THE RULE

Society of St Vincent de Paul Australia

July 2026 Eighth Edition

St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

Cover

Centre (L-R): Saint Louise de Marillac and Saint Vincent de Paul

Clockwise: Blessed Rosalie Rendu, Blessed Francois Lallier, Felix Clavé, Blessed Pierre Le Taillandier, Captain Charles O'Neill, Fr Gerald Ward, Blessed Emmanuel Bailly, Jules Devaux, Blessed Paul Lamache and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.

The Rule
of the
Society of St Vincent de Paul in Australia

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OUR VISION

The St Vincent de Paul Society aspires to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering ‘a hand up’ to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope, and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.

OUR MISSION

The Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.

OUR ASPIRATION

An Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice.

OUR KEY VALUES

Commitment

Loyalty in service to our mission, vision and values

Compassion

Welcoming and serving all with understanding and without judgement

Respect

Service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions

Integrity

Promoting, maintaining and adhering to our mission, vision and values

Empathy

Establishing relationships based on respect, trust, friendship and perception

Advocacy

Working to transform the causes of poverty and challenging the causes of human injustice

Courage

Encouraging spiritual growth, welcoming innovation and giving hope for the future

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FOREWORD

To deepen our personal commitment to people experiencing poverty and exclusion, facing hardship or systemic inequality, every Member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul is called to be grounded in community, prayer, and solidarity within their Conference. *The Rule* calls us to both individual and collective prayer and practical solidarity so that we may truly recognise Christ in the people we accompany and in one another as brothers and sisters of the Vincentian Family.

The Rule, together with the International Statutes, offers a common framework for Vincentians across the world. It gives shape to our spirituality, our mission and the governing structures that support the Society, so that our service is effective and faithful to the vision of our founders.

The Rule has three parts: Part I summarises our Vincentian spirituality; Part II contains the Statutes of the International Confederation and sets out the internal regulations of the international confederation; and Part III sets out the internal statutes of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Australia.

From the beginning, the Society has revised *The Rule* from time to time so that in each era it sets out the same vocation to dedication and service drawing on contemporary language that speaks to the times.

In that spirit of renewal, National Council commenced a review of Part III in early 2021. A Rule Review Drafting Committee was responsible for consultations with Members and Council over more than the three-year period of review and drafting. During this time, Society-wide consultations were conducted with State and Territory Councils taking a lead role; there was discussion with Members, including recommendations from the October 2023 National Congress; and, there were reflection and discernment processes ensuring that contemporary governance practices aligned with Vincentian values and the needs of the Companions we serve.

Central throughout the review was Article 1.6 of Part I which emphasises National Councils' responsibility to follow the Society's founders to constantly strive 'for renewal, adapting to changing world conditions'. Since the 2012 edition of Part III was published, the Society in Australia has established a number of legal entities to advance the mission and the

vision of the Society in Australia. The review therefore had to respond to a more complex landscape while remaining firmly rooted in our charism.

The review offered an opportunity to ensure the Society's core governance document and its structures fully aligned to the Society's values as well as integrated with the standards outlined by the National Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and to take account of Australian legislation. A series of footnotes along with procedures and appendices seek to assist in interpreting the Articles and provide examples of processes that are to be followed.

Amendments to Part III were agreed by National Council and submitted to the International Statutes Committee in October 2025. The Permanent Section of the Council General International approved them on 17 December 2025. National Council determined the revised Part III would take effect from 1 July 2026. This allowed amendments to Part II which were endorsed by the General Assembly of the Council General International in June 2026 to be incorporated into this eighth edition of *The Rule* in Australia.

These Internal Statutes of Australia are subordinate to and are to be interpreted according to *The Rule* of the Society of St Vincent de Paul of the International Council General and to the International Statutes. Together they form a single legal and spiritual framework that guides our common Vincentian life and mission.

I commend this eighth edition to all Vincentians and those who assist us to implement the Society's vision for a fairer and more compassionate Australia which strives for the 'common good'.

I want to thank our Members and the drafting committee for the work undertaken over a four-year period to complete the revision of Part III.

Mark Gaetani
National President, National Council of Australia

2026

PART I

Rule of The International Confederation of St Vincent de Paul Society

1. THE ORIGINS OF THE SOCIETY & SERVICE TO THE POOR

1.1 ORIGINS

The St. Vincent de Paul Society is a worldwide Christian community, founded in Paris in 1833, by a group of young Catholic lay people and an older person, who joined together to create the first Conference. The Society wishes to remember them all with gratitude, as they set an example of dedication to the poor and to the Church. From Le Taillandier, who received the first inspiration, to Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, Paul Lamache, Francois Lallier, Jules Devaux, Felix Clave, all of them knew, in their humility, how to seek the wise advice and support of the one who would become the first President General of the flourishing Society Emmanuel Bailly.

The Holy Spirit was undoubtedly present in all of them at the founding of the Society fostering the charisms of each one. Among them, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam was a radiant source of inspiration.

The Society has been Catholic from its origins. It remains an international Catholic voluntary organisation of lay people, men and women.

Purpose and Scope of Our Service

1.2 THE VINCENTIAN VOCATION

The vocation of the Society's members, who are called Vincentians, is to follow Christ through service to those in need and so bear witness to His compassionate and liberating love. Members show their commitment through person-to-person contact. Vincentians serve in hope.

1.3 ANY FORM OF PERSONAL HELP

No work of charity is foreign to the Society. It includes any form of help that alleviates suffering or deprivation and promotes human dignity and personal integrity in all their dimensions.

1.4 TO ANYONE IN NEED

The Society serves those in need regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender, or political opinions.

1.5 TO SEEK OUT THE POOR

Vincentians strive to seek out and find those in need and the forgotten, the victims of exclusion or adversity.

1.6 ADAPTATION TO A CHANGING WORLD

Faithful to the spirit of its founders, the Society constantly strives for renewal, adapting to changing world conditions. It seeks to be ever aware of the changes that occur in human society and the new types of poverty that may be identified or anticipated. It gives priority to the poorest of the poor and to those who are most rejected by society.

Our Personal Encounters with the Poor

1.7 PRAYER BEFORE PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS OR VISITS

Vincentians pray that the Holy Spirit may guide them during their visits and make them channels for the peace and joy of Christ.

1.8 REVERENCE FOR THE POOR

Vincentians serve the poor cheerfully, listening to them and respecting their wishes, helping them to feel and recover their own dignity, for we are all created in God's image. In the poor, they see the suffering Christ.

Members observe the utmost confidentiality in the provision of material and any other type of support.

1.9 EMPATHY

Vincentians endeavour to establish relationships based on trust and friendship. Conscious of their own frailty and weakness, their hearts beat

with the heartbeat of the poor. They do not judge those they serve, rather they seek to understand them as they would a brother or sister.

1.10 PROMOTION OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Vincentians endeavour to help the poor to help themselves whenever possible, and to be aware that they can forge and change their own destinies and those of their local community.

1.11 CONCERNS FOR DEEPER NEEDS AND SPIRITUALITY

Vincentians are sincerely concerned with the deeper needs and the spiritual well-being of those they help, always observing a profound respect for their conscience and the faith they believe in, listening and understanding with their hearts, beyond both words and appearances.

Vincentians serve in hope. They rejoice in discovering the spirit of prayer in the poor, for in the silence, the poor can perceive God's Plan for every person.

The acceptance of God's Plan leads each one to nurture the seeds of love, generosity, reconciliation and inner peace in themselves, their families and all those whose lives they touch. Vincentians are privileged to foster these signs of the presence of the Risen Christ in the poor and among themselves.

1.12 GRATITUDE TO THOSE WE VISIT

Vincentians never forget the many blessings they receive from those they visit. They recognise that the fruit of their labours springs, not from themselves, but especially from God and from the poor they serve.

2 VINCENTIAN SPIRITUALITY & VOCATION

Faith in Christ and the Life of Grace

Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God (Rom. 5,1-2).

2.1 LOVE IN UNION WITH CHRIST

Convinced of the truth of the Apostle St. Paul's words, Vincentians seek to draw closer to Christ. They hope that someday it will be no longer they who love, but Christ who loves through them.

...I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God (Gal. 2,20) and that even now, through their caring, the poor may catch a glimpse of God's great love for them.

2.2 THE JOURNEY TOGETHER TOWARDS HOLINESS

Vincentians are called to journey together towards holiness, because true holiness is perfect union with Christ and the perfection of love, which is central to their vocation and the source of its fruitfulness. They aspire to burn with the love of God as revealed by Christ and to deepen their own faith and fidelity.

Vincentians are aware of their own brokenness and need for God's grace. They seek His glory, not their own. Their ideal is to help relieve suffering for love alone, without thinking of any reward or advantage for themselves.

They draw nearer to Christ, serving Him in the poor and one another. They grow more perfect in love by expressing compassionate and tender love to the poor and one another.

Therefore, their journey together towards holiness is primarily made through:

- Visiting and dedicating themselves to the poor, whose faith and courage often teach Vincentians how to live. Vincentians assume the needs of the poor as their own.
- Attending the meeting of the Conference or Council, where shared fraternal spirituality is a source of inspiration.
- Promoting a life of prayer and reflection, both at the individual and community level, and sharing with their fellow members. Meditating on their Vincentian experiences offers them internal spiritual knowledge of themselves, others and the goodness of God.
- Transforming their concern into action and their compassion into practical and effective love.

Their journey together towards holiness will be all the more fruitful if the members' personal lives are characterised by prayer, meditation on the Holy Scriptures and other inspirational texts, devotion to the Eucharist and the Virgin Mary, whose protection we have always sought, and to the teachings of the Church.

2.3 PRAYER IN UNION WITH CHRIST

In every Conference throughout the world and in their personal lives, Vincentians raise their prayers to God, united with the prayer of Christ, on behalf of one another and their masters, the poor, whose suffering they wish to share.

2.4 THE SPIRITUALITY OF BLESSED FREDERIC OZANAM

The spirituality of one of its founders inspires Vincentians profoundly. Blessed Frédéric Ozanam:

- Sought to renew faith, among all people, in Christ and in the civilising effect of the teachings of the Church through all time.
- Envisioned the establishment of a network of charity and social justice encircling the world.
- Attained holiness as a layman through living the Gospel fully in all aspects of his life.
- Had a passion for truth, democracy and education.

2.5 THE SPIRITUALITY OF SAINT VINCENT

Having been placed under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul by the founding members, members of the Society are inspired by his spirituality, manifest in his attitudes, his thoughts, his example and his words.

For Vincentians, the key aspects of Saint Vincent's spirituality are:

- To love God, our Father, with the sweat of our brow and the strength of our arms.
- To see Christ in the poor and the poor in Christ.
- To share the compassionate and liberating love of Christ the Evangeliser and Servant of the poor.
- To heed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

2.5.1 ESSENTIAL VIRTUES

Vincentians seek to emulate Saint Vincent in the five virtues essential for promoting love and respect for the poor:

- Simplicity, frankness, integrity, genuineness.
- Humility, accepting the truth about our frailties, gifts, talents and charisms, yet knowing that all that God gives us is for others, and that we can achieve nothing of eternal value without His grace.
- Gentleness, friendly assurance and invincible goodwill, which mean kindness, sweetness and patience in our relationship with others.
- Selflessness, dying to their ego with a life of self-sacrifice; members share their time, their possessions, their talents and themselves in a spirit of generosity.
- Zeal, a passion for the full flourishing and eternal happiness of every person.

2.6 A VOCATION FOR EVERY MOMENT OF OUR LIVES

The Vincentian vocation affects all aspects of members' daily lives, making them more sensitive and caring in their family, work and leisure activities. Vincentians are available for work in the Conferences only after fulfilling their family and professional duties.

3 MEMBERS, CONFERENCES, COUNCILS – COMMUNITIES OF FAITH & LOVE

3.1 MEMBERSHIP

The Society is open to all those who seek to live their faith loving and committing themselves to their neighbour in need. (See Article 6.4 of *The Rule*).

3.2 EQUALITY

The Society, in each of its Conferences (the primary basic unit of the St Vincent de Paul Society), makes no distinction regarding gender, wealth, occupation, social status or ethnic origin.

3.3 MEETINGS OF THE VINCENTIAN MEMBERS

The members meet as brothers and sisters with Christ in the midst of them, in Conferences that are genuine communities of faith and love, of prayer and action. Spiritual bonds and friendship between members are essential, as is the common mission to help the poor and marginalized. The entire Society is a true and unique worldwide community of Vincentian friends.

3.3.1 FREQUENCY OF THE MEETINGS

The Conferences meet regularly and consistently, usually weekly, but at least every fortnight.

3.4 FRATERNITY AND SIMPLICITY

Meetings are held in a spirit of fraternity, simplicity and Christian joy.

3.5 PRESERVING THE SPIRIT

Members of all ages strive to preserve the spirit of youth, which is characterised by enthusiasm, adaptability and creative imagination. They are willing to make sacrifices and take risks for the benefit of the poor wherever they may be by sharing their discomfort, needs and sorrows and defending their rights.

3.6 COUNCILS

Conferences are grouped under various levels of Councils.

Councils exist to serve all the Conferences they coordinate. They help the Conferences to develop their spiritual life, to intensify their service and to diversify their activities so that they may always be responsive to the needs of those who suffer.

Councils at appropriate levels are particularly called to create new Conferences, to help existing Conferences to expand, to promote Special Works, to prepare training courses and encourage Vincentians to attend them, to foster interest in co-operation with the Vincentian Family, to promote co-operation with other organisations and institutions, to develop friendship between members in the same area, to provide communication to and from Conferences and higher Councils. In summary, to promote the sense of belonging to a Society which encircles the world.

3.7 YOUNG MEMBERS

Young members keep the Society young. They see with new eyes and often look far ahead. The Society works constantly to form Youth Conferences and welcomes young members into all Conferences. Their experience in a community of faith and love and their exposure to poverty deepens their spirituality, spurs them to action and helps them to grow as human beings. The senior members assume the responsibility of assisting them along their path of training, respecting their personal choices and their aspirations of Vincentian service.

3.8 AGGREGATION AND INSTITUTION OF CONFERENCES AND COUNCILS

The visible unifying link within the Society is the Aggregation of the Conferences and the Institution of the Councils declared by the Council General.

