
NEW MEMBER WORKBOOK

AN INTRODUCTION TO YOUR HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE



CONTENTS

Welcome to our co-operative housing program	1
<hr/>	
New member workbook	2
<hr/>	
What you need to do	3
<hr/>	
The Steps Involved	4
<hr/>	
About Co-operatives	5
<hr/>	
co-op Membership	7
<hr/>	
Directors and Office Bearers	10
<hr/>	
Workbook Completed	16
<hr/>	

WELCOME TO OUR CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING PROGRAM

As a member of our co-operative, you will gain skills, experience and be part of a connected community through the co-operative housing program.

The co-operative housing program offers much more than a house, there is a great sense of being part of something much bigger.

We – you/co-op members + Co-operatives + Common Equity Housing (CEHL) – share the responsibility for planning and managing our housing program together.

“Our co-operative housing program is about housing affordability, stability, opportunities for learning, growth and working together.”

CO-OP MEMBER COMMENTS FROM PLANNING OUR FUTURE- LISTENING FORUM DECEMBER 2015



NEW MEMBER WORKBOOK

Co-ops rely on their members to contribute to the running and management of their co-op. This Workbook is designed to help you learn more about co-op housing, your co-op, its activities and the roles that members undertake.

Being a co-op member offers opportunities to gain new skills, learn about your responsibilities and connect with your new community.

It is important you take responsibility to access the information to become an active member of your co-op. You will be able to complete this Workbook in two - three months of joining your co-op.

Learning about your co-op

There are a number of resources you can use to learn more about being an active member of your co-op that help will you complete the Workbook:

- Co-op members and Directors
- Attending co-op meetings
- Watch the New Member DVD
- CEHL website: www.cehl.com.au
- A co-op 'Buddy'

Co-op Buddy

Your co-op might offer a co-op member 'Buddy' who will support you to complete the Workbook. In this case, the co-op will give you the name and contact details of a co-op member who will become your 'Buddy'. This person will assist you to complete the tasks, and will ensure that you benefit from your induction. However, the emphasis is on you taking responsibility for your own learning.

By the time you finish this Workbook you will:

- Understand responsibilities of co-op membership;
- Understand the roles of Directors and Office Bearers in your co-op do and who they are;
- Know how you can participate in your co-op.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

FOLLOW THE STEPS IN THIS DIAGRAM:

1. Watch the **DVD** where the directors explain their roles
2. Complete activities in this **workbook** – read and record answers to questions. Not all co-ops have the same structure, so some questions may not be relevant to your co-op.
3. Attend **meetings of the co-op**
4. Look up the **CEHL website** for more information:
www.cehl.com.au
5. Complete activities in this **workbook** – read and record answers to questions

Need assistance?

Talk with your **Buddy or someone else from your co-op** if you need support or assistance with information about your Co-op or to complete activities in this Workbook.

THE STEPS INVOLVED

LOOK OUT FOR THESE ICONS

When you see this icon, it means you need to...



