



**The New Zealand Association of Radio Transmitters Incorporated**

## **The Conference Organiser's Handbook**

**An advisory document laying out Current Policy and practice with regard to the organisation of Conferences**

**Version 1.0**

**This document comes into effect on 06 September 2020**

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# Introduction

The purpose of this document is to assist Branches with the preparation of Conferences for NZART. **Generally, this document is a guideline only, although certain aspects of this document reflect NZART policy and need to be adhered to.**

This document replaces all previous versions. This document was rewritten to reflect changes within current practice and advances in technology.

This document is intended to be a “living document” and built upon with lessons learned through running conferences. It is hoped that additions to this document will be made at the completion of each conference. This can only happen if your committee submits new material for inclusion in this document If applicable

This document is only a guide. Local conditions will vary - and different branches will do things differently within these guidelines. This is one of the things that makes each conference different and interesting.

## The Conference Committee

1. The **Conference Committee** organises and runs the conference on behalf of NZART. A conference committee assumes this responsibility on behalf of NZART Council and the members, so the selection and training of persons for key committee appointments is important.
2. **Previous Conferences:** It is important and that some members of the conference committee should have attended earlier conferences. This experience will avoid misunderstandings and save you many hours of effort. Make contact with recent past conference committees to bounce ideas off.
3. A small committee keeps the individual workload down for everyone and allows for decisions to be made quickly. The chairman, secretary and treasurer do the most work. They are the core and should constitute the planning sub-committee. It is essential the secretary has good general computer and word processing/spreadsheet skills, with reliable access to email and other communication methods. (Skype/Zoom/Etc)
4. **Social meetings:** Arrange social meetings for the committee and their spouses at intervals from the time you know conference is yours. These enable the "workers" to get to know one another and work together as a team.
5. If more than one branch is involved consider having one branch take the lead and have representatives of the other branches empowered to make decisions, rather than have to go back to their own branch meetings which slows organisation down.
6. Generally speaking there are no free handouts - everyone pays full registration, however if you have students involved in helping organize the conference the organizing club may consider giving the student(s) a rebated registration fee in lieu of work.
7. **Delegation of duties:** Spread the workload. Delegate specific duties to committee members. Conference chairman must delegate or suffer being over-worked.
8. **Manpower:** Co-opt anyone willing to help in any way, many hands make light work, except for the coordinator. Co-opt helpers by personal invitation. Don't just call for volunteers - sometimes they are shy. Give each person a specific job and guidance on what's wanted.
9. **N.Z.A.R.T.** The host branch or branches run conference for the members of the Association. **All committee members must belong to NZART.** The Association guarantees any loss (if required) and Council must therefore make the final disposition of any profit made (i.e. after all bills are paid NZART may require part or all of the profit to be paid to NZART or shared with the branch). Refer to NZART current policy. The AGM is a formal occasion and has to follow a set pattern. Certain meetings on Sunday are traditional. Otherwise the week-end is yours to plan and you can give the conference a theme of your choice.
10. **Meetings:** Committee meetings should be held more regularly as the time for conference draws near. Have a timetable for each aspect so that people can come and go when their subject is due, or stay, as they wish. Act on consensus; record only the decisions; there is no need for formal minutes.
11. **Planning:** Form a sub-committee for each aspect of conference and leave them to attend to the details.



## Accommodation for Attendee's

*See Council Requirements for Council Accommodation*

1. Provide a list of available accommodation - Cabins, Hotels, Motels, and Motor Camps. Every effort should be made to list a broad price range of accommodation. Motor camps usually have cabins at very reasonable cost.
2. Attempt to obtain a special rate for Conference attendees with accommodation providers.
3. **Camping Grounds:** Check availability for caravanners. Check availability of Cabins.
4. On Site Motorhomes: Confirm with the venue if motorhomes are able to park nearby or within the conference venue car park.

# AGM

1. **Delegates:** Branch delegates need a table or desk to spread their papers on during the AGM.
2. **Opening Ceremony:** Allow forty-five (45) minutes. Give the speakers their time allocation, after they have accepted their invitation. Fit others round the chief speaker, who usually opens the conference.
3. **President and Council:** In election years the new President and Council take office at the end of the AGM.
4. **Seating:** For official party on stage at opening. Tables and four chairs on stage for President, Vice-President, General Secretary and assistant for the AGM. Delegates seats and tables at the front of hall for AGM.
5. **Branch Signs** (for delegate's tables). These are in a special transit case. Contact the General Secretary.
6. **Electronics:** Required at the AGM for use of General Secretary. Please refer to the General Secretary for requirements. This includes a **Public Address** System.
7. **Curtains:** If the top table is on a stage to exclude draughts are welcomed by those at the "top table".
8. **Power:** Ensure that there is sufficient power at the top table to allow for laptop computers, recording devices and other devices necessary for the AGM.