3.9 SUBSIDIARITY AND FREEDOM OF ACTION

The Society embraces the Principle of Subsidiarity as its basic standard of operation. Tasks are performed as close as possible to the area of activity to ensure that the local environment and circumstances, (cultural, social, political, etc...) are taken into consideration. In this way, the Society promotes local initiatives within its spirit. This freedom of action of Conferences and Councils, which has been kept faithfully since the origins of the Society, enables them to help the poor spontaneously and more effectively.

In exercising this freedom of action to face the challenge of poverty in their area, Vincentians feel called to pray together for guidance and strength and for that creative imagination which is the promised gift of the Holy Spirit:

Your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions (Joel 3,1).

3.10 DEMOCRACY

All decisions are made by consensus after the necessary prayer, reflection and consultation. The democratic spirit is fundamental at all levels of the Society and, when appropriate, matters are put to a vote.

3.11 PRESIDENTS AS SERVANT LEADERS

Following Christ's example, the Presidents at all levels of the Society endeavour to be servant leaders. They provide an encouraging atmosphere in which the talents, capacities and spiritual charisms of the members are identified, developed and put to the service of the poor or to the St. Vincent de Paul Society. The President of the Conference or Council will have special responsibility for promoting Vincentian spirituality.

3.12 FORMATION OF MEMBERS

It is essential that the Society continually promote the formation and training of its members and officers, in order to deepen their knowledge of the Society and their spirituality, improve the sensitivity, quality and efficiency of their service to the poor and help them be aware of the benefits, resources and opportunities that are available for the poor. The Society also offers members higher training in order to better help raise the cultural and social level of those who request this support.

3.13 THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Members of the Society are united in the same spirit of poverty and of sharing. They encourage one another to live a profound spiritual life and to share in the spirit of prayer. For this purpose, the role of a Spiritual Advisor is very important.

3.14 THE USE OF MONEY AND PROPERTY FOR THE POOR

Vincentians should never forget that giving love, talents and time is more important than giving money.

Nevertheless, the Society uses money and property to help relieve the suffering of those in need. The Society's funds must be handled with the utmost care, prudence and generosity. Money must not be hoarded. Decisions regarding the use of money and property are to be made after reflection in the light of the Gospel and Vincentian principles. Accurate records must be kept of all money received or spent. The Society may not allot funds to other organisations, except occasionally for other branches of the Vincentian Family, save under exceptional circumstances.

3.15 COMMUNICATION

The vitality of the Society's network of charity depends on the regular and rapid exchange of news and information. Such communication broadens the members' horizons and enhances the interest of members in the experiences and challenges of their brothers and sisters throughout the world. The Vincentian response to communication is a willingness to learn and a desire to help.

4 RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE VINCENTIAN & CATHOLIC NETWORK OF CHARITY

4.1 TWINNING

Conferences and Councils help others in need, both at the national and international level. This is one of the activities most cherished by the Society. The awareness of acute poverty in a great number of countries and the Vincentian preferential option for the poor spur Conferences and Councils to assist others with less resources or in particular situations.

This direct link between two Conferences or Councils, consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship and material resources, is called Twinning. This activity contributes to world peace and to understanding and cultural exchange among peoples.

4.1.1 PRAYER AS THE BASIS OF FRIENDSHIP

Twinning promotes spirituality, deep friendship, solidarity and mutual help. Funds and other material resources can be provided to enable a Conference or Council to help local families. Financial, technical, medical and educational support is given to projects which are identified by the Society locally and which encourage self sufficiency. Even more important is support given through prayer, as well as through mutual communication regarding what has been accomplished and what is happening among Vincentians in each area, including news about persons and families.

4.1.2 VINCENTIANS' PERSONAL COMMITMENT

The Society urges the Vincentians to consider undertaking a personal commitment for a particular period of time to work with Vincentians in other countries or to spread Conferences.

4.2 EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

When disasters, war or major accidents occur, the Society launches emergency initiatives on the spot and provides funds for the local Society to help victims.

4.3 THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY

Members throughout the world, together with other communities inspired by the spirituality of Saint Vincent de Paul and with those whom they help, form a single family. Gratefully remembering the support and encouragement that the first Conference received from Blessed Rosalie Rendu, the Society maintains and develops close relationships with other branches of the Vincentian family, while preserving its identity. It cooperates with them in spiritual development and common projects, as well as with the Church's charitable pastoral initiatives at every level, whenever this may be mutually enriching and useful to those who suffer.

5 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHURCH HIERARCHY

5.1 A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP

Faithful to the clear intentions of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and his companions, the Society has a close relationship with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Respect of the members for the hierarchy provides the foundation for harmonious reciprocal cooperation.

5.2 AUTONOMY

The Society is legally autonomous as to its existence, constitution, organisation, rules, activities and internal government. Vincentians freely choose their own officers and manage the Society's activities and assets with full autonomy, in accordance with their own Statutes and the legislation in effect in each country.

5.3 MORAL RECOGNITION

The Society recognizes the right and duty of the diocesan bishop to affirm that none of its activities is contrary to Catholic faith or morals. The Society, whenever possible, informs the diocesan bishops of its activities annually, as a sign of ecclesial communion.

6. OTHER RELATIONSHIPS, ECUMENICAL & INTER-FAITH RELATIONSHIPS

6.1 EVERY MEMBER SHOULD FOSTER ECUMENISM

Following the teachings of the Catholic Church, the St Vincent de Paul Society recognizes, accepts and encourages the call to ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue and cooperation which arise from its charitable activities. It is prepared to participate in the Church's ecumenical and inter-faith initiatives within each country, in harmony with the diocesan bishop.

6.2 THE SOCIETY IS COMMITTED TO ECUMENICAL AND INTER-FAITH COOPERATION

Following the teachings of the Catholic Church, the St Vincent de Paul Society recognizes, accepts and encourages the call to ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue and cooperation which arise from its charitable activities. It is prepared to participate in the Church's ecumenical and inter-faith initiatives within each country, in harmony with the diocesan bishop.

6.3 THE ADOPTION OF PRACTICAL INITIATIVES

Conferences and Councils should establish a dialogue with their counterparts in other Christian churches or ecclesial communities and other faiths, with regard to cooperation in charitable work, wherever this is appropriate.

6.4 ECUMENICAL AND INTER-FAITH MEMBERSHIP

In some countries, circumstances may make it desirable to accept as members Christians of other confessions or people of other faiths who sincerely respect and accept the Society's identity and its principles insofar as differences of faith allow. The Episcopal Conference should be consulted.

6.5 PRESERVING THE CATHOLIC CREDO AND ETHOS

The Catholic beliefs and ethos of the St. Vincent de Paul Society must be preserved. The President, Vice-President and Spiritual Advisor should, therefore, be Roman Catholic. They may, in certain situations depending

on national circumstances, and after consultation with the local diocesan bishop, be members of churches and ecclesial communities which share the Catholic belief in, among other issues, the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, the seven Sacraments and devotion to Mary.

6.6 AFFILIATED GROUPS CAN WORK VERY CLOSELY WITH US

The Society accepts the principle of affiliated groups. These groups consist mainly of members of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities who are attracted by the work of the Society and/or its spirituality. They are welcome to participate in the charitable work, appropriate Council discussions and fraternal life of the Society, but are not eligible for office in the Society.

Groups from non-Christian religions may also be similarly affiliated.

6.7 RELATIONSHIPS WITH STATE AGENCIES & OTHER CHARITIES

When the problems they encounter are beyond their competence or capacity, Vincentians may contact State Agencies and other more specialised charitable organisations, provided that such action helps the Society in its struggle against injustice and respects the spirit of the Society.

7 RELATIONSHIP WITH CIVIL SOCIETY – WORK FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

7.1 THE SOCIETY GIVES IMMEDIATE HELP BUT ALSO SEEKS MID-TERM AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

The Society is concerned not only with alleviating need but also with identifying the unjust structures that cause it. The Society is, therefore, committed to identifying the root causes of poverty and to contributing to their elimination. In all its charitable actions there should be a search for justice; in its struggle for justice, the Society must keep in mind the demands of charity.

7.2 A VISION OF THE CIVILISATION OF LOVE

Affirming the dignity of each human being as created in God's image, and Jesus' particular identification with those who are excluded by society, Vincentians envision a more just society in which the rights, responsibilities and development of all people are promoted.

As citizens of one world, Vincentians listen to the voice of the Church which demands their participation in creating a more equitable and compassionate social order, promoting the culture of life and the civilization of love. In this way, the Society shares the Church's mission to evangelise the world through visible witness, in both actions and words.

7.3 VISION OF THE FUTURE

The Society's vision goes beyond the immediate future, looking towards sustainable development and protection of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

7.4 THE PRACTICAL VINCENTIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

The distinctive approach of Vincentians to issues of social justice is to see them from the perspective of those we visit who suffer from injustice.

7.5 A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

The Society helps the poor and disadvantaged speak for themselves. When they cannot, the Society must speak on behalf of those who are ignored.

7.6 FACING THE STRUCTURES OF SIN

Where injustice, inequality, poverty or exclusion are due to unjust economic, political or social structures or to inadequate or unjust legislation, the Society should speak out clearly against the situation, always with charity, with the aim of contributing to and demanding improvements.

7.7 STRIVING TO CHANGE ATTITUDES

Vincentians oppose discrimination of all kinds and work to change the attitudes of those who view the weak and those who are different with prejudice, fear or scorn, attitudes which gravely wound the dignity of others.

The Society strives, with charity, to foster new attitudes of respect and empathy for the weak, so that all are able to understand, recognise and defend the right of each person to be responsible for his or her own life. The Society promotes understanding, cooperation and mutual love among people of different cultures, religions, ethnic origins and social groups, and so contributes to the peace and unity of all peoples.

7.8 POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE SOCIETY

The Society does not identify with any political party and always adopts a non violent approach.

It is good that some members follow and fully participate in their political vocation in such a way that they bring Christian values to political matters. Those members who hold political offices will be asked, always with charity, not to hold any position of representation in the Society during their term of political office.

7.9 WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES

The Society should work not only with individuals in need but also with families and communities. It can help an excluded or deprived local community to develop a sense of responsibility and solidarity which leads it to improve its economic, social or environmental well-being, always retaining the personal contact of members with those who suffer.

PART II

Statutes of The International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent De Paul

PREAMBLE

Amendments to Part II were approved at the General Assembly held in Lisbon, Portugal on 17 June 2026.

The revised Articles in Part II are reproduced in this publication.

Commentary for each Article contained in Part I and Part II may be found in the Rule and Statues of the International Confederation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul Council General.

A link to the Rule and Statutes can be found at Appendix U. (This link is maintained so as to provide the most up-to-date version of the Rule and Statutes.)

The Rule and Statues of the International Confederation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul Council General also include a section headed “Basic Requirements”. Basic Requirements set out the necessities for drafting the internal statutes of superior councils. Each of the Basic Requirements has commentary. The internal statues of Australia’s National Council are Part III in this publication.

1 THE CONFEDERATION, HEAD OFFICE AND MEMBERS

1.1 THE CONFEDERATION

At international level, the St. Vincent de Paul Society is united in its spirituality and management through an International Confederation of the
St Vincent de Paul Society (hereinafter referred to as the 'Confederation'), which is presided over by the President General.

1.2 THE NAME OF THE SOCIETY

The International Confederation of the St. Vincent de Paul Society is the sole owner of the Society's name. Only the Council General may, on behalf of the Confederation, authorise or prohibit the use of its name.

1.3 THE INTERNATIONAL HEAD OFFICE

The Confederation's head office is based in Paris, France, the city where the first Conference was founded.

The head office maybe transferred to any other location in the world by resolution of the Council General Assembly; this resolution shall be

adopted by a majority of two thirds of the votes of the members present or represented.

In order for this resolution to be validly adopted by the Assembly, the point must have been included on the agenda prepared previously and sent to the members of the Council General.

1.3.1 OTHER INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION CENTRES

Other work Centres may be established in different cities around the world.

1.4 OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

In recognition of the establishment of the first St Vincent de Paul Conference in France, the official language of the Confederation is French. All the Confederation's official documents shall be drafted in this language.

1.4.1 OTHER CO-OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The co-official languages of the Confederation are English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. The Confederation undertakes to publish most of its documentation in all the co-official languages.

1.5 THE ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL

The supreme democratic body of the Confederation is the Council General, which meets in ordinary or extraordinary Assembly and is presided over by the President General.

1.6 LEGAL MEMBERS

Each Superior or Assimilated Council that duly joins the Confederation, and is instituted accordingly, shall become a legal member of the Confederation's Council General.

They must be constituted within the scope of their national legislations as non¬profit or similar organisations, and duly Instituted by the Council

General. Although the tradition of our Society prefers to use the term 'Superior Councils', which is used throughout the wording of the Statutes, special provisions in legislation or other circumstances may warrant the use of the term 'National Council'.

1.6.1 REPRESENTATIVES ON THE COUNCIL

The Council General is formed by the duly elected Presidents of the Superior or Assimilated Councils, which they represent, and which are instituted in the different countries and clearly-defined regions around the world.

1.6.2 DEFINITION OF ASSIMILATED COUNCILS

Assimilated Councils are Councils that have been Instituted or Conferences that have been Aggregated and which are legally constituted

within the scope of their national legislations as non-profit organisations representing a country or region in which a Superior Council has not yet been Instituted.

1.7 AFFILIATION TO THE CONFEDERATION

Any Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council (as defined in Article 1.10.1 of the International Statutes) of the Society around the world that wishes to join the Confederation must request this in writing and submit such request to the President General of the Confederation.

1.7.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AFFILIATION

The above-mentioned written request for affiliation to the Confederation must state that such Council complies, pursuant to national legislation, with the provisions established in Article 1.6 of the International Statutes of the St Vincent de Paul Society, and must also indicate the area for which it is responsible.

Likewise, it shall expressly accept all aspects of *The Rule* and Statutes of the St Vincent de Paul Society, which consists of three parts: the Rule of the St Vincent de Paul Society, the Statutes of the International Confederation of the St Vincent de Paul Society, and the Basic Requirements for Drafting the Internal Statutes for Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils.

1.7.2 LEGAL LIABILITY

Under no circumstances shall the Confederation or any of its governing members, by virtue of the affiliation described above, be liable for events occurring without their full and proven knowledge. The Superior, Assimilated and Associated Councils shall, for all legal purposes, be the highest and ultimate bodies responsible, before any type of national or international jurisdiction, for events occurring within their jurisdictional areas.

