**A Network Charter for RANCH?**

A network charter was proposed as part of the review of RANCH in 2011. A charter can take many forms but its purpose is to make explicit the expectations and commitments of member Neighbourhood Houses.

**Why have one?**

By signing up to a series of minimum standards, principles etc, you demonstrate your organisation is serious about quality. This is a good promotional tool and can assist with submissions you write.

While each Neighbourhood House is an individual organisation with its own mission, committee and strategic direction, we all have much in common and belong to one identifiable sector. Because of this, any failure to meet reasonable standards by one Neighbourhood House reflects on the others. This is particularly true in the Local and State government arenas. It can also impact on the willingness of funding bodies to give grants to other Neighbourhood Houses.

The reverse is also true. When Neighbourhood Houses are seen to perform well, the reputation of other Neighbourhood Houses is positively affected.

A charter also demonstrates respect for the values and the hard work of our colleagues.

**What would a charter contain?**

This is up to the members to decide. However, to be meaningful it should be more than just a few motherhood statements. A charter could include things like a commitment to:

* Certain practices e.g. use of the good governance guide
* Applying values or principles e.g. Neighbourhood House sector principles or codes of ethics
* Minimum standards e.g. auditing, reporting and acquittal of grants
* Participation e.g. participation in Professional Development, network activities etc.

**How would it work?**

Signing up to and complying with a charter would be voluntary. How it would work is a decision for members but there are options including but not limited to:

* Compliance with the charter would not be monitored. However, breaches of the charter could be referred to RANCH Committee and sanctions applied if the breach is not remedied. One obvious sanction would be removal as a signatory the charter.
* The charter could be linked to membership and the constitutional dispute processes could apply
* There could be no action for breaches but this limits the value of the charter

**Has anyone else done this?**

Yes. In the Neighbourhood House sector there have been at least two charters put in place. In other areas such as professional associations, codes or charters are a well established quality control mechanism.