## **A.R.E.C.**

1. A.R.E.C. as per the norm of recent times follows on from the NZART AGM on the Saturday. The room used for the NZART AGM should be used for the AREC National Forum.
2. Liaise with the National Director for other requirements for the meeting.
3. Allow for an attendance of about one third of total registrations.
4. The room used is often the venue for the evening meal, so make sure the AREC team are aware when they need to vacate to allow the room to be set up.

## Attendance and Registration

1. **Eligibility:** Only members of NZART are eligible to attend conference. Return non-member registrations with a membership application form. If in doubt the General Secretary can supply an up to date membership list.
2. Design the registration form to produce information as to catering, transport connections, dinner, etc. Take nothing for granted and remember that if a question can be misinterpreted it will be. Have copies available on request. Use past conference registration forms as a guide and modify to suit your own needs. Liaise with Break-In for printing in the March – April issue.
3. Be aware that some attendees to conference have underlying health issues and may not be able to wait until normal registration opens prioritise these people and register them early if possible, it will help the general flow of registration.
4. **Discounts/Penalties:** Offer a discount for early payment of registration fee. Alternatively impose a penalty for late payment.
5. **Late Registrations:** Be prepared for people to arrive without notice. It is usually possible for a few extra to be fitted in. Remember they cannot be denied admission to the AGM.
6. **Swingers:** Name tags for all registrations coded to indicate functions for which they are valid. Registration number on back for swinger prizes.
7. **Numbers:** A gamble. Your estimate is best based on figures from previous conferences in the area, or at similar venues. It is hard to strike a balance between the break-even point and profit and loss.
8. **Official Guests:** Balance their public relations value against their cost. If an overseas guest is invited, then NZART will pay the registration fee.
9. **Saturday:** Provide for registration procedure to continue; the AGM; conference dinner; alternative programme.
10. **Friday:** A reception centre is required for arriving delegates. Consider an informal social gathering with light supper provided.

## Council Requirements

1. **Accommodation:** Council has different accommodation requirements for each Conference. Please discuss this with the NZART Business Manager early in the planning process.
2. **Meetings:** A meeting place for up to twenty (20) is required on Thursday evening if requested by the General Secretary; all day Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, and on Monday from 9:00 am to 12.00 pm. Space is required to spread papers. A "U" shaped configuration of tables is the best. Warmth, good lighting and acoustics are a must. Morning and afternoon tea, and lunch are required on Friday. Morning tea on Monday. These are paid for by NZART. Keep Council informed via the General Secretary of progress. Call in your nearest councillor for help and advice.
3. **WIA Representatives:** Each alternate Conference, NZART Hosts representatives from the WIA. **Their Conference Registration is covered by the Conference and Accommodation by NZART Council.** Check with the NZART General Secretary for requirements.

## Evening Programmes

*See also Meals and catering*

1. **Dinner:** Numbers can vary and a good indicator for numbers is a comparison of numbers attending the previous few conferences. A buffet style meal is best. Speeches should come before dinner if possible or between course if the speaker can keep the time short. Find a personable master of ceremonies. The dinner is the Annual Dinner of the Association with invited guests.
2. **Entertainment:** Sunday night is the prime time. After dinner on Saturday if there is no dancing. Look for local talent and invite visitor participation.
3. **Entertainment:** If professionals are used book early and get firm quotes in writing. Confirm near conference time. Homebrew, homespun entertainment is cheaper and better appreciated.
4. **Quizzes.** An excellent form of entertainment using overseas visitors and Association personalities as "victims". Useful in dispensing give-aways.

