bins/compost, disposal of large items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants • NCCH staff 	More efficient methods of waste disposal, reduction of contamination	Ongoing

Annual review of matters raised

A review of matters raised at Tenant Council meetings, requiring action and resolution, will be maintained by the Tenant Council and presented in writing bi-annually to NCCH (end of June and November each year). Details of such issues can form part of NCCH's Annual Report, Strategic Plan, Quality Improvement Plan or Business Plan. This will also provide another opportunity for NCCH to be accountable and transparent in regard to day to day tenancy issues. Tenant Councillors will also be invited to attend the Annual General Meeting and one ordinary Board meeting each year, to provide the opportunity for feedback from the Tenant Council on issues of importance to the company.

NCCH Strategic Planning

NCCH will actively seek input from the Tenant Council on the company's strategic planning process, involving the Tenant Council in every major review of the annual Strategic Plan.

Observers at meetings

NCCH tenants who are not members of the Tenant Council, or other outside stakeholders or guests, may attend meetings with the prior approval from Tenant Council members. At least two weeks' notice is required to request permission to attend a Tenant Council meeting, in order that all Tenant Council members may endorse the request.

Support from NCCH

NCCH will support the Tenant Council to continue to operate as a high functioning, self-regulating entity. Examples of ways in which NCCH will provide support include, but will not be limited to:

- Organisation of six meetings throughout each calendar year, in terms of administrative support, venue booking, catering, etc
- Organisation of Tenant Forums to precede the Tenant Council meeting, in terms of administration support, catering, organisation of guest speakers and topics
- Support by NCCH personnel by attending the Tenant Council meetings and Tenant Forums, and in so doing, responding to issues raised at meetings or providing timely and appropriate follow-up to address issues raised by Tenant Council members or visiting tenants
- Support to Tenant Council in recruiting new members by way of compiling Tenant Council Fact Sheet/information pack, information in newsletters, mail outs, etc.
- Distribution of appropriate written materials, sourced either externally or within the organisation, to update and inform Tenant Council members on a range of issues
- Support to Tenant Council members to upskill in whatever areas they wish to increase their knowledge and skills in order to better carry out the role of Tenant Council member

Risk Management

(a) Tenant Council members are required to give three months' notice of their intention to resign from the position of Tenant Council Member, unless extenuating circumstances exist, eg. ill health, having to move away from the area, etc. It is imperative that *succession* planning occurs on both the part of NCCH and Tenant Council members to recruit to any vacant position and undertake complete handover of documents. In this way, the risk of unplanned attrition on the Tenant Council, which could lead to the Tenant Council becoming untenable will be avoided, ensuring longevity of its operation.

(b) If over a repeated period of time, a Tenant Councillor will not work constructively with others or is causing undue hindrance or problems to others, it is within the right of other Councillors to:

- Discuss the problem together first, in order to ensure clarity and develop a plan
- Highlight the problem to the Councillor concerned and request a change in his/her behaviour
- Develop a plan of action over a specific time frame for the change to occur, after which time if no change is evident, the Councillor in question will be asked to step down from the Tenant Council
- Ensure that every step has been taken to mentor the person concerned in order for a positive change to occur and to retain their membership of the Tenant Council

Changes to the Operational Framework

Suggested changes to the Operational Framework can be recommended, together with relevant justification, by the Tenant Council, the NCCH CEO or the Board of the organisation. Any such changes will need to be ratified by the NCCH Board before being integrated into the document and the guidelines by which the Tenant Council operates.

Tenant Council Forums

Five Tenant Forums will be held over a calendar year to coincide with Tenant Council meetings in February, April, June, August and October. The Forum will be held from 10.30 to 12 noon, before the bi-monthly Tenant Council meeting. Tenants will be welcomed to stay for lunch and participate in general discussion with NCCH staff or other tenants. A Calendar of Topics and Guest Speakers will be drawn up on an annual basis, with the aim of a guest speaker, or NCCH staff member, presenting each topic across the range of geographic meeting locations. The Forums will also provide the opportunity for tenants to table **issues of general concern**, which can be addressed by NCCH staff in the lunch break or followed up within a reasonable time period. Tenant Council members have the role of keeping NCCH accountable in terms of appropriate and timely follow up on issues raised at Tenant Forums.

