

## **KORINDERIE RIDGE CO-OPERATIVE ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION FOR PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS**

### A Brief History Of Shareholding

The land, today known as Korinderie Ridge, was purchased in an undeveloped state in 1974 by John Reading. He and his brother built the original building that was to become the present community centre.

At some time between 1974 and 1976, John negotiated with a group of 11 people to sell a major part of the equity in the property. The money raised by the group was considered as individuals buying 'shares' in the property. The land was held by John and two others as tenants in common, held 'in trust' for the whole group. This was called the 'Korinderie Ridge Trust', the name coming from an Aboriginal word 'Koninderie', meaning 'rainbow' (apparently the 'n' was changed to an 'r' due to a slip of the chisel as the sign was being made to hang over the entrance.)

In the later part of the 1970's, the first residents moved onto the property. John Reading never settled on the land, and eventually sold his share. Subsequently, the 'shareholders' decided to form an incorporated body to take ownership of the land. So in 1982, Korinderie Ridge Co-operative was incorporated, as what was then called a 'community advancement society'. The land title was transferred to the Co-op in 1983.

At the time, the local Council allowed one house plus one manager's quarters per 100 acres to be built on rural properties. As Korinderie Ridge is 494 acres, only four houses (plus four manager's quarters) could be built. Fortunately the State Government approved a new planning policy (now defunct) that enabled 'multiple occupancy' of rural land. So in 1989, the Co-op submitted a development application to the (then) Richmond River Shire Council, for a multiple occupancy zoning. This was for a maximum of 25 dwellings, but the final conditions of consent permitted a maximum of 18 dwellings. Consequently, the rules of the Co-operative were amended, to effectively prevent the allotment of any more than 18 shares, since this would create a situation where there were more shareholders than potential approved dwellings.

For this reason shares are only available for transfer, by acquiring a share from one of the 18 members.

### Membership And Shares

To become a member of the Co-operative, applicants must first become known to all existing members. An application can then be made and will be voted upon by a formal meeting of members within a maximum period of 6 months. A 'yes' vote of 80% of those present and entitled to vote is required for approval. To be registered as a member, applicants must then acquire one share by transfer. New members are entered into the 'share register' and receive a share certificate.

Membership is a personal right and comes with certain rights and obligations as set out in the rules, including the right to build and occupy a dwelling, subject to certain conditions imposed by Co-op and local Council. So membership essentially enables a person to become an active participant in the Ridge community. At present, 'active membership', which is required by law to be defined, is the payment of an annual subscription that goes towards recurrent costs and discretionary spending. This does not of course, account for or replace the many ways of personal involvement and contribution to the community.

A share represents equity in the Co-operative. There is no set monetary value and share transfers have been agreed by private arrangements between buyer and seller. It should be noted that regardless of any private agreements or contracts, the transfer cannot be effected until the buyer is approved as a member.

There is now also provision for joint shareholding by two people. Such partners must decide whose name will appear first on the share certificate and they then become joint shareholders. However, only one vote can be exercised by joint shareholders to ensure equity is preserved across all 18 shares.

### Meetings And Decision Making

The Co-operative holds formal meetings every two months. As well as the members, all persons who are part of the resident community and any invited guests may attend. There is a standard agenda structure.

Important decisions are made by a formal vote, requiring a 50% majority of members. Less important matters may be determined by agreement. A motion to change the Co-operative's rules requires a 75%

majority. There is no proxy voting allowed, that is, you must be present to vote. Only one of the joint shareholders named on the certificate can vote at any time, but this need not always be the same person.

All attending are normally permitted to speak on motions or matters under discussion. For particularly important or difficult issues, there may be a 'round the table' where all present are able to speak in turn.

The meeting in June is the 'budget' meeting, at which the finances are reviewed and planned for the following financial year (July 1 to June 30). The Annual General Meeting is held around October. This sees the election of a Board of five Directors and various functional positions including chairperson, secretary and treasurer. There is also typically a wider discussion about community matters, reflecting on the past year and looking to the future.

The Board of Directors meet as they see fit and must have a minimum of four meetings annually. It normally only makes decisions on functional matters as required by the Co-operatives' law, but will also decide on matters where the members have, at a meeting, requested them to do so.

Outside the formal processes, there will of course be discussions amongst persons on a range of matters. Meetings will often delegate authority to a person or group to deal with a particular matter, perhaps with some instruction. Email and small group meetings are used to focus on detailed matters, with an expectation that progress and/or outcomes will be reported via email or at the next Co-op meeting.

#### Rules And By-Laws

As required by law, the Co-operative has rules that have been approved by the Registry of Co-operatives (now part of NSW Fair Trading). These can be altered but must comply with the Co-operatives Act and Regulations. Recently legislation has been changed to a national system, but our rules are still formulated under NSW law.