Ask someone for the information



Read something



Write something



Find out something from the internet



Look at the DVD supplied



Tick the box to show that you have completed all the activities in that section

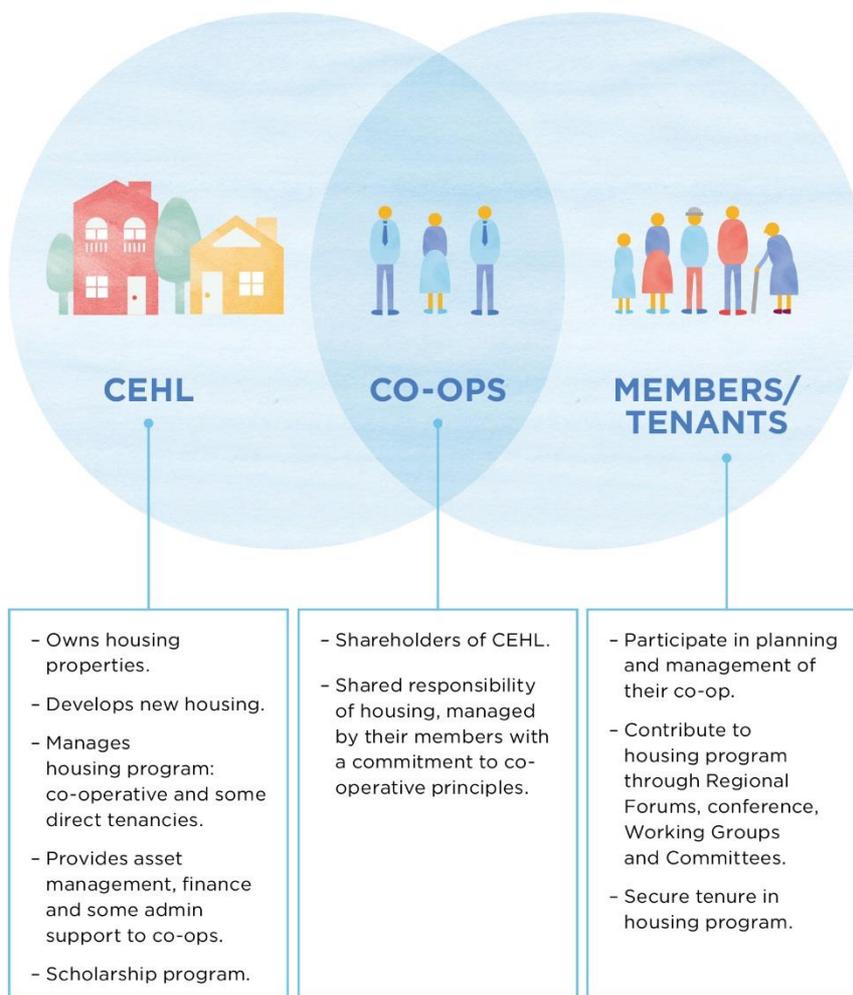
ABOUT CO-OPERATIVES

CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING DEFINITION

A housing co-operative is a legal association formed for the purpose of providing housing to its members on a continuing basis. It is owned and controlled by its members. CEHL is different from other housing associations because of its ownership structure and its commitment to co-operative principles.

CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING VALUES

Housing co-operatives exist for their members' mutual benefit. They share with other co-operatives the values of individual responsibility, mutual help, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. They should conduct themselves honestly and openly.



CO-OPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

Co-operatives around the world operate according to the same core principles and values, adopted by the International Co-operative Alliance (www.ica.coop) in 1995. A member must have a commitment to the following principles.

Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all people able to use its services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination.

Democratic Member Control

Co-operatives are democratic organizations controlled by their members—those who buy the goods or use the services of the Co-operative—who actively participate in setting policies and making decisions.

Members' Economic Participation

Members contribute equally to, and democratically control, the capital of the Co-operative. This benefits members in proportion to the business they conduct with the Co-operative rather than on the capital invested.

Commitment to Service

Housing co-operatives should strive to meet their members' needs for affordable, good quality housing, security of tenure, and for safe, secure neighbourhoods. They should provide the best quality service at a fair price. Housing co-operatives should work to create environments where members give and receive support beyond their shelter needs and treat each other with respect and tolerance.

Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If the Coop enters into agreements with other organizations or raises capital from external sources, it is done so based on terms that ensure democratic control by the members and maintains the Cooperative's autonomy.

Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for members, elected representatives, managers and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their Co-operative. Members inform the general public about the nature and benefits of Co-operatives.

Co-operation among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the Co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures.

Concern for Community

While focusing on member needs, Co-operatives work for the sustainable development of communities through policies and programs accepted by the members.



If you would like to learn more about the history of Co-operatives, use your search engine to find: Rochdale Pioneers Museum.