1.8 INSTITUTION OF SUPERIOR COUNCILS

In order to achieve a better service for members and the poor in the same country, two or more Superior Councils may be Instituted in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 1.9 of the International Statutes.

1.8.1 THE CONDITIONS

The following conditions must be met in order to justify this need:

a) Excessive territorial scope.

b) Difficulties in communication.

c) Large number of Conferences and Councils.

d) Large number of members and Special Works.

1.9 PROCEDURES FOR INSTITUTING NEW SUPERIOR COUNCILS

The following conditions must be met in order for a new Superior Council to be instituted in a country where there is already a Superior Council:

1.9.1 ESTABLISHMENT AT THE REQUEST OF A SUPERIOR COUNCIL

a) Existence of more than 3,000 Conferences working in the country of the applicant Superior/Assimilated Council.

b) The new Council, which is the object of the institution request has more than 1,000 Conferences.

c) The request is presented by the existing Superior Council, authorising the institution of the new Superior Council.

d) The legislation in the country in question permits the institution of two Superior Councils in that country, with different jurisdictions.

e) Favourable report by the Territorial Vice-President.

f) Express authorisation from the Council General through its Permanent Section.

1.9.2 INSTITUTION FOLLOWING AN OFFICIAL REQUEST

The Council General, through its Permanent Section, may officially institute Superior or Assimilated Councils for specific regions around the world, regardless of the frontiers of the countries in question, whenever socio-political, geographic reasons or the service make this necessary.

When the Institution of these Councils affects already Instituted Superior Councils, duly aggregated to the Confederation in accordance with the provisions established in Article 1.6 of these International Statutes, the aforementioned Council must be consulted beforehand. This consultation

obligation shall be binding on the Permanent Section of the Council General.

1.10 OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL

Different circumstances may mean that there are other members of the Council General, in accordance with the following classification:

1.10.1 ASSOCIATED COUNCILS

These are Councils that cannot achieve full legal member status due to limitations in their national legislations or to the fact that they have availed themselves of legal instruments governing legal members other than those established in Article 1.6 of these International Statutes.

1.10.2 TEMPORARY MEMBERS

These are members appointed by the President General in countries or regions where the Society is not present and until the corresponding Superior or Assimilated Council can be instituted.

The same shall apply to the provisional Presidents of the Superior Councils instituted by the Council General in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 6.5 of these International Statutes.

1.10.3 MISSIONARY MEMBERS

These shall be members appointed by the President General to perform specific tasks and services. They shall always include members who have served as International Presidents General.

1.11 RIGHT TO SPEAK BUT NOT TO VOTE

All the other members of the Council General, that is: Associated, Temporary or Missionary members shall be entitled to speak but not to vote at Council General Assemblies.

1.12 RELATED SPECIAL WORKS

Special Works related to the Society that may use the Society's logo in the places and situations that are considered appropriate, shall be deemed to be those Special Works in which the St Vincent de Paul Society participates at any level of the organization; the aforementioned

participation shall enable the Special Work to be controlled by Vincentian members on an effective, majority and real basis.

1.12.1 USE OF THE SOCIETY'S LOGOS

Every Superior or Assimilated Council shall authorise the use of the Society's logos within its jurisdiction in accordance with the provisions established in the previous paragraph.

1.12.2 EMPLOYEES

The employees of these Special Works and in general those employed by the Confederation may not hold Offices on the Councils of the Society, with the exception of the technical and executive position corresponding to them at the Special Work or Council where they render their services.

2 THE COUNCIL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

2.1 THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CONFEDERATION

The senior body of the Confederation is the Council General, which meets in a General Assembly as provided in Article 1.5 of these International Statutes.

Each Superior Council and Assimilated Council which is a legal member is represented by its legally elected president, or a proxy, who has one vote. The President General shall likewise have one vote which, if the case may be, shall be considered the casting vote.

2.1.1 QUORUM AND VOTING

The valid adoption of resolutions by the General Assembly shall require the attendance or representation of at least 30% of its full members. Should a second call be necessary, this shall be issued at least 24 hours later, and shall be considered as validly constituted regardless of the percentage of members present or represented. Resolutions shall be validly adopted by a simple majority.

2.2 FREQUENCY OF ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

The Council General Assembly normally meets once every three years.

2.2.1 EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

The President General may convene Extraordinary General Assemblies whenever circumstances make this advisable.

An Extraordinary General Assembly must be convened when so requested by more than 50% of the legal members of the Council General.

2.3 PARTICIPANTS

These Assemblies may be attended by the representatives of the Councils indicated in Article 1.6 herein as well as those indicated in Articles 1.10.1 and 1.10.2 and 1.10.3 of these International Statutes, each by virtue of the powers granted to them in the aforementioned Articles.

The representatives shall be the legally elected Presidents of these Councils or proxies whom they authorize. A proxy must be from the same country as the President represented and must hold a leadership position in that President's Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council.

2.4 AGENDA

The agenda of the Assembly meeting and the notice convening the meeting are determined by the General Secretary in agreement with the President and taking into account any suggestions by members of the Council to whom this notice is delivered.

2.5 PRAYERS AND MEDITATION

According to tradition, the meeting begins and ends with a prayer, consisting of a spiritual reading or meditation, which may lead to a brief exchange of opinions. This reading is given by the International Spiritual Advisor. The corresponding secret collection is always taken among attending members.

3 THE PRESIDENT GENERAL, THE BOARD OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL AND THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE STRUCTURE

3.1 THE PRESIDENT GENERAL

The President of the Confederation of the St Vincent de Paul Society and its Council General represents the Society before the Holy See and all international religious or civil organisations, and in general, before any public or private organisation.

Since the founding of the first Conference, this figure has represented the nexus of union and moral authority of the Society in periods when the Council General Assembly has not met. The President General personifies the unity of the Society worldwide.

3.2 THE FUNCTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT GENERAL

The President of the Council General, supported by a team within the International Structure, supervises, fosters and coordinates the Society's activities worldwide and, for this purpose, makes any decisions deemed appropriate, implementing the resolutions of the Council General Assemblies in compliance with the provisions established in the Rule, the International Statutes and pursuant to the Society's tradition.

3.2.1 REPORT ON THE PROGRESS OF THE SOCIETY

In January every year, and for general information of all the members and Councils, the President General drafts a moral report for all the members of the Council General, reflecting the progress of the Society during the previous year and the prospects for the future.

3.3 ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT GENERAL

The President of the Council General is elected by all the members of the Society, represented by the Presidents of the Superior, Assimilated and Associated Councils, who exercise this right on their own behalf and on behalf of the members they represent. Each of these Council Presidents may authorize a person of their choice to attend the Assembly and act on their behalf as a proxy. Such a proxy must be from the same country as

the President represented and must hold a leadership position in that President's Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council.

3.4 DURATION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE

The term of office of the President General is six years; this term of office may be renewed once only.

3.5 AGE LIMIT

The President General may not be more than 75 years of age when elected.

3.6 ELECTION PROCEDURE AND DEADLINES

When a President General must be elected because the term of the existing President has reached its end, the Vice-President General must announce this at least ten months prior to the time of the election to the members of the Council General, who are then responsible for notifying the members accordingly.

3.6.1 ELECTORAL BOARD

The Electoral Board is presided over by the Vice-President General and is formed by the latter, the Secretary General, the Treasurer General, and two National Council Presidents who shall be nominated and elected by the legal members of the International Executive Committee at their discretion. If any of the aforementioned three officers is a candidate, the President General shall replace him/her on the Electoral Board with a legal member of the Council General. Minutes of the meeting of the Electoral Board shall be kept and made available to members of the General Assembly.

3.7 PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES, FORMS AND LIMITATIONS

During the two months following the notification of the election, the members of the Council General, either individually or in groups, may present the candidates that they deem suitable and worthy, chosen from among those members who have belonged to the Society for more than fifteen (15) years, are active in their Conferences and who do not hold remunerated service posts in the Confederation at any level or in any of the participated or related Special Works.

3.8 ANNOUNCEMENT OF CANDIDATES

At least three months prior to the Council General Assembly meeting, the Vice-President General shall announce the candidates who fulfill the required conditions and whose proven acceptance has previously been obtained by the Vice-President General.

This announcement shall be accompanied by a short Vincentian 'curriculum vitae', together with the candidate's vision statement. After nominations have been declared, canvassing on behalf of a candidate or against a candidate is forbidden.

3.9 TIME AND FORM OF ELECTION

The new President General shall be elected at the General, Ordinary or Extraordinary Assembly called for this and other purposes.

3.9.1 QUORUM FOR ELECTION

In order for the General Assembly to be validly constituted to elect a new President General, a quorum of 30% of the members with voting rights pursuant to Article 2.1.1 of these International Statutes shall be required.

3.9.2 VOTING PROCEDURE

The voting system used shall consist in two rounds and shall be effected by secret ballot. The first round shall include the postal votes of those electors who are unable to attend in person. In the second round, which shall only be required if no candidate obtains one half plus one of the votes presented, the candidates shall be the two members who have obtained most votes in the first round. Due to time restrictions, this second voting round shall be performed directly and by secret ballot; no postal votes shall be accepted.

Voting shall take place on the afternoon of the first day of the Council General Assembly meeting in which the voting is included on the agenda and shall have priority over any other matters.

3.9.2.1 LIMITATION

If an existing President General is presented for a second term of office having passed the first round without any candidate reaching half plus one

of the votes, in order for his/her election to be valid, he/she must obtain at least one half plus one of the votes presented in the second round. Otherwise the voting process shall recommence twenty-four hours later with the proposed candidates, excluding the existing President.

3.9.3 TAKING OF OFFICE

The President General shall take up the Presidency on the next Feast of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, namely on 9 September, in the city of Paris.

3.10 TERMINATION OF FUNCTIONS

The President General may cease to perform his/her service functions for the following reasons:

a) End of the term of office for which he/she was elected.

b) Resignation during the period of service.

c) Incapacity.

d) Death.

e) Loss of civil rights with a final criminal sentence for fraudulent or intentional offenses.

f) Serious misconduct violating the principles of *The Rule* and putting at risk the reputation of the organisation.

3.11 RESIGNATION FROM SERVICE

In the event a President General should resign, in order for such resignation to take effect, it must be formally presented before the International Executive Committee, pursuant to Articles 4.1 and subsequent of these International Statutes, and accepted by the aforementioned Committee.

3.12 INCAPACITY

In the event of the President General's incapacity to serve, the officers of the Board i.e. the Vice-President General, the Secretary General and the Treasurer General, shall jointly call an extraordinary meeting reserved solely for the International Executive Committee to deal exclusively with this matter. This meeting shall be held within a maximum of 30 days.

For the meeting to be validly constituted, the attendance must include at least 50% of the Committee's Legal Members, as provided for in Article 4.3 of these International Statutes.

3.12.1 CONSIDERATION OF INCAPACITY

The Committee, meeting in an extraordinary and urgent manner with this sole item on the agenda, shall examine in charity and with reserve, the alleged incapacity of the President General according to the serious and documented reasoning presented by the officers of the Board of the Council General. During the period elapsing between the convening of the Committee and its decision, no international Vincentian office undertaking may be suspended, replaced or cancelled.

3.13 GUARANTEEING THE DECISION ABOUT INCAPACITY

In order for the incapacity decision to be legally executed and validated, it must ,be supported by at least two thirds of the votes present and represented at the meeting of the International Executive Committee. The Secretary General of the Society shall immediately take detailed minutes of all the events at the Committee meeting, which, on this specific occasion, must be signed by all the attendees.

3.14 TERMINATION FOR MISCONDUCT

This procedure is for response to the President General's loss of civil rights due to a final criminal sentence for an intentional crime or serious misconduct violating the principles of the Rule and putting at risk the reputation of the organisation. In the event of a final judgment of a criminal court limiting the civil rights of the President General for an intentional crime or serious misconduct of the President General in violation of the principles of the Rule, the officers shall convene an extraordinary and reserved meeting of the International Executive Committee to deal exclusively with that matter.

This meeting, which may take place in person or remotely, shall be held within a maximum of 30 days from the time a member of the CGI or the IEC becomes aware of the fact or complaint. For the meeting to be validly constituted, at least 30% of the legal members provided for in Article 4.3 of these International Statutes must be present in person or remotely. In order for the removal of the President General to be legally established and

effective, a favourable vote of at least two-thirds of the votes of the International Executive Committee present and represented shall be required. The Secretary General of the Society shall take detailed and immediate Committee-meeting minutes, which, on this particular occasion, shall be signed by all those in attendance.

3.15 REPLACEMENT OF THE PRESIDENT GENERAL

In any of the events envisaged with respect to the termination of services and functions on the part of a President General the Society's Vice-President General shall be responsible for the international management of the Society.

In all cases he/she shall notify the other members of the Council General and particularly the President General when specifically declaring the latter's incapacity.

3.16 DEADLINES FOR THE ELECTION OF A NEW PRESIDENT GENERAL IN THE EVENT OF RESIGNATION OR INCAPACITY

In the event of resignation or incapacity, and within the maximum and non-extendible period of 90 days, the International Vice-President General shall call elections in accordance with the provisions established in Articles 3.3 to 3.10 of these International Statutes.

3.17 THE BOARD MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL

The President General after making the appropriate enquiries, shall appoint a Vice-President General a Secretary General and a Treasurer General for a limited renewable period; these persons, together with the President General, shall form the Board of the Confederation's Council General, and shall provide the President General with counsel and shall also have the functions described in Article 7.4 of these International Statutes.

The President General shall preside over the Board. All the members indicated, pursuant to Articles 3.16 through 3.18 of these International Statutes, shall be entitled to vote at the Board meetings, with the exception of the Spiritual Advisor. Meetings of this Board shall not require a quorum and resolutions shall be adopted by simple majority vote.

3.17.1 THE BOARD'S MISSION

The Board shall collaborate with the President General in order to develop the strategy required to implement the agreements reached by the Council General Assemblies and the recommendations of the International Executive Committee.

It shall also collaborate with the President General in designing the strategy to be proposed to the Council General Assembly and to the International Executive Committee.

It is the closest Vincentian body to the President General, whom it advises and counsels on any matter.

The President must consult the full Board at least three times a year, in between International Executive Committee meetings.