The rules specify among many things, the procedures involved in becoming a member and acquiring a share. They set out the 'primary activity' and the objects of the Co-operative, as below (this is Rule 9):

*9 (a) The primary activity of the Co-operative is to enable all members to live in a Co-operative community on land owned by the Co-operative while conserving the natural resources and environment of that land.*

*(b) The objects of the Co-operative shall be:*

- (i) to acquire land for use, benefit, and ecologically sustainable development of the Co-operative and its members;*
- (ii) to conserve the biodiversity and other natural resources of land owned by the Co-operative;*
- (iii) to manage development on land owned by the Co-operative;*
- (iv) to provide and facilitate the provision of resources and services for the use, benefit or development of the Co-operative and its members;*
- (v) to encourage and facilitate the use of sustainable technology and practices by the Co-operative and its members;*
- (vi) to facilitate and carry out any enterprises by the Co-operative or its members not inconsistent with the other objects;*
- (vii) to promote the above objects of the Co-operative.*

In addition to the rules, there are five by-laws. These differ from rules in that they can be altered by an 80% vote of members without the approval of Fair Trading.

- 1. All activities on land owned by the Co-operative will conform to the current development control plan for that land as approved by local government.*
- 2. Residents and visitors on land owned by the Co-operative will abide by any fire control and environmental control plans currently in force for that land as approved by the Co-operative at a general meeting.*
- 3. Members, employees and office-bearers of the Co-operative, all persons acting on behalf of the Co-operative, and all persons on land owned by the Co-operative, will abide by any list of policies currently in force as approved by the Co-operative at a general meeting.*

4. *These by-laws may only be amended by an 80% majority vote of members present at a general meeting of the Co-operative, provided that notice of the proposed amendment has been given to members in accordance with the rules of the Co-operative*
5. *Where any incompatibility arises between these by-laws and the rules of the Co-operative, the rules will take precedence.*

A final understanding within the community is that dogs and cats are not permitted. However, if a new member already has a beloved pet, a request can be put to Co-op and that specific pet/s may be allowed with the understanding they cannot be replaced once deceased.

#### The Development Plan

When the Co-op applied to Council for multiple occupancy zoning, a development application was submitted. This was accompanied by an extensive document, which included a study of the property and addressed a range of matters that would be considered in the approval process. This document also included a development control plan, with a map in which the land is subdivided into 'land use' zones. There are specifications for what can and cannot be done in each zone as agreed by members. For example, there are areas set aside where dwellings can be built, and areas that are protected for environmental reasons. Also specified are more general controls that apply to the whole property.

In 2015, a designated cemetery area was approved by Council, and one shareholder is now buried there.

Copies of the zonal plan are available to inspect at the Co-op office in the community centre. An electronic version is being prepared at the present time.

#### Community Group Activities

At each formal meeting, workdays are scheduled for larger projects that need 'many hands on deck'. While these are not compulsory, all residents are encouraged to help out within their means, and often friends and visitors will take part as well. Some projects are one-off, like the major renovations to the community centre. Others are ongoing, for example, road construction and maintenance.

There are also some intermittent, but important organised activities such as fire drills and actual fire-fighting. Also training sessions are held when necessary, to ensure safe operation and maintenance of the community tractor and its implements. There is a range of activities that bring visitors to the community and require much organisation. The biggest of these is the annual 'Bush Regeneration Week' each winter, where volunteers come to camp and help with weed control.

Social activities are many and varied, but the hub is principally the community centre. A long-standing tradition is a Friday night pot-luck dinner, and the community centre is also the venue for many birthday parties, weddings, wakes, musical events and other celebrations.

#### And Finally...

Much of the above information is fairly technical, since it answers questions commonly asked by prospective members. While there are rules and controls, these only are referred to when necessary. The binding elements to note are our fundamental appreciation and care for this small part of the planet, the practical Co-operative activities and the social support of the Korinderie Ridge community.

We have prepared this for people who may have an interest in becoming part of the community. It is only a brief summary intended to give a first-time visitor an idea of what the Ridge is and how it works. Anyone who is seriously considering applying for membership is advised to look at the Co-op rules and the development plan. The rules can be provided as a pdf file free of charge.

Of course interested applicants need to spend time engaging with the Korinderie community, and ideally stay here for some time to experience the lifestyle and the beauty of Korinderie Ridge throughout the year. It is interesting to note that, in the early years, persons were required to spend 6 months in total as a resident before being able to be considered for membership! This prescribed time stay was reduced, and eventually dropped altogether due to its impracticality.

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Residents most of the time since 1980.