

## **PREAMBLE: PROGRAM POLICY FOR ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP**

To support the development of an active membership policy, the CEHL Board endorsed the establishment of an advisory group made up of co-op members and a standalone engagement process with the broader CEHL Cooperative Housing Program. The Participation Policy Advisory Group's (PPAG) role was to recommend to the Board a final policy that reflected the breadth of views heard through engagement with the Program. The Board approved the active membership policy and preamble recommended by PPAG in October 2017. The policy sits within the broader suite of Program Policy that collectively govern the operations of the CEHL Cooperative Housing Program.

This active membership policy reflects a fresh and future-focused take on the intrinsic value that comes from people living and working together under a set of shared values and international principles. The model of cooperative living has never been more relevant as we address the collective challenges facing our society, our environment and our prosperity. Our opportunity is to grow and strengthen the model, not only to benefit our existing members, but so that generations to come can experience the growth and fulfilment that come from this way of life.

Members of cooperatives within the Program attribute significant personal benefits to living cooperatively, beyond secure, affordable housing. Much of this benefit results from active membership, including:

- Personal influence in “having a say” in the management of their Cooperative and Program
- Personal and professional skill development
- Increased community connection and a sense of belonging
- Improved safety, security, independence and peace of mind.

Active membership embodies the spirit of cooperative living, and is critical to the viability and sustainability of both Cooperatives and the CEHL Program. There is a symbiotic relationship between them, neither can thrive without the other. To support that relationship, there must be trust, transparency and an appreciation for the roles that each play in the Program:

- CEHL's purpose is to be an enabler: “We partner with member cooperatives to deliver an effective, sustainable cooperative housing program.”
- Cooperatives are defined as “democratic organisations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.”

A number of elements come together in this Program Policy to support the Cooperatives within the Program taking a refreshed view of Active Membership for their members: a vision for a sustainable future, a sense of connection across generations and communities, fairness and respect for diverse models and contributions, opportunities for extending personal and collective capabilities and growth, mutual accountability and self-determination. As shareholders in our non-for-profit company, we have a responsibility to be good stewards and active membership is a critical part of that.

During the development of this policy, the inputs of Cooperative members were sought and incorporated through the policy drafting process. PPAG was convened to ensure members' voices were captured and well represented. Throughout this process, the PPAG recognised the close links with other Program policies and processes, particularly as they relate to supporting active membership and deal with loss of membership.

This Active Membership policy links member contributions to their Cooperative's viability and vision for the future. Active membership is not simply a matter of compliance, it is both a mind-set and an action. As such, it is essential that the Program processes that support member selection, induction, training and governance reflect that. This policy acknowledges that each individual is different, that their active membership commitments may be tailored to their circumstances, and that every Cooperative member is accountable for, and will benefit from contributing to the ongoing sustainability of their Cooperative. It encourages multiple pathways to be explored for lapses in active membership and once exhausted, the policy enables a Cooperative to initiate a cancellation of membership. At this point, the Active Membership policy intersects with other Program policies that deal with loss of membership.

Welcome to our Program Policy for Active Membership, which tells of our active engagement in cooperative life and our collective contributions to sustaining our Cooperative Program.