Suggested topics/speakers, who would attend at all Forum/meeting sites, could include:

- Energy & Water Ombudsman NSW
- Public Transport/Community Transport
- Aged Care
- Tenant Advice Service (Tenants Rights)
- Fire Safety in the House
- Police/General home security
- Centrelink/income changes
- Department of Fair Trading/consumer rights
- Health/Preventing Falls
- Council: Community Development Officer/waste collection, recycling

Tenant Forums will have:

- an identified Facilitator
- a 'talking stick' circulated for tenants/audience, with the facilitator timing each person's use of the talking stick
- feedback forms available that can be completed by tenants regarding specific and/or individual issues and given to NCCH staff in attendance, or posted to NCCH
- NCCH Website orientation for tenants attending the Forum.

See Appendix *B and C* for recommended process for meetings.

Stakeholders

Tenant Councillors will make every effort to maintain positive working relationships with tenants, NCCH staff and Board members. It is expected that reciprocal and beneficial working relationships will also be maintained by all stakeholders.

Appendix A

TENANT COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT

North Coast Community Housing (NCCH) commits itself to ethical, professional and lawful conduct, including proper use of confidential and private information and appropriate behaviour from those acting on behalf of NCCH or its tenants. To this end, Tenant Council members are to act according to the Operational Framework of the Tenant Council and to abide by the following Code of Conduct:

Personal behaviour – I will:

- act honestly, in good faith and in the best interests of the organisation as a whole;
- use due care and diligence in fulfilling the functions of office;
- recognise that the primary responsibility is to the organisation as a whole but should, where appropriate, have regard to the interests of all stakeholders, and in particular NCCH Tenants;
- make decisions fairly, impartially and promptly, considering all available information, legislation, policies and procedures;
- not take advantage of being in the position of a Tenant Council member;

Communication and official information – I will:

- not make improper use of information acquired as a Tenant Council member;
- ensure that confidential information received as a Tenant Council member in the course of exercising that role remains the property of the organisation from which it was obtained;
- agree that it is improper to disclose confidential information or allow it to be disclosed, unless that disclosure has been authorised by the organisation, or the person from whom the information has been provided;

Conflicts of interest – I will:

- not allow personal interests or the interest of any associated person to conflict with the interest of the organisation;
- always declare a perceived conflict of interest, eg, if the subject under discussion relates to the complex in which I reside or a related issue;

Relationships with others – I will:

- contribute to a harmonious, collaborative and productive work environment with fellow Tenant Council members, ensuring professional working relationships at all times;
- treat members of the public, NCCH staff and Tenant Council colleagues with respect, courtesy, honesty and fairness, having proper regard for their interests, rights, safety and welfare;
- not harass, bully or discriminate against members of the public, NCCH staff or other Tenant Council members;

Fraudulent and corrupt behaviour – I will:

- not engage in conduct likely to bring discredit to the organisation;
- report any fraudulent or corrupt behaviour, and
- comply at all times with the spirit, as well as the letter, of the law.

I have read, understand and will abide by the conditions of the Code of Conduct of the Tenant Council of North Coast Community Housing and to the conditions as set out above for Tenant Council members.

Signed

Name

Date

Appendix B

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY AND INTRODUCTIONS

The following is a recommended process to follow for Tenant Council meetings or Tenant Forums in relation to:

Acknowledgment of Country:

Tweed:

I would like to acknowledge the Nganduwal Minjungbal People of the northern end of Bundjalung country, Traditional Custodians of the land on which this meeting is taking place, and pay tribute to the unique role they play in the life of this region. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians who are present today.

Lismore:

I would like to acknowledge the Widjabal People of the Bundjalung Nation, Traditional Custodians of the land on which this meeting is taking place, and pay tribute to the unique role they play in the life of this region. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians who are present today.

Clarence:

I would like to acknowledge the Bundjalung, Gumbaingirr and Yaegl peoples, Traditional Custodians of these lands on which this meeting is taking place and pay tribute to the unique role they place in the life of this region. I would also like to pay respect to the Elders, both past and present and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians who are present today.