## Finance

1. The treasurer keeps accurate and departmentalised book of accounts. Pay bills on presentation, produce accounts in a business-like manner and, if necessary, send monthly reminders to those overdue. If you have a slow payer be diplomatic but firm. Refer any insoluble problems to Council.
2. **Advance:** An advance of working capital can be had on application to the General Secretary. This advance is set to a maximum of \$3000.00 and must be re-paid in full (if possible) after all bills have been paid.
3. **Association:** The Association pays for hire of venue for AGM only and the AREC National Forum. See under "Council" for their requirements.
4. **Balance Sheet:** Produce after all monies have been received and accounts paid and send to the General Secretary before 31st December of the year of the Conference. Recommendations for the disposal of any surplus may be made to Council, but not proceeded with until approved. Have the balance sheet reviewed by a qualified person.
5. **Budget:** Set a realistic "break-even" figure for attendance based on previous experience in the area. Remember that fixed charges will decrease on a per-head basis as numbers increase. Get written quotes for catering, transport, printing, hire of venue as early as possible and add the inflation rate for the preceding year. Budget on the minimum number you expect to attend for a 5 to 10% surplus. Figures must be firm by February to ensure registration forms are in the March-April Break-In. Send a copy of the budget to the General Secretary as soon as it is firm and no later than the previous November. Try contacting local business for sponsorship.
6. **Finance:** Decide early whether or not to subsidise the cost by fundraising activities such as raffles, trading tables, branch projects. Have the final budget ready by February based on minimum attendance figure. The object is to keep the cost of conference low to attract the maximum attendance.
7. **Soliciting:** For give-aways, advertising and prizes. Get letters away early to give firms time to budget. Follow up all but the refusals after three months. There is no need to restrict requests to radio and electronics. Write thank-you letters promptly.
8. **Sponsorship:** Try contacting local large businesses for possible sponsorship of the conference or perhaps one dinner.
9. **Raffles:** For fund-raising these are relatively painless. Solicit gifts from local and national firms as early as possible. There is no need to confine requests to radio and electronics. Supply full details of the Association and the conference with the requests. Give credit for donations in the brochure. Lots of small prizes assist entertainment.
10. **Quotes:** Ensure that all quotes are received in writing. Management may change and any verbal quote given, forgotten.
11. **Insurance:** **The organising branch(es) should check its (their) public liability cover and ensure that this cover extends to conference activities, if necessary, by contacting insurers. While NZART has cover (\$10M at time of writing), this may not extend beyond conference events that NZART specifically organises, such as some annual general meetings. Commercial exhibitors arrange their own cover. Cover for other activities is required if necessary. Consider a policy against cancellation of conference. Venues often have their own public liability**

**cover, so ask first, often they may include an additional cost to ensure this cover.**

12. **Trading Tables:** If the cost of conference is being subsidised trading tables are money spinners.
13. The Organising Committee may decide to underwrite the National Conference. Any surplus can be used by the Organising Branches to enhance the aims and the objects of the Association.
14. The Organising Committee may request that NZART underwrite the National Conference. In the event of NZART underwriting the National Conference, Council may approve a proportion of Conference profits to be returned to the Organising Branches.

## Meals and Catering

1. **Catering:** The most costly item, and the hardest to predict. Get firm quotes from a number of caterers and give the whole job to one. It is easier to deal with one firm and the complete package helps to keep costs down.
2. **Meals:** Put value into the Saturday night dinner. Tea/coffee and biscuits are enough for morning and afternoon teas. Lunch on Saturday and Sunday should be hot and simple. Arrange a number of parallel serving stations to avoid long queues and to keep the breaks to a minimum. Ensure that enough food is provided to cater for everyone and that no one misses out.
3. **Menu:** Discuss each meal in detail with the caterer. See that you get what you pay for and pay for what you get.
4. Dietary requirements: make sure there are gluten free and vegan options: include this on the registration form so the caterers are prepared. Also discuss with caterers about any special dietary requirements beyond gluten free and vegan can be catered for just in case some arise.
5. **Council** have requirements for the Friday and Monday Council Meetings. See the General Secretary regarding this.

# Photographs

1. **Photographs: *Candid*** - give the job to a commercial photographer at a fee or, at least, no charge.
2. **Photographs: *General*** - for Break-In and the local press. Usually Break-In does its own. If the local press are unable to supply a photographer a committee member with a camera can usually be found.
3. **Photographs: *Conference*** – Consider a group photograph, but unless it is properly organised, it can take more time than is justified. June weather can be unpredictable. As a commercial venture it is hardly a viable proposition.

## Programme

1. **Activity:** Draft a master plan covering all activities in chronological order as soon as possible after undertaking to run Conference. Leave it to one person to do the first master plan and do not be afraid of altering it right up the printing deadline. Break-In should have a programme for publishing in the April issue, for which the deadline is 10th March in the editor's hands.
2. **Aim:** To provide a programme of interest and education blending the interests of all. Give conference a theme.
3. **Programme:** You will never please everybody all the time, but a varied programme means pleasing most of them for some of the time and they will go away happy. Use local talent - many who attend conference do not have the chance of learning first-hand from the experts.

