

How the CPA works

Introduction

How the CPA Works aims to inform new members and prospective members of the party about the structure of the party and the rights and duties of members.

It is a companion to ***This is the CPA***, which briefly outlines what the Party stands for.

If you are thinking of joining the Communist Party, we invite you to read these two documents, to familiarise yourself with the Party's policies, methods of work and organisational structure.

For a more detailed elaboration of the Communist Party's structure, ideology and policies, the Party's ***Program*** and ***Constitution*** are available from your nearest CPA office.

A comprehensive ***Political Resolution*** was adopted by the 2001 Party Congress.

We hope they will help you decide to join the Communist Party.

About the CPA

The Party was formerly known as the "Socialist Party of Australia", but changed its name to the "Communist Party" at the 8th National Congress in October, 1996.

The Socialist Party of Australia was established by a "Conference of Communists" held on December 4 - 5 in 1971. In the main, participants in the conference were members of the Communist Party of Australia

up to that time but were dissatisfied with the direction the CPA was taking.

The Communist Party of Australia has some main features:

The Party's objective is the socialist reconstruction of Australian society.

The Party's ideas and policies are based on the theory and practice developed by Marx and Lenin, often referred to as "Marxism-Leninism". The Communist Party of Australia applies Marxism-Leninism to Australia's circumstances.

The Party is a working-class party, recognising the leading role of the working class in social change. The Party includes in its ranks workers, students, members who are professionals, small business people, farmers and pensioners.

The Party recognises the need for the working class to build links with other sections of society who are exploited by big business. This requires the Communist Party to win substantial influence within the working class at the same time as actively building alliances with other left and progressive political forces.

The Party members, at Congress and other Party meetings, work out and decide all our policies.

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The Communist Party of Australia has a national structure.

The Central Committee has a national responsibility for the Party. State and District Committees are responsible for specific States and districts. For example, the CPA has a Victorian State Committee and a Sydney District Committee.

Each Branch, State and District Committee elects its own Executive, which includes a Secretary, Chairperson and Treasurer.

The Central Committee elects the General Secretary and the President of the Party and other officers and CC Committees.

Party Branch

Each member of the CPA belongs to a particular Party Branch. New members join the Party by joining a Party Branch unless they are in an area where no Party organisation at present exists. In that case they are enrolled as “unattached” members.

Branches are established in workplaces, industries, localities, places of study, or on other areas which unite Party members and allows them to carry on work and activities among workers and communities and build the Party’s influence.

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Every CPA Branch has a Branch Executive — Secretary, Chairperson, Treasurer, etc — elected at the Branch’s Annual General Meeting. The Branch Executive prepares the business for each meeting, bringing to it initiatives and proposals for Branch work, often recommending ways by which the Branch can implement relevant decisions of the District, State or Central Committee.

Party Branches should be “centres of political activity” in the industry or locality in which they work. This means carrying out campaigns, building contacts with others who are struggling around similar issues, building each Branch into a respected political force in the areas of its activity.

Branch members organise activities in support of people’s political, economic, social and cultural needs. They popularise the CPA’s policies and strengthen the links between the Party and the mass of people. A main way of achieving this is for Party Branches to carry out campaigns in the CPA’s name.

Party members are activists in non-Party organisations (most importantly, trade unions) to strengthen and further the aims of those organisations and introduce relevant Party policies to such organisations in an appropriate manner.

Branches meet regularly, usually fortnightly. A well functioning Branch will be lively and relevant, with plenty of discussion so all members have an opportunity to make a contribution and to improve their political and ideological education, participate in decision making and in activities undertaken by the Branch. To assist this process, Branch Executives try to ensure there is a political report at each meeting and that Branch study classes are organised.

Members' suggestions on improving Branch life are most welcome. If a member has difficulties in fulfilling Party obligations this can be raised in the Branch, or with the Branch Executive, if this is more appropriate.

Branches organise the distribution and sale of *The Guardian*, the Party's weekly newspaper, to friends, neighbours, workmates, family, at marches and other public events. If members can't guarantee to personally deliver a paper to a reader each week, the reader can be asked to take out a subscription.

Branches raise finance for the Party. Each Party Branch is allocated an amount (a "quota") to pay to its higher party body (District, State or Central Committee).

Money is raised by various fundraising activities and by regular weekly contributions (a "pledge") from Party members. The Central Committee has recommended a guideline for members' pledges of 4 percent of gross income.

Each member of the CPA belongs to a particular Party Branch. New members join the Party by joining a Party Branch.

Party members have both rights and duties

All Party members are encouraged to participate freely in Party discussions, on Party policy, Party strategy and tactics and ideology. Most Party members will engage in such discussion in their Party Branch. Those members elected to District or State Committees, or to the Central Committee, also participate in the work and life of their Branch.

As a Party member, you can address and proposal, statement or constructive criticism to your Party Branch, any higher Party body, and Party Conference or Congress. Party members can be elected to their Branch Executive, District or State Committee, and the Central Committee, provided they fulfil the provisions for election contained in the Constitution.

Each Party member is expected to help build the Party's influence among the people, by taking part in campaigns, by raising Party policies in mass organisations, by selling Party publications, by introducing and popularising the CPA in appropriate ways. Activity in a Party organisation is a requirement of Party membership.

The development of each member's understanding of Marxist-Leninist theory is most important. This is achieved by study of Party publications and active participation in Party meetings and study classes.