Introductions:

After Acknowledgment of Country, the Facilitator will welcome all those present, and ensure that introductions are carried out of Tenant Council Members, NCCH Board Member/s, NCCH staff, guest speakers and other stakeholders. An invitation will be extended to tenants present to introduce themselves by stating their name and address. This will especially apply to introductions at the beginning of the Tenant Forum, where a designated time will be set aside for any tenants to present **issues of general concern**. Issues specific to a tenant are required to be dealt with by NCCH staff at a more appropriate time, and/or by inviting the tenant to complete a feedback form, available at the Tenant Forum.

Appendix C

GUIDELINES FOR MEETING FACILITATION

Meeting procedure

- **Motivator:** The motivator will get people to the table on time, organise the minute book, give people 5 minute warning, etc.
- **Setting the agenda.** The agenda will be put together during the two months leading up to the meeting. The facilitator will note any Business Arising from the previous meeting and table those items at the beginning of the meeting.
- **Minutes.** A minute taker will have been identified at the end of the previous meeting (along with a motivator and facilitator for the next meeting). Minutes are to be distributed within two weeks of the meeting date.
- **Role of participants:** To take responsibility for speaking out as needed and to support the facilitator role and not undermine it.

The role of the Facilitator

At the beginning of the meeting, the Facilitator asks the group to decide on a finishing time, requests people to turn off mobiles, generally sets the scene to *focus* people present.

During the meeting, the facilitator:

- Gives a reminder that meeting content and process is confidential and only *outcomes* are to be disclosed
- Gives reminder that the *decisions belong to everyone*
- Reminds people on the *agreed finish time* for the meeting
- Identifies *Business Arising and order of Agenda*
- *Keeps time* throughout the meeting
- *Manages the group process* and individuals within the group

Bring out opinions:

- Encourage the expression of various viewpoints – the more important the decision, the more important it is to have all pertinent information (facts, feelings, and opinions).
- Call attention to strong disagreements. When handled forthrightly, differences of opinion yield creative solutions.
- Ask people to speak for themselves and to be specific. Discourage statements like, “Some people seem to feel.....” or “What she/he is trying to say is” or “We need to.....” or “I think we should.....”.

Help everyone to participate:

- Don't let two or three people monopolise the discussion. Ask for comments from others.
- Some people may need to be asked to speak more briefly or less frequently.
- Other people will need to be drawn out and their opinions/input heard.
- Keep the role of the facilitator neutral:
- If you have personal opinions to offer, do so outside of your role as facilitator. For example, say, "stepping out of my role as facilitator, I think"
- If you find yourself drawn into the discussion in support of a particular position, it would be preferable to step aside as facilitator until the next agenda item. Ask for a volunteer replacement facilitator.
- Keep discussion relevant. Point out to the group when discussion is drifting off the topic or becoming trivial. Cut off discussion when repetition occurs or when people become weary.

Seeking consensus:

- During the expression of opinions, listen carefully for agreements and hesitations within the group. State points of agreement and hesitation. Stating points of agreement helps group morale, may lead to agreement in principle on the issue, and may make agreement on new proposals possible. Stating points of hesitation makes them clearer and makes resolution possible.
- Test for agreement as soon as a decision seems to be emerging. For example, "Is anyone not in agreement with this proposal?". Periodic testing will help clarify disagreements, making discussion more fruitful.
- State the tentative consensus in question form, and be specific: "Do we all agree that we will.....?". If you are not clear how to phrase the decision, ask for help.
- Request a response from the group. Silence does not indicate consent and the participants need to be conscious of making a contract with each other.
- Sometimes it is preferable to delay making a decision until the next meeting so that participants can reflect, and not be pressured to make a final decision.
- Consensus does not mean 100% agreement. It simply means that those participants who are not in favour of the decision, agree not to undermine the decision and this is recorded in the Minutes. You can ask the question: "Can you live with this decision?" (v. seeking perfection).
- Where there are differences, it is often useful to move the energy by looking at what you DO agree on, rather than focusing on disagreements

Minute taking:

- Record decisions (with an agreed phraseology). These may also note unresolved issues for later debate.

Reflection on the meeting by adding a final agenda item which looks at:

- What was good about the meeting?
- What was difficult?
- What did we learn?

This draws on the collective wisdom of the group.