



**Slow Food
Canberra Capital Country Convivium
Special General Meeting
Tuesday, 31 May 2022,
7:30 pm (Zoom)**

Agenda + Discussion Paper

1. **Welcome and apologies:**
2. **What are the issues?**
 - Why are we considering disbanding the Convivium?
3. **What are the options?**
 1. Continuing with Convivium model
 2. Explore option of creating at least one Slow Food Community
 3. Disband the Convivium.
4. **Continuing with the Convivium model.** *See attached Discussion Paper under Discussion of options point 2: Membership Model.*
 - Who is willing to help out and in what role? Not every role has to be on the Committee.
 - Is that enough people? If not, either come up with ways to address the lack, or disband.
 - If the decision is to continue operating as a Convivium then we need to call an Annual General Meeting to vote for the new Committee.
5. **Exploring the option of setting up a Community.** *See attached Discussion Paper under Discussion of options point 3: Community Model.*
 - Briefly discuss the Community model pros and cons.
 - Who would be interested in participating in a Community and do we have any ideas for projects? A list of a few potential projects is at the end of the attached Discussion Paper.
 - If sufficient interest does exist, we need to collect names and contact details to organise further meetings. No specific deadlines yet for deciding to set up a Community. Final proposal(s) will need to be submitted to Slow Food International for approval.
6. **Items to be voted on by members**
 - 6.1. **Convivium Model – election of new committee**

Subject to sufficient members nominating for the committee.
 - 6.2. **Community Model**

Vote by members to support in principle nominated community projects.
 - 6.3. **Motion to disband the convivium**

Should there be insufficient new committee members nominated and no path identified, to recruit more committee members post meeting, then the current committee will propose a motion to disband the convivium. Additional decisions required include:

- Whether we refund memberships and under what conditions. For example, pro rata and/or more than some number of months of unused membership. See Discussion Paper for more details.
- Once we pay the outstanding liabilities what do we do with the remaining funds? See Discussion Paper for more details.

7. Final Thoughts

- Thanks for everyone's participation

Slow Food Canberra Special General Meeting 31 May 2022

Discussion Paper

What's the issue?

Slow Food Canberra has always operated on the traditional membership model: people pay a membership fee to join and take part in events. The fee is set by Slow Food International (SFI) with a greater portion going to SFI to support their worldwide programs, and the rest retained in Canberra to support the local convivium. A committee is formed from the members to manage the convivium. Simply put, in Canberra this model is failing, for the following reasons:

1. just about all of Slow Food's principles have gone mainstream, meaning that our mission to promote good, clean and fair food has, in one sense, been achieved;
2. by the same token, many organisations in the ACT and region have goals which over-lap with ours — for example, the Canberra City Farm, Canberra Seed Savers, and Southern Harvest;
3. membership of Slow Food Canberra is in long-term decline* ;
4. the current committee is too small (5 people), worn out, and only one illness or long absence away from being too small to function at all;
5. calls for volunteers have had poor results, although we appreciate that some may have volunteered but we did not have enough resources to respond properly;
6. with a few exceptions attendance at our events is sporadic and small;
7. in recent years most of our activities have been curtailed because of covid, and it is unclear how things will pick up again as the plague abates;
8. fundraising is at a standstill because soup kitchens, our historical means of raising funds, lost out to competition from the increasing number of other food outlets at farmers' markets and the like.

What can we do about it?

We have three options, and perhaps some combinations thereof:

1. continue the convivium as we are with the Membership Model;
2. convert to the Community Model. This option seems the most promising;
3. disband.

Discussion of options

1. **Continue as is with the Membership Model.** For this to succeed we need to enlist a new and preferably larger committee. Present positions are Convivium Leader, Secretary, Treasurer, Memberships, and one ordinary member. The occupants of the first four positions all wish to retire. Extra positions would (ideally) be Media Manager with an emphasis on social media, Newsletter Editor, Events Manager, and Project Planner. Obviously, some positions must be filled by a member of the Committee.
2. **Transition to the Community model.** Slow Food International recognises that the Membership Model is “in crisis everywhere,” and in response has developed the **Community Model**.
 - a. This is a project-oriented form of organisation, not event-oriented as we have been operating in the past.
 - b. We bring together a group of at least 10 people who care about their food and want to address a **specific issue**. Slow Food Canberra has a large number of Friends who have never been paid members but who are still interested in our goals and purposes. A Community could give them a ready way to become involved in a project under the Slow Food banner.
 - c. A Community is self-managed. It will **not** be managed by the Convivium committee. While it can work with a Convivium, it can exist separately and even in areas where a Convivium does not exist.
 - d. People do **not** have to be members of Slow Food to participate, and they pay no membership fees.