## Alternate Programme

1. Set up an alternative programme committee within the master plan. The programme they arrange for those not wishing to attend the AGM or other meetings is vital to the success of conference. A good alternative programme brings more to conference and details should be available at the time of registration.
2. Members should indicate on their registration form if they have a disability so organizers are aware and can assist or get assistance for them if required
3. **Visits:** To local places of interest. Think what makes your region unique, what visitors will want to see and do.
4. **Tours:** Coach tours of the local area are popular with visitors.
5. Have a **Plan B** in place just in case of inclement weather if needed.

## Sunday Programme

1. Provide for WARO, OTC, SPAM and AMSAT/ZL AGM's.
2. Arrange for forums on as many aspects of amateur radio for which time and speakers can be found.
3. Evening entertainment needs to be booked early if offered. If using an after-dinner speaker then try to have them speak for no more than thirty (30) minutes.

## Publicity

1. **Publicity:** Use Break-In, NZART website, a Conference web site. Consider Having a conference award.
2. **Advertising:** Use any or all of the following to advertise conference - Break-In, Newsletters to branches, Official Broadcast, HQ Infoline, etc. As a source of revenue offer local traders advertising in the conference brochure, at a page rate sufficient to cover printing costs.
3. **Break-In:** Keep the Editor fully informed and meet his deadline for copy, (10th of month before month of issue). Start promotion at the conference preceding yours. Appoint a Break-In scribe to write a report on conference.
4. **Talk-in facilities:** For mobile guidance when required. Can also handle queries during conference. Frequency to be used should be included in publicity.
5. **Questions:** Despite all your publicity be prepared for questions which have already been answered. There is a conference law which says "Anything capable of misinterpretation will be".

## Remember

1. **Students:** Consider a rebated registration fee in exchange for work. This is good training.
2. **Spouses/Partners:** Please them and you have success.
3. **Weather:** Plan for the worst and take the credit if it is better.
4. **Up-dating.** At the end of your conference let the General Secretary know of any changes considered necessary to improve this Guideline.
5. **Options.** Ideally it should be all or none but experience has shown that members like to choose which parts of conference they wish to attend. All members have the right to attend the AGM at no charge, but that does not include refreshments which have to be paid for. Carefully consider the options and once printed do not change them. The more options the more work there is for the committee. Options should carry a small premium.
6. **Unawares.** How not to be caught. Detailed planning should prevent this. Know where the lighting and heating controls, and fuse boxes, are for every room.

## Venue

1. Ideally under one roof. Consider educational establishments. Their charges are usually moderate. A number of small rooms in addition to the main hall help in planning a varied programme. Check the acoustics. Floor plans are useful in devising traffic flow and the lay-out of facilities for meals.
2. **Heating:** Make sure heating is adequate and that it works, and that you know how it works. Remember we meet in winter.
3. **Backdrop:** A large canvas NZART Conference back drop is available for the stage at the AGM. Contact the General Secretary.
4. **Directions:** How to find the venue or venues within your city. How to find rooms within the venue. How to find your city. Include a map in the registration response letter.
5. **Bookings:** Book early. In some areas two years lead time is necessary. Get as much as possible under one roof. Check if catering arrangements are adequate and avoid a "tied" caterer if possible.
6. **Security of Premises:** Responsibility rests with the caretaker. Equipment: responsibility is that of the owners.
7. **Keys:** Make sure you know who holds keys for all rooms in use and arrange spares.
8. **Sound:** Arrange for good sound reproduction at all events.
9. **Projectors and electronics** - - each meeting room should be equipped with their own effective data projector system if possible. Try to let your guest presenters know what connections are catered for. (VGA / HDMI, etc) Have on hand a selection of adapters and leads, a spare projector, and a laptop loaded with Presentation Software - just in case. Suggest guest speakers also bring their presentation along on redundant pen drives or have it available in the cloud in the event their laptop dies. Check if good WiFi or Cellular Data is available at the venue.
10. **Parking:** Provide parking details.
11. **First Aid:** Have a first aid person available and publicise who it is and where they can be found. In a gathering there is bound to be an emergency. List local service numbers in the brochure. Venues may have their own requirements as to requirements for the provision of First Aid; Check!

## Visitors and Guests

1. **Visitors:** Make them feel wanted and they will come again.
2. **Who's coming:** The President is grateful for this information in advance.
3. **Guests:** All who attend conference are your guests so treat them well. In addition there are **official guests** for the opening of conference and the dinner. These are a charge on conference so keep the list short. Official guests at the opening cost a morning tea; those at the dinner cost about half a registration fee. Local Mayor, M.P., Police or SAR representative, a V.I.P., and their spouses for the opening..

## Update History

Updated by	Date	Version
<b>Base Document</b>	<b>7 April 2009</b>	<b>0</b>
ZL2UFI	11 June 2020	0.25
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