Party members should seek to strengthen Party unity and when appropriate, make criticisms and suggestions which develop the collective work and democratic life of the Party. Differences of opinion will inevitably arise, but these should not be allowed to become personal animosities. Differences can be overcome by patience and a search for agreement.

State and District Committees

State and District Committees are established (by the Central Committee) to lead the work of a number of Branches in particular States or Districts.

State and District Committees are responsible for assisting Party organisations apply the decisions of the Central Committee in their areas. This may involve developing campaign material, organising meetings and education classes, developing links with other organisations, etc.

Each State and District Committee has a financial quota to pay to the Central Committee and in turn levies each Branch under its responsibility with a financial quota.

State and District Committees meet regularly (usually monthly) to discuss and develop the work of the Party in their areas of responsibility. Often State and District Committees ask Branches to report on their work, and assist Branches by offering practical suggestions to help develop the work. State and District Committees take responsibility for activities which involve all the Branches in their area e.g. demonstrations, education classes, leaflets, posters, election campaigns, etc.

State and District Committees may call meetings (fractions) of Party members who belong to different Branches but who work in the same industry or area of mass work. From time to time there are fraction meetings for trade union activists (either general or in a particular workplace or industry), for peace activists etc. Party friends and supporters from the particular area are usually invited to such meetings.

State and District Committees convene State and District Conferences every two years. Conference delegates are elected by Branches. At such conferences, the work of the Party in the particular area is critically reviewed and plans are adopted for the next period. Such conferences also elect new State and District Committees. At conferences held just before CPA national congress, congress delegates are also elected.

The Central Committee

The Central Committee is the leading national body of the Party (the “highest party body”) between Party congresses. The Central Committee is elected by the Party Congress, which is held every four years.

The Central Committee is responsible for the implementation of general policy decisions of Congress. The Central Committee is primarily responsible for the development of Party policy on the many issues which inevitably arise between Congresses, but is guided by the general political course adopted by the previous Congresses.

The Central Committee provides leadership for the State and District Committees, and for “unattached” Branches and members.

The Central Committee is in charge of the national administration of the Party, including Party finances. It is responsible for the production of the CPA’s weekly newspaper, *The Guardian*, its theoretical journal, the *Australian Marxist Review*, and other booklets and pamphlets which are produced from time to time.

Following each Congress, the Central Committee elects the General Secretary and the President of the Party, the Central Committee Executive and the Central Committee Secretariat.

The Central Committee meets three times a year, while the Executive meets in between Central Committee meetings and is responsible for the work of the Party nationally, between Central Committee meetings. The Central Committee Secretariat meets weekly and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Party.

National Congress

A Party National Congress is held once every four years.

The Congress is made up of delegates elected by Party organisations throughout Australia.

The Congress determines the Party's general policy. For example, the Party *Program* and the Party *Constitution* were adopted at a Party Congress. The current *Political Resolution* which guides the Party between the 9th and the next Congress was adopted at the Party's National Congress in 2001.

These documents are issued to the Party membership in draft form and all party organisations are invited to discuss the drafts and submit amendments if desired.

Each Congress receives, discusses and makes decisions on reports from the outgoing Central Committee. Such reports cover the work of the Party since the last Congress, assess the political situation and make proposals for the future work of the Party.

Congress also elects a new Central Committee.

Democratic Centralism

The organisational principles of the Communist Party of Australia are known as "democratic centralism".

The aims of democratic centralism are to promote a vigorous democratic life within the Party, to ensure a cohesive and effective central leadership, and to build Party solidarity and unity.

The best way to win support for Party decisions is to ensure maximum participation by all members in the decision-making process.

It is a democratic-centralist principle that majority decisions are binding on all Party members. This ensures a single line for the Party on all issues, avoiding fragmentation and improving the effectiveness of Party work.

Members who, on occasion find themselves in the minority, are obliged to carry out majority decisions. Such a situation often does not mean the end of the discussion on the issue, but those in a minority are not permitted to frustrate the carrying out of majority decisions.

At every level of the Party, collective leadership should be practised. Important questions should be discussed and decided collectively and responsibility then allocated to individuals, or groups of individuals, to carry out the decisions.

A healthy democratic-centralist structure requires frequent interaction between the different levels of the Party. Leading Party organisations should report to those Party bodies under their leadership. Similarly, lower party organisations (Branches, State and District Committees) should regularly submit reports, resolutions, opinions to higher party bodies (State and District Committees, the Central Committee).

Higher party organisations should assist lower party organisations in their work. Lower party organisations should actively seek assistance and guidance from higher party bodies.

Democratic centralism aims to put into practice collective decisions made at all levels of the Party. To ensure that the will of the majority is actually carried out, all Party organisations should make a regular check on the carrying out of decisions.

Joining the CPA

If you decide to join the CPA, you have to fill in a Membership Application Form. It can be obtained from any party member you know or by contacting your nearest party office.

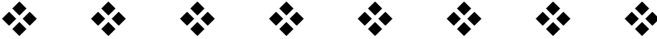
Your application for membership has to be supported by a Party member who signs your application form as your nominator.

The application is then presented to a Party organisation (usually a Party branch) for consideration. _____

Membership is open to all who are 16 years of age or older, who normally reside in Australia, who accept the Party's Program and Constitution, and who are willing to be active in a Party organisation.

Membership fees are \$60 per year for those receiving an income above the age pension and \$15 per year for those receiving the age pension or less.

On acceptance of your membership application by the Party organisation, you become a full member and are entitled to exercise all the rights and duties which are set out in the **Constitution**.



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