- e. Communities have representation in Slow Food equal to that of convivia. A commitment of support for the international movement is essential. This can vary depending on a number of factors and will be decided based on an agreement between the Community and the Executive Committee of Slow Food or other delegated associations. The purpose is to support projects that are a part of our identity, such as the Ark of Taste and the various campaigns.
- f. Most Communities are overseas but Singleton in the Hunter Valley has set up a Community which is undertaking a number of projects now

There is wide scope for projects. See a partial list at the bottom of this document. We are networking with other food-related groups in Canberra. One in particular is Regional Development Australia ACT, which “is suggesting a major shakeup of the ACT’s approach to the local food system.” We could be very helpful here! Want to help?

How to set up a Community: <https://www.slowfood.com/our-network/slow-food-communities/create-your-community/>

FAQs about Communities: <https://www.slowfood.com/our-network/slow-food-communities/faq/>

3. **Disband the Convivium.** This is the default position as it is the result of not meeting the conditions that must be met to keep the Convivium running.

What needs to happen if the Convivium is to be disbanded?

If we do not get enough volunteers to run the Convivium then we will have to disband. Sorry. In disbanding we will pay off our few debts, archive our paper and digital records, shut down our website, dispose of our physical assets, disburse our funds and close the bank account. We are not an incorporated society and have no other requirements regarding closure and liquidation.

What do we do about membership fees?

* The current membership is 32 of whom 13 will expire during 2022, 12 will expire during 2023 and 7 will expire during 2024. A Convivium requires least 20 members to exist. Currently, there are two options for current members:

1. Do nothing and continue to be a member of Slow Food with your membership fees supporting Slow Food projects in Australia and elsewhere.
2. Nominate to become part of another convivium; for example, South Coast, Nowra, Saddleback, Berry to Jervis Bay, or Sydney.

Members taking one of these two options can do so at any time and do not need this Committee to do anything.

We are considering a 3rd option: membership fee refunds. This could be decided as part of winding up the committee (i.e. whether we make refunds and under what conditions).

Normally we do not make refunds, but as it is the Convivium committee itself proposing to disband, is this a good and fair thing to do?

Our reasoning is as follows. Some members will have just renewed and/or renewed for multiple years and so we are wondering if we should offer refunds. A large portion of membership fees is sent to SFI for use in international programs. and there does not appear to be a mechanism to request refunds from Slow Food International. Accordingly, refunds would have to come out of our local funds which are sufficient for those who request refunds. It is possible that not everyone that meets the criteria will request a refund but the amount requested will be added to or other liabilities and taken out before distributing the remaining funds.

What do we do with the remaining funds after liabilities are paid?

Possible options are to:

1. donate to worthy Slow Food projects or like-minded organisations in the ACT Region;
 2. provide a contribution to a Farewell Party to which we would invite past and current members;
 3. seed money to assist a Slow Food Community that is trying to get up and running;
 4. return the funds to Slow Food International to support international work of Slow Food.
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A few possible Projects for a future Community to consider for the Community Model.

1. Implement the Snail of Approval (SoA) project. This calls for people to find, engage and promote local and regional producers of foodstuffs and food services. A good example is the Mountain Pepperberry, with one grower (and a Slow Food member) near Braidwood and some others further south. It calls also for a follow-up program to check at intervals whether the SoA principles are being adhered to. **This project involves an ongoing commitment.**
2. Create a regional community of chefs — the Chefs' Alliance — and engage them with the Slow Food network. We have had two chefs as a member but they lapsed some years ago.
3. Organise and present cooking demonstrations, such as passata making or fermenting vegetables. This has proved popular in the past. The range of choices is very wide.
4. Support some aspect or other of the Soil City farming co-operative. This is setting up a co-operative of farms in and around the ACT. Note that this is a co-operative made up of separate farms, not a farm that is a co-operative. It's a bold new concept, not tried before in this country, modelled on the highly-successful Mondragon Corporation in the Basque country of Spain, the world's largest worker co-operative.
5. Work with the Regional Development Association of the ACT (RDA ACT) who seek to establish a sustainable food system for the ACT. The CEO of RDA ACT has offered to publicise Slow Food Canberra, which should open up opportunities. For more info, visit the [Canberra Food Region Collaborative](https://www.agrifood-hub.com/) (<https://www.agrifood-hub.com/>)
6. Recruit younger people who are the future of any society. Our current membership model fails almost completely in this respect. We need a new approach arranged by people who understand the younger generation and their apparent use of social media almost to the exclusion of all other channels of communication, including emails like this and our newsletters.