

Attending PBPA General Meetings Remotely

Introduction:

The Progress Association uses Google Cloud Services for essential communication and collaboration tools. This includes email, familiar office applications, and video conferencing capabilities. Thanks to our non-profit status, the Association enjoys these services free of charge.

The PBPA started using Video Conferencing during COVID and although it has been offered since then, up until March of this year our records show that very few members used this facility and in 2023 only two General Meetings show remote attendees. Demand has increased recently so we will continue to provide this service for members who normally reside in Sydney etc, while encouraging residents to participate in person, fostering community engagement.

In the past, video conferencing relied on a personal Zoom account funded by the previous secretary. Moving forward, we will be transitioning to Google Meet for all meetings offering video conferencing as a participation option.

To ensure a smooth remote joining experience via Google Meet, attendees must notify the Assistant Secretary, using the email asst_secretary@pearlbeachprogress.org.au, at least 48 hours in advance of their intention to participate virtually. This advanced notice allows the Association to assess whether the facility needs to be provided and confirm all remote attendees have joined before the meeting begins. If insufficient requests are received by the designated time, the video conferencing option will not be available.

Due to the amount of work required to administer and setup Video Conferencing for a General Meeting, we have set a minimum limit of 3 requests to join the meeting remotely.

As the Association now facilitates voting at General Meetings through video conferencing (Google Meet), all participants joining virtually must use their first and surname as listed on the Membership register. While participants that are not Members or Friends are welcome to observe the meeting in person at the hall, they won't be eligible to participate via video conference.

If the minimum number of requests have been received, the Google Meet link will be sent to those who wish to join remotely at least 24 hours before the meeting with joining instructions and a link to this usage policy. If not, then those who have requested will be informed that the minimum number has not been met and the facility will not be available.

Joining the Meeting:

- **Click the provided link.** You can join using an existing Google account or simply connect as a guest. **Important:** Whichever method you choose, make sure the name you use matches the one you provided when requesting to join via Google Meet.
- **Name verification.** Only names that have pre-registered and are the same as listed on the membership register will be admitted to the meeting.

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- **Timing.** Please ensure you join the meeting by at least 10 minutes before the meeting is scheduled to start. This allows time for the Host to confirm you have joined correctly. No one will be admitted once the meeting has started.

Before the Meeting Starts:

- **Chat is for audio check only.** Use the chat feature up until the meeting starts to confirm you can hear the host clearly. The host might also ask everyone to speak briefly to ensure we can hear you in the hall.
- **Mute your microphone on entry.** This helps to avoid background noise and ensures a smooth meeting experience. The host will mute everyone if necessary.

Multiple attendees from the same location:

- If the meeting has a motion on the agenda that requires a vote, you will need to join separately if you wish to have more than one voted counted. You can join with another device e.g. Smartphone and mute the mic and speaker. Just use it to register your additional vote.
- The reason for this is that when attendees use Hands Up while the host is presenting the host can only see the first one or two names but then it just says how many hands are raised. It would require someone else in the hall to join just to manage voting and this is not practical. So unfortunately, the notification of attendees with Hands Up is the only option to manage voting effectively.

Joining the Conversation:

To ensure a smooth flow of discussion, we'll be using voice for contributions, just like in-person attendees. Here's how to participate remotely:

1. **Raise your hand.** Use the "Hands Up" feature in the Google Meet platform to indicate you want to speak. This is used to provide the same experience for all meeting attendees.
2. **The host will acknowledge you.** Once you raise your hand, the host will announce that a remote participant has a question or comment.
3. **Speak clearly.** Unmute your microphone, allowing you to contribute. Please speak clearly and concisely.
4. **Mute after speaking.** When you've finished your point, mute your microphone again to minimize background noise.
5. **Voting:** Voting will use the "Hands Up" feature. Only one vote will be counted for each joining participant.

Planned Q&A:

If the agenda includes topics likely to generate questions, we'll collect them during the presentation using the Q&A function. This allows the speaker to focus on their content and lets us address all relevant questions efficiently at the end.

Remote Attendee Support:

If you're a remote attendee with microphone or speech limitations, you can pre-emptively request to use the Q&A for asking questions. Please let the host know before the meeting starts.

Google Meet features not available for PBPA Meetings:

The following features will not be available to remote attendees joining a General Meeting via Google Meet:

- **Telephone Dial-in.** Will not be provided for the following reasons:
 - The Host will not be able to easily identify who has joined the meeting.
 - No chat or Q&A feature is available.
 - No Hands Up feature is available.
- **Chat.** To ensure a fair and inclusive meeting experience, where the experience is the same for all attendees, online chat will be disabled. This is because those attending in the Hall, including those who are speaking, cannot see or contribute to the chat.
- **Presentation Mode.** The ability to share a remote screen or an application will only be available to the Host or a Guest speaker who has been asked to present remotely.

Please note that due to the effort involved and implications of trying to use Video Conferencing in a large Hall with equipment that is designed for an office meeting room at best, this is the best solution we can provide. We have contacted most if not all the Associations and Community Organisations within a 25+km radius and can confirm we are the only community organisation offering this service due to these reasons. Most other organisations only use Video conferencing when all meeting attendees join the conference or don't use it at all, where members need to rely on minutes if they cannot attend in person.

While we understand that it is not always possible to be in Pearl Beach at the time of a general meeting, we encourage you whenever possible to join us in the hall for the meeting and then the social drinks and nibbles afterwards. It is a great opportunity to socialise with other members.

If you have any questions regarding this document, please contact asst_secretary@pearlbeachprogress.org.au