



NED Foundation Communications Policy 15/04/2021

Background

At the March 2021 NED Foundation gathering of 'staff', there was a strong request for people to know what different areas within the organization are doing, and to participate in sharing and discussing information and ideas that are of interest to the internal culture of NED.

After the IT subcommittee researched the options of how this increased communication could be facilitated, it was decided to initiate an online platform specifically for NED staff to discuss developments and share ideas.

The possibility of conducting this via email was considered, but there were a number of issues:

1. *Archiving.* Management communications between board, administration and subcommittees requires to be conducted by email, as that is how the organization is able to retain an archive. Board and subcommittee communications that utilize the specified mailing list email address, are all stored on a database for purposes of organizational memory and legal reasons. This archiving is not easily possible using SMS or online forums.
2. *Email.* One apparent factor with digital communications is its increasing fragmentation. There are so many different apps and methods of interaction, that it became impossible to easily identify one or two which everyone uses and is familiar and comfortable. Many people either don't use email or monitor it rarely, but it remains the most accepted format for essential organizational communication.
3. *Administrative requisite.* Thus, it becomes a requirement of staff involvement with NED that they maintain and monitor an email account.
4. *Email limitations.* There is a law against unsolicited list emailing: 'According to the Australian Spam Act of 2003, it is illegal in Australia to send unsolicited emails. ... Recipients of your message must give consent to receive emails from you. You must provide identification of your business contact details, and you must provide a working unsubscribe link.' [<https://www.jezweb.info/australian-spam-laws/>]

As we need to make email the stipulated business communication format for NED staff, members are unable to 'opt out'. Thus, it becomes unacceptable to use email or staff address lists for internal discussions of a general or informative process.

5. *Facebook.* After exploring many possible online discussion applications, it was decided that the difficulty of learning an unfamiliar program outweighed the array of functionality that other acknowledged tools provide (like Slack). If Facebook is satisfactory for the Australian Labor Party's staff discussion forum, and most people have already made the effort to understand how to use it, then it was an obvious choice.

There is no communication format that someone doesn't have a gripe with, and some believe Facebook to be the embodiment of evil, yet it is still the most widely used format.

6. *Workspace*. Once we decided on Facebook, it became obvious it was not wise to have an integration of personal and organisational Facebook profiles. Staff privacy was important to maintain. Facebook anticipated this and offers a separate yet similar platform for business groups, called Workplace. We have set up a Workplace account for NED Foundation, which, as a charity, we have been able to obtain for free using their Workplaces for Good initiative.

You will need to create a new login to sign up to the NED Foundation Workplace (separate from your usual Facebook login).

7. *Staff and confidentiality*. The composition of 'staff' in this communications stratagem means initially any members of the board or subcommittee. It can also include people who have an ongoing involvement with the functions of NED though not a committee member. A list of candidates will be circularised to subcommittee chairs for approval.

The value of a general organisational discussion group is the ability to share upcoming projects and other potential developments. This implies confidentiality, otherwise those with whom we are engaging in projects could have their situation jeopardised. Thus it is important to limit the numbers involved in discussions to those who accept the responsibility of being a functioning member of the NED Foundation.

8. *Connections with like-minded organisations*. Building linkages with organisations of a similar ethos as NED and SDN is not only one of our objects, but is also highly encouraged. Workplaces is the perfect place to share awareness of organisations you know of or are a member of, such that we become informed about the wider field of Social Development.

Ethical and Responsible Communication Behaviour

The Federal Government is seeking to apply new rules to charities registered by the ACNC, whereby any illegal activities in any way associated with a charity's staff or projects, including the use of emailing lists, could be cause to deregister the charity. The charity has to demonstrate they have taken all measures to ensure no illegal activities could be seen to have been supported. This has not yet come into effect, but would be specifically targeted at advocacy.

Thus it is the obligation of all staff members of the NED Foundation that they be careful in their behaviour where perceived to be acting in their organisational role. In respect to this policy, this especially applies to communications.

Be absolutely sure you understand there is no such thing as a private conversation in the digital sphere, meaning all communications like email, phone, online or phone apps, SMS, MMS etc. Always view these conversations as potentially public, and adhere to ethical principles.

Policy

1. *Email*. All non-personal-direct administrative and management related discussions must continue via email. Do not take these matters to other platforms, including the Workplace

forum, as we will not be able to maintain an organisational archive.

2. *Responsiveness.* All members of NED Foundation must do their best to respond in a timely and considered manner to administrative and management related emails.
3. *Workplace.* Staff discussions of a general, informational and inspirational nature can now be facilitated by the online NED Foundation Workplace. (Separate instructions will be available)
4. *Network.* Dissemination and engagement with the wider SDN Network will continue via network email circulars (for which there an unsubscribe option). This includes Newsletters. All subcommittees should consider regular update submissions to the SDN Network Newsletter (currently, contact Harry Creamer).
5. *Respectful Behaviour.* All communications undertaken as part of NED activities must adhere to Restorative and ethical principles, and be conducted with due responsibility as a representative of the NED Foundation. Anticipate when engaging with activities that could lead to violence or destructive of property.
6. *Engaging with other organisations.* Remember that only certain people in NED are approved to speak on behalf of the Foundation. This should not stop staff members engaging and liaising with other like-minded organisations so long that is conducted in a Restorative and respectful manner.
7. *Professionalism and visibility.* All communications via phone or internet are potentially public, so at all times conduct these ethically and professionally with the view that they are visible interactions.

Speaking on behalf of NED. (existing policy)

The primary person to speak on behalf of NED is the President, or in his or her absence, the Vice President, or by delegation. Secondly, the Business Manager and designated staff have authorisation to speak on behalf of NED, in matters directly relating to organisational functionality. The Executive should consult whenever a serious matter arises, so that continuity and risk-preparedness is maintained.

It is important that all members of the board, or employees of NED, do not disclose board matters to those not on the board, unless prior approval has been given by the board or the President. These include:

- a. Submissions and reports to the board.
- b. Financial information of NED (except where the CEO and Investment Manager are involved in the normal course of their business).
- c. Talking publicly to the media.
- d. Talking to the SDN Network about NED board matters, due to the sensitivity that exists between the SDN Workshop experience and the NED governance of SDN.