3.17.2 THE INTERNATIONAL SPIRITUAL ADVISOR

The International Spiritual Advisor always belongs to the Board of the Council General, as a member, with a right to speak but not to vote; this person shall also be appointed by the President General with the authorisation of his direct superior.

3.17.3 THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DELEGATE

The member entrusted with the International Youth Delegation shall also always form part of the Board of the Council General.

3.17.4 OTHER BOARD MEMBERS

Depending on the Board's needs, other members may be appointed as deputies to the Vice-President, Secretary or Treasurer.

3.17.5 THE OMBUDSMAN GENERAL

The Ombudsman General chosen by the President General, will act autonomously to deal with complaints, compliments, suggestions, and denunciations received, both from members of the Council General and from cases not duly resolved within National or assimilated Councils. Cases will only be dealt with by the Ombudsman General if all spheres of resolution have been exhausted at national level.

3.18 THE VICE-PRESIDENT GENERAL

The Vice-President General shall replace the President General if the latter is prevented from attending, absent or disqualified and all the latter's functions shall be delegated to the former.

3.18.1 THE SPECIAL MISSION

The Vice-President General is responsible for ensuring and organising the election of a new President General whenever the post becomes vacant, and in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 3.6 et seq. of these International Statutes, and announces the election results and submits these to the Society.

3.19 DEPUTY VICE-PRESIDENTS GENERAL

Whenever necessary and for specific general areas of considerable responsibility within the Vincentian Society, the President General shall appoint Deputy Vice-Presidents General to whom certain functions shall be delegated; these Deputies shall automatically form part of the Board of the Council General.

3.20 THE SECRETARY GENERAL: FUNCTIONS

Under the authority of the President General, the Secretary General ensures the smooth running of the different administrative services and bodies worldwide that report directly to the Council General. The Secretary General prepares the schedule of Council General Assemblies, organising its agendas and drafting the Minutes. The Secretary General performs the same mission for the International Executive Committee, the Permanent Section and the Board.

The Secretary General handles habitual and regular relations between the Permanent Section and the different Councils and Conferences of the Society. The Secretary General is responsible for the Council General's Archives and may be assisted by Deputy Secretaries.

3.20.1 ANNUAL REPORT

In July every year, the Secretary General shall draft an Annual Report on the Society's worldwide activities, based on the information obtained from the Superior Councils. This Report shall also be publicised internally and externally.

3.21 THE TREASURER GENERAL: FUNCTIONS

Under the authority of the President General, the Treasurer General is responsible for the financial management of the Council General. The Treasurer General keeps the accounts, which must be checked at least once a year by a financial Commission appointed by the Council General and by a professionally qualified independent body.

The Treasurer General may be assisted by Deputy Treasurers.

3.22 THE BUDGET OF THE COUNCIL GENERAL

The Treasurer General establishes the budget for the Administration of the Council General, the income and expenses accounts are approved by the Permanent Section, in its capacity as the Governing Board, before being presented at the Council General Assembly. In years in which no ordinary Assembly is convened, the International Executive Committee shall be responsible for approving these Budgets.

3.22.1 INCOME

The ordinary budget of the Council General in terms of income is generated by:

- Contributions from the Superior, Assimilated and Associated Councils. Collections taken during Council meetings.
- Donations with or without special applications. Subsidies from any type of public or private institution.
- The personal contribution of each member of the Society, through secret collection in the last quarter of each year, as a sign of solidarity with the Council General.
- Others.

3.22.2 EXPENSES

The main expenses are as follows:

- Expenses incurred to finance actions in any country in order to develop, extend and support the Society.
- Expenses incurred by the Secretariat and with respect to Council General publications.

- Expenses incurred in the organisation of Vincentian meetings that serve the international structure.
- Expenses incurred in connection with strictly essential trips.

3.22.3 EXTRAORDINARY BUDGETS, GLOBAL OR SPECIAL FUNDS AND OTHERS

Besides the ordinary budget, a provision may be allotted for creating Global or Special Funds, which are managed in the same way and intended for use in emergencies or as aid in specific circumstances for the benefit of one or various Councils, Conferences, countries, geographical regions of the world, in the event of catastrophes, or for any other purpose that is deemed appropriate.

3.23 THE REMAINING INTERNATIONAL SERVICE STRUCTURE

The President General appoints Territorial Vice-Presidents and Area Coordinators from among the Society's worldwide members.

3.23.1 ENQUIRIES

Prior to making the appointments to the International Service Structure, the President General shall, on a non-binding basis, always consult with the countries affected by the appointments.

The countries affected by an appointment to service in the Structure of a Coordinator or International Vice-President with which they do not agree by majority vote, shall inform the President General of such a decision. The President General shall be obliged to revoke his/her appointment and to appoint a different Coordinator or Territorial Vice-President within the shortest possible time.

3.24 TERRITORIAL VICE-PRESIDENTS

In close cooperation with the President General and in his/her name, the Territorial Vice-Presidents shall support, advise, protect, help and coordinate the Society in large geographical areas around the world.

3.24.1 REGIONAL MEETINGS

In the parts of the world where they supervise and are responsible for rendering their services, they may organise regional meetings with the authorisation of the President General.

3.25 THE COORDINATORS

The Territorial Vice-Presidents are assisted in their supervisory and promotional tasks by members who report to them, and to whom they delegate specific service tasks for specific groups of countries.

They shall also respect at all times the freedom of action of the Superior, Assimilated and Associated Councils which they serve as a nexus of union and means of communication.

3.26 INTERNATIONAL COMMISSIONS

For specific purposes, the President General may delegate different members the task of presiding over work or representing Commissions established to achieve specific targets.

3.26.1 THE MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSIONS

Whenever proposed by the different Commission Presidents, the President General shall appoint the members of these Commissions.

3.27 INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Likewise, and for specific missions that do not require a larger number of collaborators, the President General may delegate specific missions to individual members.

3.28 MEMBERS WITH INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

All members summoned to render important international services to their fellow members and to the poor shall do their utmost not to abandon their obligation to perform these tasks simultaneously with their commitments to the Conference to which they belong.

3.29 THE END OF TERMS OF OFFICE

In order to ensure the smooth hand-over of functions, all terms, posts and

services delegated by the President General shall automatically cease six months after a new President General takes up his/her appointment.

The new President General may shorten this period if it is deemed appropriate.

4 THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

4.1 THE MISSION OF THE COMMITTEE

The International Executive Committee of the Confederation (hereinafter referred to as the 'Committee'), shall be responsible for coordinating the Society's international strategy in the interim periods between Council General Assemblies, giving special attention to the need to ensure that this complies with the requests and matters approved during in the aforementioned General Assemblies.

The minutes of the Committee's meetings shall be distributed electronically to all General Assembly members within 60 days of the meeting. Any concerns or questions shall be addressed to the President General.

Should a majority of the legal members of the International Executive Committee determine that they have an exceptional issue where they may prefer to ask for approval by the General Assembly, the Committee may ask the legal members of the General Assembly to affirm or disapprove of a decision by an electronic vote. There will be a 60-day voting period, commencing on the day the invitation to vote is distributed.

In order to affirm or disapprove of the International Executive Committee resolution, a 50% plus 1 majority of the votes cast must be reached. The IEC shall collaborate with the President General in overseeing Conferences and Councils, examining the general progress of the Society and developing strategies for the following year, as well as promoting continuous improvement of the operations of the CGI.

4.1.1 THE MISSION OF THE COMMITTEE AS AN ORDINARY ASSEMBLY OF THE CONFEDERATION

In the years in which the ordinary Assembly of the Council General is not convened, the Committee shall be responsible for performing the Assembly functions of the Confederation as provided in French legislation governing non¬profit associations.

4.2 REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

At the beginning of each Council General Assembly meeting, the Committee shall report to the Assembly through the Secretary General on the results of its management and administration during the years in which the Assembly was not convened and shall request the ratification of its performance.

4.3 PERMANENT AND LEGAL MEMBERS

Permanent Committee members are, apart from the President General, those members who are responsible for the effective presidency of the Committee, namely the Vice-President General, the Secretary General and the Treasurer General. Likewise, they shall include, where appropriate, the Deputy Vice-Presidents General envisaged in Article 3.18 of these International Statutes.

Legal members of the Committee are the Presidents of the Superior or Assimilated Councils with more than 1000 active and aggregated Conferences in their country, within their jurisdiction, besides France, the country where the SSVP was founded.

Moreover, the President General shall appoint, on the proposal of the other permanent and legal members of the Committee:

- 5 (five) members among the Superior or Assimilated Councils that have between 1 and 500 active and aggregated Conferences; and
- 5 (five) members among the Superior or Assimilated Councils that have between 501 and 999 active and aggregated Conferences.

These members are appointed for a three-year term.

Each Superior or Assimilated Council which is a legal member is represented by one vote. The President General shall likewise have one vote which, if the case may be, shall be considered the casting vote.

4.3.1 QUORUM AND VOTING

The valid adoption of resolutions by the International Executive Committee shall require the attendance or representation of at least 30% of its full membership, including at least 50% of the Committee's Legal Members.

Resolutions shall then be validly adopted by a simple majority.

4.4 GUEST PARTICIPANTS

The Territorial Vice-Presidents, the Presidents of the existing International Commissions and members especially delegated by the President General with individual tasks of an international nature, shall always be invited to attend Committee meetings with a right to speak but not to vote.

The International Spiritual Advisor shall also be invited especially because of his/her spiritual work.

4.4.1 SPECIAL INVITATIONS

Any person holding a post of responsibility within the Society's international structure may be called to explain his/her management and administration performance to the Committee, and this shall be subject to approval by the latter; the corresponding observations shall also be made by the Committee itself.

4.5 SPECIAL REPORTS

The Deputy Vice-Presidents General, the Secretary General, the Treasurer General, the Territorial Vice-Presidents, and the members delegated by the President General with Commissions or special missions shall be specifically obliged to report on the work performed.

4.5.1 THE SECRETARY GENERAL'S REPORT

The Secretary General, who shall also act as the Secretary of the Committee, shall report on the management of the Permanent Section and on the administrative situation and service of the Offices of the Council General of the Society. Except for the extraordinary meetings envisaged in paragraph two of Article 4.7 of these International Statutes, the Secretary General shall obtain confirmation from all the Superior or Assimilated Councils, at least two months in advance of the meeting of the International Executive Committee, regarding the inclusion or exclusion of any point on the agenda of the meeting.

The Secretary General shall be the spokesperson for Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils that do not form part of the Committee and do not attend its meetings, with respect to any reports or opinions that have been sent in writing.

4.5.2 THE TREASURER GENERAL'S REPORT

Specifically with respect to the Treasurer General, he/she shall report on his/ her management and administration performance to the Committee, which shall represent, for him/her, the financial Commission envisaged in Article 3.20 of these International Statutes.

Likewise, the Treasurer General shall present the budget and obtain its approval in those cases envisaged in Article 3.21 of these International Statutes.

4.6 CORRESPONDENTS AND COORDINATORS

In addition to the members with the responsibilities mentioned in the previous Articles, the Committee may specifically summon any Correspondent or Coordinator, etc... and included within the performance of their services, to ask questions with respect to any aspect of their service.

4.7 COMMITTEE AND INTERNATIONAL STRUCTURE MEETINGS

The Committee shall meet at least once a year, during the first six months of the year, except in years in which the Council General Assembly is convened.

Meetings may be held electronically by means of a telephone call or video conference format, provided that persons participating in a meeting have the opportunity to hear each other and can contemporaneously communicate with each other. Such participation shall constitute presence at such meeting.

Extraordinary meetings may be convened when the President General considers that these are necessary and also whenever requested by one-half plus one of its voting members.

4.8 PRAYER AND MEDITATION

In accordance with the Society's tradition, the Committee meeting shall begin and end with a prayer. A spiritual reading or a meditation, which may lead to a brief sharing, shall be presented by one of the attending members, normally by the International Spiritual Advisor. A secret collection shall then be taken among the participants.

5 THE PERMANENT SECTION/GOVERNING BOARD

5.1 HEAD OFFICE AND CONVENING OF MEETINGS

A Permanent Section shall be established at the head office of the Council General of the Confederation; it shall be presided over by the President General. It may be convened anywhere around the world, whenever the President General considers that the situation makes this advisable.

5.1.1 THE MISSION OF THE PERMANENT SECTION

Its mission is to closely supervise and monitor the activity of the St Vincent de Paul Society around the world, helping the President General to achieve a better international service for members and the poor. It makes any appropriate decisions within the scope of the Rule and Statutes and the Society's tradition, and also complies specifically with the resolutions adopted by the Assemblies of the Council General and the recommendations of the International Executive Committee.

The Permanent Section shall specifically monitor resolutions adopted at the last Assembly meeting of the Council General or the International Executive Committee, as well as their degree of implementation in the different Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils and by the Council General itself whenever appropriate.

5.1.2 THE MISSION OF THE PERMANENT SECTION AS THE GOVERNING BOARD OF THE CONFEDERATION

Whenever appropriate, and at least once a year, the Permanent Section shall be responsible for performing the role established by French Law for the Governing Boards of non-profit Associations.

In such circumstances, the Permanent Section shall be convened with a special agenda that shall make special mention of the fact that it acts as the Governing Board of the Confederation.

5.2 PERMANENT SECTION MEMBERS

By virtue of the service that they render, the Board Members of the Council General, the Territorial Vice-Presidents and the Correspondents are members of this Permanent Section.

5.2.1 VOTING

Save on the occasions when the Permanent Section meets as the Board of Directors of the Confederation, pursuant to Article 5.1.2 of these International Statutes, all Presidents of Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils who attend a session of the Permanent Section shall be entitled to a voice and vote, as if a full member of this body.

5.3 TERRITORIAL TECHNICAL LIAISON OFFICERS

Members of the Section are those professionals who are recruited whenever possible, and on a preferential basis, from among the members from different geographical origins. Their mission is delegated by the President General for a specific renewable period. They are appointed with the right to speak but not to vote.

5.3.1 THE MISSION OF THE TERRITORIAL TECHNICAL LIAISON OFFICERS

Each Liaison Officer is appointed at the designated Council General Work Centre determined pursuant to Article 1.3.1 of these International Statutes, as an assistant to the Territorial Vice-Presidents and Coordinators of the geographical area to which they are assigned. From time to time, other Technical Liaison Officers, with or without territorial responsibilities, may be entrusted with special missions reporting directly to the Secretary General or the President General.

