

## Board Independence – Volunteers

What we are seeking to do in this column of the Governing Board Members Form is work out if a Governing Body member who is also a volunteer (apart from the time they spend as a member of the Governing Body) is independent of management.

For example, if a member of the Governing Body was also the full time PA of the CEO of the organisation, albeit on a volunteer basis, we would consider that member of the Governing Body **not** to be independent. On the other hand, if a member of the Governing Body were to be rostered on monthly to be in charge of providing morning tea after a church service and report to a member of staff in that capacity, we would still consider that member to be independent.

The distinction is whether the Governing Body member could be, or could to an outside observer be seen to be, under the influence of a member of the staff of the organisation. As a general rule of thumb, the more time a member of the Governing Body spends reporting to a relatively senior member of staff, the less likely it is that we would consider that Governing Body member to be independent.

Here are some further examples of relationships which could raise warning flags in the volunteer context:

- (a) A person who is a 3 day a week volunteer music pastor in a church
- (b) A volunteer who spends one and a half days a week doing all the banking for the organisation and preparing financial reports to the CFO/Treasurer
- (c) A volunteer who spends one week a month preparing reports on significant programs of the organisation for the CEO
- (d) A volunteer who, under the supervision of the CEO, regularly leads and trains others to lead teams of ad hoc volunteers to carry out ministry programs overseas

If after considering the above you are uncertain about whether a particular volunteer relationship could be seen to compromise independence, please explain the relationship in the “comments” section of this question and we will form a view. If we need more information, we will come back to you.

Finally, please remember that it is not a bad thing to have people involved in the day to day running of your organisation on your Governing Body – the Governing Body will be much better informed about the organisation and its ministry through such people. Our principle is that the **majority** of people on the Governing Body should be independent, to ensure the proposals and decisions of the management of the organisation can be reviewed by a majority independent Governing Body, acting as a check and balance on management.