CO-OP MEMBERSHIP

Each household has one membership (single or joint), and each membership has one vote at meetings. A joint membership is defined as two adults in a married or de facto relationship.

In a housing co-operative, members undertake significant responsibility for the future planning of their housing and the good functioning of their co-operative. This includes selecting new members, developing long term co-op plans, undertaking office bearer roles such as co-op chair, treasurer and secretary.

Depending on the co-op structure, members may also be responsible for carrying out the tasks associated with being a landlord, which may include:

- Financial administration
- Maintaining rent records
- Arranging house maintenance
- establishing new tenancies
- Keeping all associated records

As a member of your co-operative, you need to share in the workload of your co-op and participate in wider program forums. You are not expected to do all these activities at the same time, but co-ops are only able to exist because members make an ongoing contribution.

Your co-op might ask you to sign an "Active Membership Agreement". This agreement spells out what you will commit to learn and contribute to the co-op in the coming year.

Membership of a co-operative is an opportunity to learn and be involved, respecting the spirit and philosophy of co-operation and enjoying the benefit of safe, secure, affordable housing.



ABOVE: CO-OP MEMBERS VOTING

As a new member, you could offer to help out the Secretary or the Maintenance Co-ordinator. Listen closely at your first meetings and see if you can volunteer to help other co-op members with their co-op responsibilities.



Read the Quickguide for Members on the News and Publications tab on CEHL's website: www.cehl.com.au

The screenshot shows the CEHL website's 'Manuals & Quickguides' page. The navigation menu on the left includes: Media Articles, Annual Report, All CERCs Memos, Co-operatively Speaking, **Manuals & Quickguides**, CEHL Board Meetings, CEHL Scholarship, CEHL Member Survey, Videos, Program Advisory Panel, and CCA Evaluation. The main content area is titled 'Manuals & Quickguides' and is divided into two sections: 'Manuals' and 'Quickguides'. The 'Manuals' section lists: Co-Op Operations Checklist, Maintenance Manual, Secretary's Manual, 2016 Rent Policy Manual, 2015 Rent Policy Manual, 2014 Rent Policy Manual, Circuit Manual, Taking a Rent Arrears Case to VCAT, Handling Complaints from Neighbours, and Guide to Co-op Eligibility for New Members. The 'Quickguides' section lists: Quickguide for CERC Treasurer, Quickguide for CMC Treasurer, Quickguide for Maintenance Officer, Quickguide for Chairperson, Quickguide for Secretary, Quickguide for Member Selection, Quickguide for Directors, and Quickguide for Members. A search bar is located at the top right of the page.



Now that you have read the Quickguide for Members, answer the following questions:

List two responsibilities that a co-op member has to the co-op

List two of the Co-operatives Principles

List two responsibilities that a co-op member has to themselves as a member

List two responsibilities that a co-op member has to their fellow members

CO-OP CONTACTS



Please answer the following:

What is the email address of your co-op?

What are the co-op's phone number and mail address?

What is the address of the Registered Office of your co-op?



Ask where you would find your co-op's Rules and Policies
Ask if your co-op has a Code of Conduct for members or Co-op policies

Co-op Rules and Policies

Each Co-Op has a set of rules approved by the Registrar of Co-Operatives as well as policies to help manage the co-op and ensure consistent and transparent decision making.

Co-op Decision making

Co-op decisions can be made in a number of ways. The most common way is for members to meet, discuss issues and take a vote at a Co-op meeting.. Co-op meetings include:

- One Annual General Meeting (everyone to attend)
- Four or more Special General Meetings per year (everyone to attend)
- Ten or more Directors' Meetings (only Directors are required to attend)
- Sub committee meetings (for relevant sub-committee members)



Your first co-op meeting – write the date and location:

- I know my co-op's contact details
- I know what co-op members are responsible for
- I know where to find my co-op's Rules and Policies
- CO-OP MEMBERSHIP SECTION COMPLETED**