5.3.2 EXCLUSION

These Members of the Permanent Section shall not belong to this Section when it is meeting as the Governing Board of the Confederation, as provided in Article 5.1.2 of these International Statutes.

5.4 CORRESPONDENT MEMBERS AND OTHERS

The members traditionally referred to as Territorial Correspondents who are appointed by the President General for a specific renewable period, as well as other members with specific missions, also form part of this Section.

5.4.1 THE MISSION OF THE TERRITORIAL CORRESPONDENTS

The mission entrusted to the Territorial Correspondents is that maintaining

a constant relationship and effective cooperation with the different Territorial Technical Liaison Officers who depend on the former. They shall be close and fraternal representatives before the international structure, of the Superior, Assimilated and Associated Councils, to whose service they have been assigned.

5.5 PERMANENT GUESTS

The Presidents of the Superior or Assimilated Councils when present at head office shall always be invited to attend the meetings of the Permanent Section.

5.6 THE SECRETARY OF THE PERMANENT SECTION

As envisaged in Article 3.19 of these International Statutes, the Society's Secretary General is also the Secretary General of the Permanent Section.

6 INSTITUTION, AGGREGATION AND DISSOLUTION

6.1 AGGREGATION AND INSTITUTION POWERS

Only the Council General is empowered to institute new Councils and aggregate new Conferences to the Society, after consulting the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils accordingly.

6.2 AGGREGATION AND INSTITUTION PROPOSALS: SPEAKER

The Aggregations of Conferences and Institutions of Councils are presented by a Speaker appointed by the President General, in a session of the Permanent Section. The Speaker receives the proposals and recommendations of the competent Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils on behalf of the President General and obtains opinions from the members of the Permanent Section specifically responsible for handling relations with the Council which has requested the Aggregation or the Institution.

The Speaker presents the request to the Permanent Section, which either approves or rejects the Aggregation or Institution request.

6.2.1 DEADLINE FOR PRESENTING AND REQUESTING THE AGGREGATION OF CONFERENCES

The Conference, object of an Aggregation request presented by the Speaker, must have been created and must have provided services to the poor for at least twelve months.

6.2.2 PRESERVATION OF AGGREGATED OR INSTITUTED STATUS

The Conferences and Councils, once Aggregated or Instituted, shall retain that status as long as circumstances do not require the President General to proceed to their temporary suspension (see Article 6.8 and subsequent of these International Statutes), or to the firm exclusion by the Society of any Conference or Council.

6.3 EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES

The Permanent Section, through the Aggregations and Institutions Speaker, may sometimes request supplementary reports from the International Territorial Vice-Presidents.

6.4 COMMUNICATION

The Aggregations or Institutions declared by the Permanent Section are notified by the President General to the President of the interested Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council, as well as to the beneficiaries.

6.4.1 AGGREGATION AND INSTITUTION LETTERS

The Aggregation or Institution Letters shall be signed by the President General and the Secretary General; a space shall be left for the signature of the President of the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council. The Speaker shall provide notification of any Aggregation or Institution requests that have been rejected for different reasons.

6.5 THE INSTITUTION OF A SUPERIOR COUNCIL: APPOINTMENT OF A PROVISIONAL BOARD.

When the Council General, through the Permanent Section, institutes a Superior Council, the President General appoints a provisional Board, whose term of office is limited to one year and which may be renewed only

twice. The President of this provisional Board is a Temporary member of the Council General, as established in the provisions contained in Article 1.10.2 of these International Statutes.

6.6 MISSIONS OF THE PROVISIONAL BOARD

During this year, the provisional Board shall prepare and ensure the adoption of the Internal Statutes of the new Society for the members in their geographical area and shall establish the legal procedures required for it to subsequently join the International Confederation of the St Vincent de Paul Society as a fully legal member, in accordance with the provisions contained in Article 1.6 of these International Statutes.

The Council General, through its Permanent Section, shall finally, and whenever necessary, approve the text of the proposed Internal Statutes, including those of any Assimilated or Associated Council. Then, and within the scope of the new Statutes, the members shall elect a new President of the Superior Council and notify the Council General accordingly.

6.7 THE DISSOLUTION OR SUSPENSION OF THE AGGREGATION OR INSTITUTION OF A CONFERENCE OR COUNCIL

For reasons prompted by the seriousness of a particular event, the President General may suspend temporarily or permanently exclude a Conference or Council, after notifying the Permanent Section accordingly. In the case of a permanent exclusion, this shall always entail the cancellation of the Aggregation or Institution. (see Article 6.9 and subsequent)

6.8 EXTRAORDINARY DELEGATION

Each President of a Superior or Assimilated Council is, on a precautionary basis by virtue of his/her election, received and accepted accordingly at the head office of the Council General, delegated the powers to temporarily suspend a Conference, Council or member which are the prerogative of the President General. In other words, in cases of extreme seriousness and urgency, a President of a Superior or Assimilated Council may suspend a Conference, Council or member, exclusively as a precautionary measure, within his/her territorial jurisdiction.

6.8.1 COMMUNICATION

In such circumstances and regardless of the direct communications to those involved, the President General shall be notified of such decision, and the justified reasons for the same, within a maximum of 15 working days (as provided in Article 6.9.1.1 of these International Statutes); the member, Conference or Council in question may appeal to the aforementioned President in order to be heard. The President General shall approve or reject the appeals that are presented.

6.9 COMMENCEMENT OF DISSOLUTION OR SUSPENSION PROCEDURES

Two procedures may be used to suspend, cancel or, where appropriate, withdraw an Aggregation or Institution procedure.

6.9.1 ON THE REQUEST FROM THE SUPERIOR, ASSIMILATED OR ASSOCIATED COUNCIL

On request from the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council within whose jurisdiction the relevant member, Conference or Council is operating.

6.9.1.1 NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION

When a Superior Council requests the intervention of the Council General in the event of any problem, it must send, together with the request, full documentation for the information of the President General, particularly the documentation resulting from the intervention of the Conciliation Committee of the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council, where appropriate.

6.9.2 EX OFFICIO

The President General ex officio, i.e. on the initiative and request of one of the International Territorial Vice-Presidents, shall start the procedure of suspension or exclusion in the event of any serious circumstances. The President General shall report this serious situation to the Permanent Section.

6.10 EXECUTION OF THE DECISION

The Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council that has supervised the Conference or Council is responsible for taking the necessary steps, in agreement with the Council General, in order to execute the sanction and to ensure the transfer of property and files of the dissolved organisation. In the event of suspension or dissolution of a Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council, the President General shall appoint a Provisional Board pursuant to the provisions contained in Article 6.5 of these International Statutes.

6.11 EXTRAORDINARY PROCEDURES

In agreement with, and normally on the request of the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council concerned, the Council General may intervene in disputes arising at Conference and Council level. Its proposed decision shall take into account the spirit of the Society and any specific aspects of the Society's Statutes at the location in question, provided that they are approved in conformity with the provisions contained in the Rule and these International Statutes and ratified accordingly by the Permanent Section.

6.11.1 CIVIL AND OTHER TRIBUNALS

Any member, Conference or Council that takes legal action through civil or other Tribunals, without express authorisation from the Council General, in order to resolve disputes between members, Conferences or Councils, shall be automatically separated from the Vincentian friendship by virtue of this action and shall be excluded, for all intents and purposes, from the St Vincent de Paul Society.

7 AMENDMENTS TO AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RULE AND THE STATUTES

7.1 RULE AND STATUTES REFORM PROCEDURES

This Rule and the Statutes, in their three Parts, may be modified by means of two procedures.

7.1.1 GENERAL REFORM

Firstly, on a general basis, by replacing it with another newly-worded version. Secondly, by so-called 'Amendments'. By means of this procedure, the different amendments approved shall be attached to the end of the text of the Rule and Statutes and shall have the same effect as those that they rectify, complement or replace.

7.1.2 PARTIAL REFORMS, AMENDMENTS

Secondly, by so-called "Amendments". By means of this procedure, the different amendments approved shall be attached to the end of the text of the Rule and Statutes and shall have the same effect as those that they rectify, complement or replace.

7.2 RULE AND STATUTES REFORM PERIODS AND METHODS

In both cases, proposed changes to *The Rule* and Statutes or Amendments to any of its Articles must be presented at least one hundred eighty days before the date scheduled for the Council General Assembly meeting at which these changes or amendments are to be discussed.

7.3 QUORUM

In order for the change or amendment by means of one of the two procedures mentioned above (reform of the entire Rule and Statutes or partial Amendment) to enter into effect, it must be approved by 2/3 of the legal members of the Council General present or represented, including those members who have voted by post.

7.4 INTERPRETATION OF THE RULE

Any matter that is not specifically governed by any Parts of the Rule and Statutes shall be governed by Tradition and, in the final instance, by the decision issued by the Board of the Council General.

7.4.1 GOVERNANCE COMMISSION OF THE BOARD

To assist the Board of Directors in these responsibilities, the Board shall have a Governance Commission to review and provide guidance in matters of: 1) interpretation of and amendments to the Rule and Statutes, 2) legal issues affecting the Council General International, and 3)

advancement of governance practices in accordance with current standards for non-governmental organisations. The President General shall appoint the Commission's chair and its membership, and, after consultation with the members of the International Executive Committee, will select appropriately qualified people with legal training or governance background.

The Commission reports to the Board of Directors and shall be advisory to the President General, Board of Directors, Permanent Section, International Executive Committee and General Assembly in the performance of the governance duties assigned in these Statutes and in legal matters affecting the Confederation.

7.5 GENERAL RULES GOVERNING INTERPRETATION

Despite the fact that the entire Rule and Statutes in their three Parts must be treated as a single legal document, the first of these parts entitled 'Rule of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul' prevails with respect to the other two Parts in terms of its contents. Likewise, the 'Statutes of the International Confederation of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul', are subordinate to the Rule but prevail over the Internal Statutes.

There are also the corresponding Internal Statutes for the Superior Councils. For their drafting, we have the Basic Requirements for the Drafting of the Internal Statutes of the Superior, Assimilated or Associated Councils.

The Internal Statutes, which must be prepared by each Superior, Assimilated or Associated Council, shall comply fully with, and be subordinate to the Rule and to these International Statutes and shall be treated as a single legal document, as provided in Article 1.7 of these Statutes. They must always be approved by the Permanent Section of the Council General in order to be valid.

PART III

INTRODUCTION PART III

The 2026 edition of Part III of *The Rule* of the Society of St Vincent de Paul ('Society') in Australia introduced revisions to the 2012 edition of the Articles and the accompanying Procedures.

The 2026 edition divides the Articles into three Sections.

Section One covers matters that have to do with Conferences and Members.

Section Two covers those matters that have to do with aspects of Councils and how they function, Council position holders, elections of Council Presidents, managing complaints involving Members, and Special Works.

Section Three covers general governance matters.

Throughout the Articles, there are references to Procedures and to Appendices.

A **Procedure** provides commentary or details and/or protocols to assist Members and Councils to better understand or to assist in implementing aspects that attach to an Article.

Appendices have been referenced to give Members a source of corporate knowledge about decisions taken by National Councils past and current and material that has been developed since the Sydney Congress 2023. An 'online filing cabinet' has been established as the source of protocols and material that provide instructions and references for all Councils and Conferences to be aware of, to follow or consider. Details of how Councils might make use of the information contained in a particular Appendix is outlined in the Preamble to *The Appendices*.

Because *The Procedures* and *The Appendices* are online, this allows National Council to revise existing material and to add new reference material when this is relevant.

STRUCTURE OF THE SOCIETY

In Australia, the Society of St Vincent de Paul has organised its governance structure where Councils have responsibilities for defined geographic areas which assist the effective coordination of the Society's Mission and its activities. The formal institution of these Councils must be endorsed by National Council.

National Council	The national representative body of the Society in Australia, comprising the Presidents of the State and Territory Councils and members appointed by the National President. National Council Trustees are the members of National Council.
State and Territory Councils	A representative body of the Society in a state or territory, comprising the Presidents of the lower Councils, or in the Northern Territory the Conferences, and members appointed by the State or Territory Council President. Based on the geographical boundaries of the [Roman] Catholic Archdioceses and Dioceses that correspond to the geographical boundaries of Australia's states and territories, with the exception of Canberra-Goulburn Territory Council which extends into parts of the Province of Sydney (New South Wales).
Central or Diocesan Councils	Some State Councils have established Councils in Dioceses within a Province (state).
Regional Councils	The bodies responsible for promoting the work of the Society in a particular locality (e.g. a Diocese), comprising the Presidents of the Conferences within that locality.

Conferences	The Society's primary membership units that are mainly based in parishes, but may be adapted to other circumstances (e.g. hospitals, schools, Special Works, etc…).
Special Works	Initiatives that are organised to provide particular services to a defined group or in response to an identified need and which are wholly the responsibility of the Society.
Young Vincentians (i.e. Mini Vinnies, Youth Conferences, etc…)	Any Conferences, Councils or projects established specifically to promote the involvement of younger persons. These activities are accountable to the Council under which they operate, in the same way as any other Conference or Council.

PREAMBLE

These Internal Articles received the approval of the Permanent Section of the Council General International on the fifteenth day of December 2025. National Council issued these Articles on 1 July 2026.

They are subordinate to and are interpreted according to Parts I and II of *The Rule* of the Society of St Vincent de Paul and shall be treated together with them as a single legal document.

National Council, as the superior Council, together with the State and Territory Councils, are the stewards of the Society in Australia.

These Articles in Part III apply to all Conferences and Councils within Australia and to incorporated bodies and those bodies created under an Act of Parliament that fall under a jurisdiction to the extent expressly stated in these Articles to apply to such bodies.

Part III has taken into account the relationship and the interaction of *The Rule* with legislative requirements and obligations that attach to civil legislation within the Commonwealth of Australia at the time of writing. In the event that there is a conflict between legislative requirements and obligations that attach to civil legislation and *The Rule*, civil legislative requirements and obligations will prevail.

Part III seeks to provide enough detail within an Article and, where necessary, an accompanying **Procedure** or **Appendix**, to assist Members of the Society in Australia to:

(i) have a clear understanding of the Article; and

(ii) interpret the intent of the text of an Article where the circumstances of a particular situation may require discernment.

