

Book review by Gary Coveney of the Queensland Bar of Renton's famous text published in *Hearsay*, 17 October 2007



Guide for Meetings and Organisations (8th Ed, 2005)

Author: Nick Renton

Published by: Thomson

Reviewed by Gary Coveney

Nick Renton's *Guide for Meetings and Organisations* has been in publication since 1961. It is now in its eighth edition.¹ For the current edition, the text is helpfully divided into two volumes and deals with all aspects of chairmanship and the running of voluntary associations.

In the preface to the first edition, published in 1961, the author wrote:

"It is hoped that the book will meet the needs of those who desire meetings to have some degree of formality and who wish to avoid the time wasting, misunderstandings and frustrations which appear to be inevitable when those in charge of meetings are unfamiliar with the correct techniques."

From this, it is clear that the author's intention has always been to provide a text of true practical value. It is not uncommon for lawyers to become involved in the affairs of voluntary associations. Sometimes, we are members. At other times, we are called upon to advise a particular committee or even to take the Chair of a general meeting.

For the latter two roles, Renton's text is likely to provide the practitioner with a considerable amount of useful information on how these organisations are formed and administered.

Volume 1 is entitled "Guide for Voluntary Associations". It covers a wide range of topics including founding a new body, constitutions, membership, election systems and committees. It also gives some treatment to other matters relevant in the modern context, such as taxation, the internet and GST.

Volume 2 is entitled "Guide for Meetings". It deals with all aspects of meetings, including the role of the Chair, motions, points of order and voting. It also goes beyond voluntary associations with a chapter on shareholders' meetings.

Helpfully, the author includes practical examples of common problems that arise in organisations at the end of each volume, along with suggested solutions.

Together, the two volumes are a highly practical and enlightening guide for anyone dealing with the nuances of voluntary associations. They are written in a clear style, with very little reference to case law or legislation. However, this merely serves to emphasise the straightforward and pragmatic flavour of the text.

Each volume is reasonably priced at \$72.95.

Footnote

1. The author's highly entertaining website may be found at <http://users.bigpond.net.au/renton/> (referred to on 8 October 2007).