

Policy Document

Consensus Decision Making

Background

Making decisions in a meeting setting can become time consuming and controversial if effective techniques are not put in place. Southern New England has struggled with decision making at times, and with assistance from Julian Prior, we adopted and learned to use Consensus Decision Making.

Policy

The Members, Board and Staff of Southern New England Landcare use Consensus Decision Making whenever possible or appropriate in settings where groups of people need to make a decision, whether it be for policy or procedure.

A Consensus Ladder

The following five points are 'steps' on a ladder. Members of a group who are required to make a decision can identify where they sit on the ladder with regard to the particular issue.

1. Enthusiastic support
2. Not perfect but acceptable
3. Concerns, but can live with it
4. Strong reservations, but won't block
5. Must oppose - What would it take for you to move from 5 to 4?

How to use the ladder

Decide where you sit on the above 'ladder'. If everyone falls within the range from 1 to 4, then the decision can go ahead.

However, if ANYONE is at level 5, the decision must be discussed further, and the person(s) sitting at 5 must be asked the question:

What would it take for you to move from 5 to 4?

If some compromise can be reached so that the person moves into a 4, 3, 2 or 1, congratulations – you have reached a CONSENSUS!

Note: Simply recording oppositions in the minutes and taking the decision anyway is NOT Consensus Decision-Making.