Part III includes appendices that contain documents that relate to National Council's governance arrangements and other documents that provide relevant policy and procedure. The Appendices have been included to provide corporate knowledge to Members of the Society in Australia.

The Legal and Governance Standing Committee of National Council of Australia can provide advice on interpretation of these Articles. Decisions of the National Council of Australia concerning interpretation of this Part III are final.

Following consultation with State and Territory Councils and subject to the procedures specified in these Articles of the Society, these Articles may be amended by National Council of Australia by majority of 75 percent of the National Council members. All amendments require the prior approval of Council General International before becoming effective.

The name of the Society is ‘Society of St Vincent de Paul’ (‘the Society’).

The Society operates in each state and territory in Australia through various incorporated bodies. The registered names of these incorporated bodies is either ‘St Vincent de Paul Society’ or another name registered to the relevant State or Territory Council.

The term ‘Vinnies’ is the brand of the Society’s retail outlets. ‘Vinnies’ has become a part of the Society brand within Australia and is the name by which the public refers to the Society.

SECTION 1: MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

ARTICLE 1 – THE PRIMACY OF THE RULE FOR VINCENTIAN MEMBERS

The Rule is the foundation document of the Society. Following *The Rule* is an essential part of being a Vincentian. It is the Society's primary governance document and defines what the Society is and how Society Members govern themselves as an organisation.

The Rule has three parts:

- Part I describes the Society, its origins, values and principles, outlines Vincentian spirituality and our purpose as Society Members.
- Part II defines the international governance structures of the Society.
- Part III allows each National Council to define its governance structures and processes which must not contradict Parts I and II.

Part III guides the way the Society operates in Australia in ways that align the Society with our civil, legal and cultural contexts. Part III guides Councils on the development of policies for the operation of Councils and Conferences.

The Rule is subject to revision both at the national and international level. Revision is a necessary response to the increasing legal and corporate complexity that supports the Society's works within a country's civil and legal contexts and enables the Society to reflect contemporary practices. Revision of any Part of *The Rule* should not compromise or weaken the essential governance framework of the Society.

ARTICLE 2 – THE RULE AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND DEMOCRACY

The work of the Society is founded upon the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth which are reflected and articulated by the Church since the late 1800s through the body of works known as Catholic Social Teaching. During his beatification, Frédéric Ozanam, the founder of the Society, was recognised as 'a precursor of the Catholic Church's social teaching'.[1]

The principles inherent in these teachings guide Members, Conferences and Councils through economic, political, personal and spiritual encounters. They attract people, including many who may have little or no other

[1] The Beatification of Frédéric Ozanam. The Vatican, 2000.

connection to the Church, to contribute their time, their talents and their love to our work.

There are five principles which impact on Vincentian spirituality.

The Society accepts the **Dignity of the Human Person** which recognises the inviolable dignity of the human person regardless of their race, creed, gender, sexuality, age or ability. Human dignity is the foundation upon which Catholic Social Teaching rests.

The Society accepts the **Principle of the Common Good** which informs Vincentians that 'every person and all peoples should have sufficient access to the goods and resources of society so that they can reach their fulfilment more completely and more easily. These 'goods' include not only material goods like property and possessions, but also social resources like education and health care. The common good is: "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily' (*Gaudium et Spes, §26*) and includes the universal right to use the goods of the earth".'[2]

We are reminded in *Laudato Si* (§49) of the interconnectedness of the human and natural worlds in these words, 'Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor.'

The Society accepts the **Principle of Subsidiarity** as set out in *The Rule* Part I, 3.9 and embraces this principle as its basic standard of operation. The principle recognises that Conferences and Councils are best equipped to respond appropriately to their local needs with knowledge of the environment and circumstances (culturally, socially, politically, etc...).[3] In this way, the Society promotes local initiatives within its spirit. This freedom of action of Conferences and Councils faithfully retains the principles that have been kept since the origins of the Society and enables our Companions[4] to be assisted spontaneously and effectively.

As Saint Vincent de Paul taught, we find the real presence of Christ in the poor. And so, the Society accepts the **Principle of Solidarity** which is the understanding that we as human persons should neither be 'independent' of society nor 'dependent' on society. Rather, society should reflect and strengthen the interdependence of all people, the dream of being one

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[2] Honner. J, *Dreaming as a Single Human Family.* National Council. 2021, p.16

[3] Refer to **Procedure 2** – Catholic Social Teaching for the context of Catholic Social Teaching for the Society and for further explanation of the Principle of Subsidiarity.

[4] Refer to **Appendix A** – National Council 2017 decision to adopt the term 'Companion'. The French term 'personnes accompagnées' literally people accompanied or those we walk beside.

human family. This principle is concerned with our social and economic arrangements, particularly as these impact on our Companions and those without a voice.

Subsidiarity and Solidarity should be understood as complementary principles. Subsidiarity does not diminish the need for solidarity within the structures of The Society. Solidarity does not diminish the freedom of action within Conferences that is essential to the ability of Conferences to adapt to the needs and resources of their own communities.

The fifth principle is the **Preferential Option for the Poor**, which calls for Members to give priority in action to people who are most vulnerable in our society as set out in *The Rule*, Part I, 1.3. This Principle underpins the whole reason the Society exists and drives our work as Members.

Pope Francis places concern for people who are disadvantaged and poor in a global context (*Laudato Si*). *Dreaming as a Single Human Family* is a vision that inspires the Society's advocacy work and its good works. Members seek to work together, to cross borders, to value differences and to bring the whole human family together to seek sustainable and integral development that shapes our global future.

Democracy

All decisions, unless the Articles otherwise provide, are made by consensus where possible after necessary prayer, reflection and consultation.[5] The democratic spirit is fundamental at all levels of the Society and, when appropriate, matters are put to a vote (*The Rule*, Part I, 3.10).

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERS

The Society is composed of Members who work in Conferences, Special Works and Councils.

The Society has many other individuals and groups who engage with and commit to its work in supporting those in need by giving freely of their time and talents.

There are two categories of Members in the Society.

Conference Member

A Conference Member is a person who embraces and is committed to the Catholic ethos of the Society, who attends Conference meetings, and who

[5] Refer to **Appendix B** – Meaning of Consensus.

seeks to live out their faith and commitment in action through taking part in the work of the Society in service to people in need in their local community.[6]

A Conference Member has received the required formation and training and accepts the Parts I, II and III of the document known as *The Rule*.

Conference Members are registered by a procedure established by the relevant State or Territory Council.

Conference Members are eligible to vote for the Conference President.

Associate Member

Associate Members are people who are committed to the Catholic ethos, mission, vision and the values of the Society, and who seek to live out their commitment by assisting in the works of the Society. Associate Members are not required to attend Conference meetings.

Associate Members are always welcome to attend Conference meetings and to participate in any formation programs.

Associate Members are registered by a procedure established by the relevant State or Territory Council.

Associate Members are not eligible to vote for the Conference President.

Associate Members cannot hold office-holding positions in the Society.

Associate Members can be involved in decision making processes that relate to matters concerning the Conference and any Special Work in which the Conference is involved.

Retired Member

Retired Members are people who continue their association with the Society but are no longer able to offer the Conference's works to people in need in their community. They can still participate in works if they meet the membership requirements set by their State or Territory Council. They can be active as volunteers in Special Works such as the Society's retail outlets and other community-based activities that promote and support the Society's works.

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[6] Refer to **Appendix C** – Conference Member – Description of role.

Engagement of Youth and Special Works Members

Youth Members are Members under the age of 35 years.[7]

Special Works Members are those Conference Members who help the Society with the delivery of a variety of special works.

Youth Members and Special Works Members can be Conference Members or Associate Members. Youth Members and Special Works Members are not a separate category of Membership. These Members participate fully in the governance structures of the Society.

Welcoming New Members

The Society welcomes all people to be Members of the Society.[8]

A prospective member becomes a Member once the Conference President discerns the readiness of the candidate to become a Member and the candidate has:

(i) made an application to the Society;

(ii) met the requirements of the relevant State or Territory Council to become a Member; and

(iii) after a period of active engagement in the Conference.

Their membership is recorded in the minutes of the Conference and notified to the State or Territory Council.

A prospective Member will need to be compliant in any legal obligations determined by the State or Territory Council (e.g. privacy, safeguarding, etc… obligations) before they can be actively engaged in offering works to Companions or activities that could involve children. Visiting Companions must always be conducted in pairs.

Commissioning

New Members may be invited to participate in a formal induction ceremony, combined with a Mass or a para liturgy, to welcome the new Member. At this time all Members may participate and renew their promise of service to the Members and to people in need, thereby deepening the spiritual dimension of their vocation.

ARTICLE 4 – VOLUNTEERS

The Society attracts people who want to give freely their time and their talents to the Society's works.

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[7] Refer to **Procedure 3** – Members – Youth in the Society.

[8] Refer to **Procedure 3** – Members – The Society and Ecumenical Relationships.

A Volunteer supports the Society's works by giving their time to support fundraising or who offers their time to Special Works of the Society including the Vinnies retail arm.[9] They respect the ethos, mission and the vision of the Society and volunteer to participate in any of the Society's works.

Volunteers are not Conference Members or Associate Members by reason of their volunteering but are encouraged to become Conference Members or Associate Members. Volunteers may participate in Conference activities and assist the Society to deliver Special Works and other voluntary activities.

Volunteers may be involved in decision making processes that relate to matters concerning their volunteering at the Special Work in which they are involved.

Volunteers who work with a Conference are not involved in decision making processes that relate to matters concerning the Conference.

Volunteers may be involved in some aspect of supporting the operations of a Special Work including the Vinnies retail arm. In these roles, Volunteers come under the supervision and direction of a Council's incorporated body's Chief Executive Officer or their delegate.

Volunteers are welcomed to public occasions where the Society acknowledges its volunteers and supporters and promotes the interests of the people the Society serves.

Volunteers are registered by a procedure established by the relevant State or Territory Council.

ARTICLE 5 – CONFERENCES

What is a Conference?

Vincentians come together as Members of a Conference, a community of faith and love, of prayer, reflection and action. The Conference is the core unit of the Society. Conferences meet regularly and frequently (*The Rule*, Part I, 3.3.1).[10]

A Conference may be established within any community, such as a parish, town, suburb, school, university, workplace, ethnic or social group. There is a strong tradition of people with a range of ages working together in Conferences.

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[9] 'Vinnies retail arm' refers to the commercial activities of a State or Territory Council's incorporated body.

[10] Refer **Appendix D** – Council General International, *Handbook for Conferences (2022*).

Conferences may be formed to support the work of the Society. Examples of the types of works supported by Conferences include people working in Special Works such as van services or a domestic violence refuge.

A Conference may be established, and its scope of activities endorsed by its immediate superior Council and its State or Territory Council. All Conferences must be attached to a Council (*The Rule*, Part I, 3.8).

The Membership of a Conference should attempt to reflect the membership of the community within which the Conference is located. Every effort should be made to attract people from all walks of life and all age groups.

All Conferences should be formally 'Aggregated' with the Confederation General International after 12 months of continuous service (*The Rule*, Part I, 3.8).

Conferences may be part of or attached to a Special Work.

Alternative forms of Conference[11]

The Society is open to establishing new Conferences that work in ways that more readily accommodate the needs of Members in different circumstances.

Councils work with new Members to develop the best methods of bringing Members together around a common purpose; e.g. a Special Work, a school-based activity. These different forms of Conferences can be aggregated or can operate in an unaggregated form. Conferences must be aggregated to participate in Twinning activities.

The Society recognises the formation of committees or working groups which operate within the same structure of a Conference being tied to a higher council and operate under a Council in a way that is bound by the normal requirements for a Conference.

Twinning

Twinning involves Aggregated Conferences and Instituted Councils supporting other Aggregated Conferences and Instituted Councils both domestically and internationally. 'Twinning is one of the activities most cherished by the Society' (*The Rule*, Part I, 4.1).

The essential element of Twinning is Vincentian solidarity through regular

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[11] Refer to **Procedure 5** – Conferences – Membership and New Forms of Conference.

communication. Material support through grants and projects may follow from and build on the relationship. Such support is coordinated at National Council level. Conferences especially are encouraged to seek and maintain Twinning relationships.

Only aggregated Conferences and Instituted Councils can engage in Twinning with overseas Councils and Conferences.

Aggregated Conferences and Councils may direct part of their funds to the service of people in need who live in overseas countries through Twinning, Assist-a-Student or Special Projects and may choose to hold collections for that purpose. All funds for these purposes must be paid to the National Council or through a State or Territory Council to the National Council for distribution to the appropriate overseas National Council.

Under no circumstances are funds to be paid directly to any person residing overseas or a Conference or a Council overseas.

Conference Meetings

Meetings should be imbued with the spirit of charity and the spirituality which animates the Society. It is essential that all three dimensions of the Society are experienced by the Members:

1st dimension: work for people who are in need, are deprived or have necessitous circumstances,

2nd dimension: the spiritual development of Members, and

3rd dimension: mutual support, inspiration and Vincentian friendship.

The Spiritual Advisor and other Members should be sensitive to the spiritual needs and development of all Members and where appropriate use forms of prayer and reflection that engage all Members in the ethos of the Society.[12]

An example of the business covered during a meeting of Conferences is set out in the Procedures.

Conference meetings should take place at least fortnightly either in person or via electronic means (*The Rule*, Part I, 3.3.1).

Visitation Reporting

The Conference is responsible for the security of records that hold personal information of Companions and other people assisted by the

[12] Refer to **Procedure 5** – Conferences – Conference Meetings.

Conference. Members will be supported by the Society to understand and to comply with the provisions of the relevant privacy laws relating to the storage, the exchange and the destruction of personal information. Information recorded in Conference minutes or shared with the Conference should be in summary de-identified form only, respecting the dignity of the Companions and people we assist.

Personal details of Companions should not be kept on a Member's private computer or smart device. Reporting of activities by the Conference must be done in a manner that does not enable any person assisted to be identified.

Decision Making

Decisions are made by consensus where possible after prayer, reflection and consultation. The Society accepts the spirit of democracy (*The Rule*, Part I, 3.10). When necessary, a vote may be taken.

Reflection on service is a key aspect of the Conference meeting. Members report on their Vincentian activities and consider the actions and decisions taken or to be taken to further charity and justice.

Aggregation

After a Conference has been established for at least 12 months, it should apply, through its State or Territory Council and through National Council, for aggregation.

