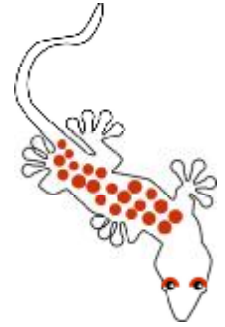


# LaborFirst

A grassroots movement for ALP renewal

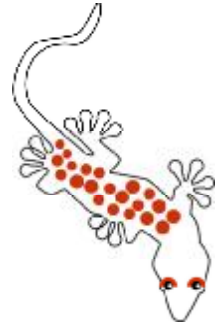


## Ten Essential Attributes of Effective ALP Branches

1. **Inclusive** - makes members feel wanted and appreciated. Provides opportunities for members to mix socially with one another and engage in informal sharing of their opinions and concerns. Ensures to the greatest possible extent that meeting times are convenient and venues accessible, welcoming, comfortable and attractive.
2. **Interesting** - plans ahead to ensure that meetings are well conducted and programmed for maximum interest. Is appreciative of the importance of good chairing, content and discussion in the meetings.
3. **Instructive** - helps members to deepen their understanding of the party's history, the principles and values for which the party stands and the policies through which it seeks to give effect to them. Is supportive of members increasing their skills through training and mentoring.
4. **Empathetic** - sensitive to the presence of members speaking languages other than English, and to those with other special needs.
5. **Innovative** - receptive to new thinking about branch structures and procedures such as have been recommended in the Hawke/Wran Report, and the adoption of new technologies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness.
6. **Pro-active** - inter-active on a co-operative basis with other party bodies, including the party office, neighbouring party branches, affiliated unions, policy committees, campaign committees and the local FEA, and encourages members to offer themselves for external positions such as FEA Executive office-holders and State Conference delegates, and candidates for public office. Networks extensively with special interest groups including those with which it shares environmental, economic, social or cultural concerns.
7. **Outward-looking** - reaches out to the wider community, contributes to community projects and involves itself actively in community affairs as 'a responsible community citizen'.
8. **Expansionary** - takes seriously its responsibility for building party membership, and campaigns constantly to ensure that new members are attracted and retained.
9. **Visible and accessible** - adopts a high public profile, with dates, times and places of meetings and contact details for office-holders extensively publicised. Solicits extensive coverage of branch activities by local media.
10. **Vigilant** - upholds the letter and spirit of the party rules and is supportive of strict enforcement to stamp out infringements and abusive practices such as detract from the party's well being and bring the party into disrepute.

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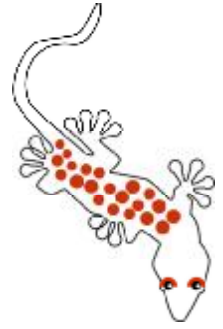


## Ten Initiatives for Greater ALP Branch Effectiveness

1. **Know your members.** Effective branches keep informed of what members expect, and what can be expected of them. Carry out an annual survey of member interests, skills and qualifications or other special attributes. Include a section for feedback on branch procedures and activities.
2. **Help members to get to know one another.** Encourage members to get together for a pre-meeting meal, or stay round for coffee afterwards. Provide members with name-tags. Partner new members with branch buddies, who introduce them around and ensure that they are made to feel welcome and appreciated. Encourage participation in branch activities on a family basis.
3. **Factor in work and family responsibilities.** It may mean that meeting times that suit some members may be inconvenient or impossible for others. It's not necessary for all meetings to be at the same time. Consider alternating between - say - a working week evening and a Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning.
4. **Meeting time is a scarce and precious commodity.** Agendas should be structured so as to free up space for discussion. Have the branch executive give prior consideration to administrative matters including correspondence, which can then be presented by the secretary in a single consolidated report. Limit discussion of the report and other formalities to no more than fifteen minutes.
5. **High quality discussion doesn't happen by accident.** Set aside an hour of each meeting for discussion of public policy and current political concerns. Structure the content round a guest speaker, a DVD documentary or a matter of definite public importance of which notice has been given. Local libraries have a lot to offer. Get to know the librarians. Alert them to issues that may come up for discussion. Invite them to suggest source material, reading lists and audio-visual materials.
6. **There's a place for informal as well as formal meetings.** Arrange movie nights. Introduce courses in labour history, social democratic thought or political economy. Form a branch or FEA book club or reading circle. Enter a team in state or national debating competitions. Select a local café where members can get together over Sunday morning coffee. Establish a chat room, which enables branch discussions to be continued in cyberspace. Include group attendances at Fabian Society events in the branch's annual calendar. Establish sister branch relationships with branches of overseas Labor or social-democratic parties.

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7. **Look for opportunities to partner with other community groups.** Special interest groups are a key source of local knowledge. Tap into them for leads as to local campaigns in which the branch may wish to involve itself. Establish a municipal council watch to ensure that council policies are in the best interests of ratepayers.
8. **Link up with national campaigns,** such as - say - the ACTU campaign against the Howard government's workplace relations legislation. The ACTU is actively seeking partners to carry its campaign into local communities, over a period extending at least until the next federal elections. Take up the ACTU's offer of resources and strategic advice, and ensure the branch becomes the local face for its defence of workers' livelihoods and entitlements.
9. **It helps to have the local media on side.** Appoint a branch Media Officer, with a brief for getting to know the local journalists. Invite them to branch functions. Stage media events to attract new members to the branch and gain support for its candidates for public office.
10. **Networking is strength.** A branch's chances of securing a hearing for its views increase proportionately with the breadth of their external support. Make sure that the branch has access to lists of branch and FEA secretaries throughout the state, and don't be backward about contacting them. Make it plain your interest is in hearing about their concerns as well as getting their backing for those of your own.