

THE COLLABORATIVE HOUSING GUIDE

Collaborative Housing Governance Models

There are a number of governance models that are already in use in Australia which could be used or adapted for your community. Some examples of these are outlined below.

Mainstream governance - Strata Committee and Owners Corporation

- Developments that are strata title and managed by an owners-corporation could adopt governance that is similar to a typical apartment building, mainly responsible for maintenance, repair and overall management of the common property. This is the case with current owner-occupied Nightingale developments. These have also included some additional requirements and guidelines in the by-laws to maintain the sustainability, community-building and affordability goals of the model. For Nightingale, these include requirements that cap resale prices, an annual contribution to the shared facilities and an annual 'green travel plan' levy that incentivises sustainable modes of transport. There are also guidelines on renting that encourage long term leases and recommend caps on annual rents. Note that the type of ownership structure can impact upon the dispute resolution processes available to the community, should issues arise that can't be dealt with internally. Dispute resolution in strata and community title housing can be handled through the [Department of Fair Trading](#), and eventually the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal. However, in company title developments such difficult disputes are heard before the Small Claims Division of the Local Court of NSW.

Mainstream Participatory - Housing Cooperative directorship

- Housing cooperatives have a specific legal and governance model (see legalities above), with an elected board of directors responsible for decision-making. Every household can be on the board of directors in order to make it as participatory as possible. Murundaka Cohousing Community operates as a housing cooperative. It uses an all-directors model (all members of the co-op are directors of the co-op) as an inclusive, flat-structure model which utilises consensus decision-making.

Sociocracy

- A common governance model for communities that have a strong focus on resident participation is sociocracy (sometimes called dynamic governance). This is sometimes referred to as consent-based decision-making. Narara Ecovillage and Murundaka Cohousing Community both use a form of sociocracy. There are a number of resources provided on this page with further information about this governance model, but essentially it is based around a pattern of inter-linked decision-making circles that each contains a small number of people, with larger decisions made by the whole group in a manner that aims to achieve.

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Collaboration under existing management

- A number collaborative housing models will operate within an existing governance structure, such as that of a community housing or retirement living provider. In this case, the residents could look into forming a governance process that sits underneath the larger structure and negotiates with the provider to determine what decisions the residents control. For example, in a traditional retirement village, the provider will generally arrange all maintenance and gardening through a central service as part of the ongoing cost. A collaborative retirement group may choose to use the same model, or decide to manage these aspects themselves for a reduced fee.

Outsourced management

- A trend that appears likely to grow is the rise of professional housing facilitators that specialise in collaborative housing. For example, Cohousing USA recommends professional facilitators that have experience working with cohousing communities to enhance group processes and communication. Coliving companies may also be positioned to offer management services for communities, if the residents decide they want minimal involvement in day-to-day decision making and management. Co-living mentors and many books and blogs are helpful for communities that want to maximise their community involvement and personal growth.

Resources

Sociocracy:

<https://nararaecovillage.com/community/sociocracy/>

<https://www.sociocracyforall.org/sociocracy/#keyconcepts>

Cohousing Association:

[Murundaka Cohousing Community Assoc Rules](#)

Facilitators:

<http://facilitatorsnetwork.blogspot.com/>

<https://groupwork.com.au/>

Books:

[Getting our act together](#), by Glenn Ochre