Aggregation is the process whereby the Conference is recognised internationally and is counted as part of the global structure of the Society. The process of a Conference being recognised through aggregation is managed by National Council. A Certificate of Aggregation is issued by the Council General International.

Once a Conference is aggregated, the President becomes eligible to vote at the Regional Council to which the Conference is attached.

Suspension or Termination of a Conference

Should a Conference be suspended or cancelled, its records and funds are to be transferred to its next higher Council. Any liabilities of the Conference become the responsibility of the same Council. A terminated Conference may be dis-aggregated (i.e. its registration with the Council General International is cancelled). The process of a Conference's aggregation being terminated is managed by National Council.[13]

[13] Refer to **Procedure 5** – Conferences – Aggregation, Suspension and Termination of a Conference.

Inactive Conference

Should a Conference cease to be active, its records and funds are to be transferred to its next higher Council. Any liabilities of the Conference become the responsibility of the same Council. An inactive Conference should not be dis-aggregated (i.e. its registration with the Council General International cancelled) but, instead, remain dormant or 'abeyant' in the hope that in the future there will be an opportunity for the Conference to once again become active.

ARTICLE 6 – CONFERENCE WORK

No work of charity is foreign to the Society in accordance with *The Rule*, Part I, 1.3. It includes, by person-to-person contact, any form of assistance that relieves suffering and promotes human dignity and integrity. The Society is concerned not only with relieving need but also with addressing situations that cause it.

As a member-based organisation, it is expected that works undertaken by a Conference generally will be undertaken by Members supported by Associate Members or volunteers and employees as appropriate.

Conference work can include visiting people in their homes, in assistance centres, in centres of charity, in hostels, in hospitals, in care facilities or day centres, in the streets or wherever else they may be found needing aid or comfort. Those who are homeless have a special call on the charity of Members.

Conference work is not limited to home visitation. Conference Members are encouraged to participate in any of the various works of the Society.

Visiting People in Need

1. Home Visitation

Ideally, as Members of the Society we visit those in need in their homes, always showing a Vincentian spirit. We show concern for their deepest needs, and we share their joys and hopes, their grief and anguish as true intentional friends and those we call our 'Companions'.

2. Other Visitation

Conference Members seek out those needing assistance wherever they may be. Visits may occur on Society premises, such as via a support centre, in hospitals, hostels, facilities for people who are aged or people

with disability, prisons, through our services or centres of charity or any other place where people in need may live or to people who are homeless wherever they may be. Initial meetings should occur in a public place.

3. Attitude to People in Need

Contact with those in need is always in a spirit of intentional friendship and companionship with respect, inclusivity, cordiality, empathy and affection. At all times we reflect the value of Human Dignity when we have contact with our Companions. Whenever possible, our assistance should promote self-sufficiency for those who seek our assistance and be concerned for their deeper needs.

4. Visiting in Pairs

Person-to-person contact with individuals and families in need is made in pairs (Jesus sent out his disciples in pairs, for mutual support and inspiration). Visiting in pairs has been the practice of the Society since its foundation and protects the visitors and the person being visited. Visits and Conference interviews must never be conducted by a single Member on their own. This practice is part of the Society's commitment to safeguarding for children and adults at risk and Society Members.

It may take several visits before the Vincentian team is able to learn all that is necessary to help someone.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk[14]

Members frequently assist and interact with children and adults at risk in their Conference work in Australia or through the Overseas Partnerships Program and Twinning.

Members will at all times protect the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk including taking any action required by Society policy or applicable law.

Members must undertake a national police check and/or hold a working with children or vulnerable people card (or equivalent in their relevant jurisdiction) where these are required by law.

Councils will adhere to the relevant jurisdictional safeguarding legislation and the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

Councils will maintain a register of Members' safeguarding details.

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[14] Refer to **Appendix E** – Council General International Safeguarding Framework, 2020.
– National Council Safeguarding Policy.

Planning and Periodic Review

Each Conference is encouraged to carry out periodic reviews to evaluate its service to the Members, to our Companions and those in need. It should review the effectiveness of its works, and explore ways to provide better service, identify new forms of need in its community and new ways to respond to need. State and Territory Councils may be involved in aspects of such reviews to help Conferences and Councils to identify regional trends, to coordinate the demand for support services and to promote continuous improvement.

A Conference should consider whether there are new opportunities for fundraising to support the works of the Conference and the broader Society.

The Conference will submit its report on its activities to the immediate Council to which it is attached.

ARTICLE 7 – THE CONFERENCE AND THE GLOBAL SOCIETY

The International Society

All Members, Conferences and Councils should be aware of the Society as an International Network of Charity governed ultimately by the Council General International and led by the International President General. The connection to the Council General International is through National Council.

The Society has an international support structure including International Territorial Vice-Presidents (ITVP) and Zone Coordinators who oversee the work of the Society in individual countries. The ITVP is the personal representative of the International President General in a group of countries referred to as a 'region'. Zone Coordinators are appointed to assist and support the ITVP in a number of countries overseen by the ITVP. These positions play a supporting role to National Council's Overseas Partnerships Program.

The Society has, within each international region, designated representatives for youth, Twinning, formation and training and special projects who link these activities in each country to the broader work of the Society. It is the responsibility of National Council to ensure that there is a person who represents the Society within a country who can be the point of communication with each of these international roles.

ARTICLE 8 – CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

The Conference President has the responsibility to ensure that the spirit and *The Rule* of the Society are observed in all activities of the Conference.

The Conference President guides and assists Members to achieve the maximum degree of personal participation in helping those in need.

The Conference President is a member of the Council to which the Conference is attached and participates in the meetings and other activities of the Council.

The Conference President is elected by the Members and holds office for a period of up to four (4) years. A President is eligible for re-election after an absence of two (2) years, except in circumstances where the current President is removed from office in accordance with Article 28.

Where a Conference President may not be able to complete the term of office and stands down, until a new formal election of a President of a Conference can be conducted, a Vice-President will act as President.[15] If a Conference cannot find a President then the State or Territory Council may appoint an Administrator for a period of not more than two (2) years.

Where no Conference Member is prepared to stand, it will be for a State or Territory Council to appoint an Administrator for a period of not more than two (2) years and this may include an immediate past President.

The Conference President should be of the Catholic faith.[16]

ARTICLE 9 – CONFERENCE OFFICE BEARERS

The Conference President, after consultation with the Members of the Conference, appoints office bearers – at least a Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer – from among the Members of the Conference to assist the efficient operation of the Conference.[17]

The term of appointment of office bearers is determined by the President. When the President's term of office expires, the appointments of the office bearers also expire. It is then open to the incoming President to appoint new office bearers or to reappoint the same Members as office bearers. The President should make appointments on merit and avoid making appointments which are arbitrary or not consistent with the best interests of the Conference.

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[15] Refer to **Article 18**.

[16] Refer to **Procedure 8** – Requirement for President, Vice-President and Spiritual Advisor to be Catholic.

[17] Refer to **Procedure 9** – Conference Office Bearers, and **Appendix F** – Conference Office Holders – Position Descriptions, for more information on office holders.

The President should endeavour to make appointments for the following roles.

Vice-President

In the absence of the President, the Vice-President assumes the President's responsibilities. The Conference Vice-President should be of the Catholic faith.

Secretary

The Secretary records minutes of all significant reports and decisions of the Conference meeting including the correspondence, actions, financial transactions and the visits made by Members. Minutes should be circulated before the next meeting and must be approved at the next meeting.

The Secretary is responsible for Conference Activity Reports as required by a Regional Council or other higher Councils.[18]

Treasurer

The Treasurer keeps full and accurate records of all Income and Expenditure and presents a summary written report at each Conference meeting or at least monthly and a report showing all income and expenditure annually. State and Territory Councils may have reporting schedules and regimes in place.

The financial records of the Conference should be audited independently once a year. This could be done by a qualified accountant or, where a State or Territory Council uses a centralised accounting system, the audit will align with the audit protocols approved by the Council. The Treasurer produces reports required by the Regional Council or higher Councils.

The Treasurer must not be a close family relative of the President. A close family relative is a spouse, sibling, parent, grandparent, child or grandchild. Where this condition cannot be met, the Treasurer of the next higher Council must act as Treasurer for the Conference until an alternative is found by the Conference President.

Spiritual Advisor

In keeping with the tradition since the beginning of the Society, a Spiritual Advisor should be appointed to help foster the Members' spiritual life

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[18] Refer to **Article 19**

within the Conference under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Spiritual Advisor must be of the Catholic faith and should be a practising Catholic.

The Spiritual Advisor ensures that all the aspects of the spirituality and identity of the Society in the International Rule and in the Society's Vision and Mission Statements are understood and become fully expressed in the meetings and work of the Conference. The Spiritual Advisor has a special pastoral role to promote harmony between Members which enables 'Christ in the Midst' to live and love through the Conference.[19]

Twinning Officer

The appointment of a Conference Twinning Officer drawn from the Conference Membership will assist the Conference to support meeting the requirement of the International Rule (Part 1, 4) for conferences and councils to be part of a global Vincentian and Catholic Network of Charity. The Conference's engagement in Twinning and National Council's Overseas Partnerships Program helps people overseas in need in countries with a Vincentian presence.

ARTICLE 10 – CONFERENCE FUNDS

Conferences must keep accurate and appropriate records of income and expenditure and of their business.[20] These records are to be readily available to Members.

State and Territory Councils that have centralised accounting systems in place allow audits to be conducted at a Council level. Where such systems are in place, audits of Conference funds will fall under a Council. Where there are no centralised accounting systems in place, Conferences must conduct an annual review of their finances, an audit and report to the Council.

Where a State or Territory Council operates through an incorporated body or under an Act of Parliament, the audit covering all Conferences within the jurisdiction will follow the requirements of the civil legislation applicable to the incorporated body and the incorporated body's constitution.

Any Special Works operating as a related incorporated body of National Council or of a State or Territory Council must be included in the annual audit. Conferences can never be incorporated and definitely are not Special Works. A Special Work may be attached to a Conference.

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[19] Refer to **Article 11** and to **Procedure 9**.

[20] Refer to **Procedure 10** – Conference Funds for more information about how the Society manages funds and donations.

The Conference Treasurer has an important role in monitoring expenditure and income of their Conference and reporting any accounting irregularities to the next higher council.

Conferences involved in fundraising activities in local parishes should consult with the parish priest and, where a fundraising campaign covers a diocese, the local bishop should be consulted.

Conference expenditure is restricted to its activities and assistance to works in which the Society is involved. A Conference must not donate funds to non-Society organisations.[21]

A Conference shall make available to the Council to which it is attached any funds which are surplus to its needs. A Conference in need of funds may apply for assistance to the Council to which it is attached or to the State or Territory Council. State and Territory Councils may take differing approaches to how this principle is implemented.

Where a State or Territory Council has a centralised accounting system, each Conference will prepare an annual budget according to the guidelines provided by the Council. The Council will be responsible for approval of the budget and will require the Conference to monitor its expenditure against that budget with any exceptions to be approved via an agreed delegation.

Where there is no centralised accounting system in place, Conferences must prepare an annual budget, approve the budget, inform its higher Council of the annual budget and monitor the Conference's expenditure against that budget.

All expenditure by the Conference must be reported at the next appropriate Conference and Council meeting and be approved by the Conference and the Council.

The approval must be recorded in the minutes of the Conference meeting.

Members authorised to undertake specific activities on behalf of the Society are entitled to have incurred expenses refunded on presentation of appropriate documentation in accordance with any applicable policy endorsed by a State or a Territory Council.

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[21] Refer to **Article 20**.

Members who are in financial difficulty

If a Conference Member is in need of assistance the matter must be raised with the Regional Council President who will refer the Member to a Conference other than the home Conference of the Member. That Conference will treat the Member in the same manner as any other person seeking assistance. The Member has the same entitlement to privacy that any other person being assisted would expect, including within the Member's home Conference.

The President of a Council should be informed of such circumstances by the President of the Conference that is asked to provide assistance where the Member is a member of a Council.

Benefactors

Benefactors help the Society by making financial or material donations. Benefactors may be provided regularly with information to inform them of the work of the Society.

Conferences and Councils should, where appropriate, acknowledge the contributions of benefactors in a manner consistent with the ethos and simplicity of the Society.

Benefactors, especially in bequests, may ask that donations be applied to a particular purpose, and every endeavour should be made to comply fully with such requests. These requests should be in writing to ensure there is a permanent record. All Councils should have in place processes to do this.

If the donation cannot be applied effectively for the purpose it was given, then the matter must be raised with the benefactor or, in the case of a bequest, with the executor.

ARTICLE 11 – SPIRITUAL ADVISOR

As practised since the beginning of the Society, a Spiritual Advisor fosters spiritual and pastoral life within a Conference or a Council.

As a lay Catholic Society, the role of Spiritual Advisor may be appointed from the Members or a member of the local parish. The local priests, deacons or religious members may be invited to be the Spiritual Advisor or to propose an appropriate person. The Spiritual Advisor models and encourages Members to lead the prayers and spiritual reading or

meditation. In conjunction with the Conference President, they provide guidance on matters of faith, morals and Catholic Social Teaching.

A Spiritual Advisor should be appointed to each Conference or Council by the President of the Conference or Council after consulting Members of the Conference or Council.

The Spiritual Advisor must be of the Catholic faith and should be a practising Catholic and have a sound knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Vincentian spirituality. This person can be a priest, religious or lay person trained for the role. Spiritual Advisor training is available if sought.

If the Spiritual Advisor is an ordained person or a member of a Religious Order, the permission of the Bishop or Religious Superior must be obtained.

The Spiritual Advisor leads the prayers, reflection and the spiritual reading or meditation and Catholic Social Teaching. The Spiritual Advisor ensures that all aspects of the spirituality of the Society detailed in the International Rule and in the Society's Vision and Mission Statements are understood by the Members and become fully expressed in the meetings and work of the Conferences and Councils. Spiritual Advisors have a special role to restore harmony when conflict arises between Members and to be a pastoral presence.

In Conferences

Conference meetings should be imbued with the spirit of charity and the spirituality which animates the Society. The Role of Spiritual Advisor within the Conference has a particular focus on fostering the spiritual and pastoral life of the Conference.