DIRECTORS AND OFFICE BEARERS

Co-ops elect a Board at the AGM (usually 5–7 members) to manage the day-to-day responsibilities of their co-op. The Board members, called Directors, decide among themselves who will take on each of the Office Bearer roles, taking responsibility for coordinating a particular area of the co-op's business. The Directors are usually elected for two years (depending on your co-op's rules) with half of them retiring each year. The Office Bearer roles may include:

- Chairperson
- Secretary
- Maintenance Officer
- Member Selection Coordinator
- Treasurer
- Rents Officer

In large co-ops, other members may be appointed as assistants to these roles, or a sub-committee may be set up to distribute the workload fairly. Depending on your Co-op, it may only appoint a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.

Directors need to work closely together to make sure that sound decisions are made. Wherever possible other interested members should also be encouraged to be trained in and learn the Directors' roles so that new people are ready to step up and take on the role when a current Director retires.



Ask for the names of your co-op Directors/Office Bearers.



Write the Co-op Directors/Office Bearers names below.
Make sure you write their roles beside their name.

NAME	DIRECTOR/OFFICE BEARER ROLE

You will need to meet and talk to each Director/Office Bearer about their role. The following pages have some questions to ask these people.

Before you meet with each Director/Office Bearer:



Read the Quickguides and Manuals. These can be found on the website at www.cehl.com.au (use search function)



Look at the sections on the DVD where the Directors talk about their role.



How long are Directors elected in your co-op?

You or your Buddy need to make an appointment for you with each of the Directors or Office Bearers to talk about their role.



Write the meeting times you make in here:

DIRECTOR/OFFICE BEARER'S NAME	ROLE	TIME AND DATE	LOCATION/ADDRESS FOR MEETING

CHAIRPERSON



Ask the Chairperson these questions and write the answers here –

How is the agenda set or agreed for general meetings of all members?

How does the Chairperson train the next person who is going to do the role?

What happens when there is a conflict of interest in a meeting?

CO-OP SECRETARY



Ask the Co-op Secretary these questions and write the answers here –

It is a legal requirement to have a sign located in the Co-ops registered office. Where is our Co-op's sign?

How are the co-op files and documents secured?

How does the Secretary alert members to important correspondence and communication between meetings?

TREASURER



Ask the Treasurer these questions and write the answers here –

Who is responsible for the co-op's finances?

How does your co-op pay the bills - by cheque or by direct debit?

What expenses does the Co-op pay for?

What financial reports are given to members? When?

RENT OFFICER



Ask if your Co-op has a Rent Officer.



Ask the Rent Officer these questions and write the answers here –

Why is it important to be 2 weeks in advance with your rent?

When does the Rent Officer (or CEHL) give you a copy of your rent statement?

REMEMBER!

It is your responsibility to:

- Pay your rent and
- Cross reference your personal bank statements/deposit slips with your rent card to ensure date and amount of payment match.

MAINTENANCE OFFICER



Ask if your Co-op has a Maintenance Officer.



As the Maintenance Officer these questions write the answers here –

How often is your property inspected?

How are these inspections organised in your co-op?

List two types of emergency maintenance
(Refer to booklet 'Renting a home – A guide for tenants and landlords').

Name two items that are the tenant's responsibility to repair.

Maintenance Requests

Who do you give Maintenance requests to?



I know the Name of the Directors and Office Bearers in my co-op



I know what activities each Office Bearer is responsible for



I understand how rent is collected and understand my rent card



DIRECTORS AND OFFICE BEARERS SECTION COMPLETED

WORKBOOK COMPLETED

CONGRATULATIONS!

You have now completed the New Member Workbook.



Take a moment to write out the three most valuable or interesting points you've learned about your Co-op

1.

2.

3.

When you finish all the activities, you need to tell your Buddy or one of the Directors. The co-op will give you a certificate to acknowledge that you have completed the Workbook.