The Conference President should appoint an appropriate person/s as the Conference Spiritual Advisor. The Spiritual Advisor can be an external member of the Conference (e.g. a Parish Priest) and, as such, a non-voting member, or could be a role undertaken from amongst the Conference Members, as such, maintaining their voting rights. The Spiritual Advisor is a non-voting role unless the Spiritual Advisor is also a Conference Member.

The term of appointment for the Spiritual Advisor of a Conference is determined by the Conference President and ceases upon the election of a new President.

ARTICLE 12 – FESTIVAL MASS AND MEETINGS

Festival Mass and Meetings promote friendship and support between the Members, providing an opportunity for sharing of experience, good practice and mutual support between Conferences. They provide information that is useful for Members in their work and emphasise that Members are part of a worldwide Vincentian family.

Regional Councils should conduct at least one Festival Mass and Meeting each year, which should include a Commissioning Ceremony for new Presidents and new Conference Members, as a means of deepening the spiritual dimension of being a Vincentian. Commissioning Ceremonies of new Conference Members may be conducted in the Members' local Church.

A meeting of Members is an occasion for their spiritual growth, mutual sharing of the Society and a study of its works and future plans.

All Members in the region are encouraged to attend the Festival Mass and Meetings and meet together in a social gathering.

Central, State or Territory Councils may organise a Festival Mass and Meetings to supplement those organised by Regional Councils.

At a Festival Mass and Meeting, Members renew their commitment to the work of the Society. This renewal is to take place annually.[22]

[22] Refer to **Procedure 12** – Festival Mass and Meetings for further information.

SECTION 2: COUNCILS

ARTICLE 13 – REGIONAL, CENTRAL OR DIOCESAN AND STATE AND TERRITORY COUNCILS

Councils are instituted by National Council following completion of the procedures required by the Council General International. A Certificate of Institution issued by National Council (historically this was managed by the Council General International) certifies a Council's institution.

Councils are at the service of all Conferences and Councils under their jurisdiction.

Councils are formed to create a link between Conferences and Councils and between Councils at different levels; e.g. Regional Councils. They facilitate joint action and communication and provide resources to assist in the effective, efficient and appropriate working of Conferences and Councils consistent with the scale of responsibility of the Council.

Between the National Council and Conferences may be Regional Councils, Central or Diocesan Councils and State or Territory Councils.

Councils serve the mission and objectives of the Society through governance at the scale and range of the Council, supporting lower Councils and Conferences, providing services and functions appropriate for the scale of the Council and serving as a link between lower Conferences and Council and the higher Councils of the Society.

A decision of a State or Territory Council is binding upon all the Councils and Conferences within that State or Territory. A decision of a Central or Diocesan Council is binding on all Regional Councils and Conferences that comprise the Central or Diocesan Council. A decision of a Regional Council is binding on all Conferences within the Region.[23]

The members of the Council are the Council President, and the Presidents of Conferences and Councils directly attached to the Council, the Youth Representative and the office bearers as specified in Article 19.

The President of the Regional Council is elected by the Conference Presidents and its appointed members. The Central or Diocesan Council

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[23] Refer to **Appendix G** for an explanation of the duties owed to higher Councils' incorporated bodies in the context of potential conflict of interest.

President is elected by the Regional Council Presidents and its appointed members. Each Central or Diocesan Council provides localised leadership, support, and advice to the Regional Presidents who form that Council.

In turn, the Central or Diocesan Council Presidents are members of the State or Territory Council. Where there is no Central or Diocesan Council, the Regional Council Presidents are members of the State or Territory Council.

Where there is no Central or Diocesan Council or Regional Council, the State or Territory Council is drawn from the Conference Presidents.

All elected and appointed office bearers of a Council are voting members of that Council by virtue of their appointment on the Council. Advisors appointed to a Council do not have a vote on the Council.

Members of Councils should endeavour to support and implement decisions made by the Council regardless of their own views or the views of the members of an attached Conference or Council.

All members of Councils serve without remuneration.

ARTICLE 14 – COUNCIL FUNCTIONS

The functions of a Council include:

- to facilitate the spiritual life of Members by sharing their skills and talents, and what has been given to the Society, on a person-to-person basis with those in need and encouraging them to take control of their own future;
- to support the spiritual life of Members;
- to support Conferences and Councils financially and administratively in carrying out their mission;
- to support higher Councils to lead the Society and to coordinate the work of the Society;
- to assist in carrying out the mission of the Society to directly relieve suffering or deprivation of those in need and to promote human dignity and personal integrity;
- to engage Society Members as volunteers to further the mission of the Society;
- to assist Society Members with their formation and training in order to

improve the sensitivity, quality and efficiency of their service to our Companions and to help them be aware of the benefits, resources and opportunities that are available for them, in accordance with *The Rule*, Part I, 3.12; and

- to support and develop Conference works.

Councils, and their related incorporated entity, may establish Standing Committees and Advisory Committees to assist the work of the Council.[24] All members of committees serve without remuneration.

Council Presidents must ensure that Council decisions are communicated accurately and promptly to lower Councils and Conferences.

The role of a Council is to serve, to educate and to animate Conferences and Members – not to rule arbitrarily.

ARTICLE 15 – COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council meetings begin and end with the Society prayers, or other appropriate prayers, that should include as a minimum a prayer to the Holy Spirit, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary and a prayer for those suffering that Members nominate. A period of spiritual reflection should also be included.

Councils meet regularly. The frequency, manner and agenda of the meetings is determined by the Council, and it is suggested each Council meet at least monthly.[25]

Council meetings provide the forum for Conferences and Councils to report on their activities, discuss matters of common concern and make decisions on action to be taken.

All decisions of a Council are binding on all attached Councils and Conferences, not only policy decisions.

Decisions are made by consensus, where possible, after prayer, reflection and consultation. The democratic spirit is fundamental within the Society and, when necessary, a vote may be taken.

Meetings should be held in a way which facilitates online participation and/or technology options when a Council member cannot attend in person.

If a Council member from an attached Conference or Council cannot attend a Council meeting, the member should be represented by another

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[24] Refer to **Procedure 14** – Council Functions: Incorporated Bodies.

[25] Refer to **Procedure 15** – Council Meetings: Format for Council Meeting Agenda.

member of the same Conference or Council. The representative will have the same rights and responsibilities as the Member they represent.

Presidents or Chairs of Special Works and Advisory Committees or their representative attend Council meetings and, when required, report on their activities.

Each Council is to continually evaluate its services to Members and those in need and at least once a year submit a report on its activities to the immediate higher Council to which it belongs.

ARTICLE 16 – COUNCIL PRESIDENTS

A President has two roles and accepting the office of President requires fully embracing both roles.[26]

The first role of a President is to be the leader of the Conference or Council for which they are President, and all that the role entails as described in this document including the Procedures.

The second role of a President is to participate as a member of the next higher Council.

The subsidiary Council or Conference cannot bind its President to a specific position when the higher Council is making a decision. While the lower Council and its members are free to express a view, the members of the higher Council must take a wider view and make a decision that is in the best overall interest of the Society within the full ambit of the higher Council, notwithstanding the effect on any specific subsidiary Council or Conference.

Where there is a substantial workload, Council Presidents are encouraged to share their tasks with their Vice-Presidents, one of whom who may act as Deputy President to represent the Council President. It is open to the Council President to appoint additional Vice-Presidents with specific portfolio responsibilities provided the number of Vice-Presidents does not exceed the limits stated in this Part III of *The Rule*.

The elected President of a Regional Council must be of the Catholic faith. In exceptional circumstances, a State or Territory Council may approve the appointment of a person who is not of the Catholic faith to the position of Regional Council President.[27]

The elected President of all other Councils must be of the Catholic faith.

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[26] Refer to **Procedure 16** – Council Presidents.

[27] *The Rule*, Part I, 6.5.

ARTICLE 17 – REGIONAL, CENTRAL OR DIOCESAN, STATE AND TERRITORY COUNCIL PRESIDENT ELECTIONS

Council Presidents are elected by a secret vote by members of the Council. Proxy voting at elections is not allowed.

The Council President is elected by the Council members and holds office for a period of up to four (4) years. A President is eligible for re-election after an absence of two (2) years, except in circumstances where the current President is removed from office in accordance with Article 28.

Nominees for the position of State or Territory President must have been a Conference Member for at least five (5) years or a Council Member for at least three (3) years.

A Council President may hold the election of the next President up to four (4) months before the end of their current term to enable the President Elect the opportunity to gain experience before undertaking the role. The current President continues as President for the remainder of the term. Unless the President Elect is an existing member of the Council, he or she is not eligible to vote in decisions of the Council.[28]

A Council President may not be able to complete the term of office for reasons shown in Article 18 below. Until a new formal election of a President of a Council can be conducted, the Deputy President or a Vice-President will act as President.[29] Where no Council member is willing to stand, it will be for the next higher Council to appoint an acting President.

ARTICLE 18 – CONFERENCE AND COUNCIL PRESIDENTS WHOSE TERM PREMATURELY CEASES

Termination of Functions

The President of a Conference or Council will cease to perform their functions (termination of functions) for any of the following reasons:

- ceases to be a Society Member;
- end of the term of office for which they were elected;
- resignation;

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[28] Refer **Procedure 17** – Regional, Central or Diocesan, State and Territory Council President Elections.

[29] Refer to **Article 18**.

- in the opinion of the Conference or Council is incapable of performing their duties as the President;
- death;
- has been found by the Conference or Council members in general meeting to have engaged in an activity which brings the Society into serious disrepute;
- has been convicted of an indictable offence;
- becomes bankrupt.

Deputy President and Vice-President

The Deputy President or the Vice-President of a Conference or Council shall replace the President on the termination of functions and all of the latter's functions shall be delegated to the Deputy President or, if no Deputy President exists or is not available, the Vice-President who will then be the acting President.

If there is more than one Vice-President, the functions of the President shall be delegated to the Vice-President chosen at a vote of the Conference or Council members.

If there is no person appointed Vice-President of a Conference or Council, the functions of the President shall be delegated to the longest serving eligible member of the Conference or Council who will be the acting President.

In the case of a termination of functions, the primary duty of the acting President is to call an election for a new President as soon as possible.[30]

Absence of President

If the President of a Conference or Council is to be absent for any lengthy period of time, the Deputy President or a Vice-President should step into the role of acting President for the period of the absence of the President.

Office Bearers

On the termination of functions of a President, the then current office bearers continue to hold office until the election of a new President.

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[30] Refer to **Appendix H** for protocols governing Regional, Central or Diocesan, State and Territory Council President Elections.

ARTICLE 19 – REGIONAL, CENTRAL OR DIOCESAN, STATE AND TERRITORY COUNCIL OFFICE BEARERS

Positions as office bearers in the Society, at any level, are always accepted as service to Christ, the Members and our Companions. No honour or status is attached to any office position in the Society.

Appointment of Office Bearers

The Council President, in consultation with Council members, appoints office bearers, including a Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer, from among Society Members to assist in the efficient operation of the Council for a term determined by the President. Other Vice-Presidents with specific portfolio responsibilities may be appointed.

When the President's term of office expires, the appointments of the office bearers expire. However, it is open to the incoming President to appoint new office bearers or reappoint the same Members as office bearers.

The President shall make appointments on merit and ensure that those appointed have the skills and capabilities to perform the role. Office bearers must not have an actual or apparent conflict of interest that would or could appear to compromise their ability to undertake the role.

To safeguard the good reputation of the Council and of the Society, some appointees must not be close family relatives of the President.[31] Where this condition is not met, the matter should be referred to the President of the next higher Council to settle on an alternative appointment.

The maximum number of appointed Members who may vote at a Council must not exceed the number of elected Members less two.

If the number of appointed Members exceeds the number of elected members less two, then the President may designate an appointed role as non-voting. Such designation shall be made at appointment and cannot be altered except by vote of the Council.

The Youth Representative is eligible to be a Vice-President.

The Youth Vice-President shall have priority for being appointed to a voting role.

The Spiritual Advisor is not included in these numbers unless they are drawn

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[31] 'A close family relative' is defined at **Article 9**.

from a lower Council as an elected Member or appointed as an office holder of the Council – see 'Spiritual Advisor' below.

Deputy President

The President may choose to appoint one of the Vice-Presidents as Deputy President to share the work of the President under delegation. The Deputy President is drawn from the Vice-Presidents and has equal status.

The Deputy President of a Regional Council should be of the Catholic faith. The Deputy President of all other councils must be of the Catholic faith.

Vice-President

In the absence of the President, the Deputy President or a Vice-President assumes the President's responsibilities. Vice-Presidents can be appointed with specific portfolio positions to advise the Council and share the work of the President.

The Deputy President of a Regional Council should be of the Catholic faith. The Vice-President of all other Councils must be of the Catholic faith.

Secretary

The Secretary records and is responsible for the secure storage of minutes of all significant reports and decisions of the Council meeting including the correspondence, actions and financial transactions. Minutes should be circulated before the next meeting at least seven (7) days in advance and must be approved at the next meeting.

The Secretary produces Activity Reports as required by a Regional Council or other higher Councils.[32] In jurisdictions where there is a centralised reporting system, Activity Reports may be produced within a central office and forwarded to Councils for approval before being disseminated to higher and lower Councils.

Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for maintaining full and accurate records of all Income and Expenditure and presents a summary written report at each Council meeting and a report showing all income and expenditure annually. The financial records of the Council should be audited independently once a year. The Treasurer produces reports required by the Council or higher Councils. In jurisdictions where there is a centralised financial reporting

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[32] Refer to **Appendix I** – International Statutes, Basic Requirement 7.

system, financial reports may be produced within a central office and forwarded to the Councils for approval before being disseminated to higher and lower Councils.

The Treasurer must not be a close family relative of the President.

Youth Representative

Presidents of Councils, after consultation with young Members, appoint a Youth Representative who is able to reflect the opinions of young people in all matters discussed by the Council. The Youth Representative acts as a conduit of information between the Council and its younger Members. Youth Representatives have a special role in assisting Councils to adapt and innovate whilst also representing the ongoing youth programs and Conferences attached to the Council.

Twinning Officer

The appointment of a Council Twinning Officer drawn from among the Council Members will assist the Council to support meeting the requirement of the International Rule (Part I, 4) for Conferences and Councils to be part of a global Vincentian and Catholic Network of Charity. The Council's engagement in Twinning and the National Council's Overseas Partnerships Program helps people overseas in need in countries with a Vincentian presence.

Spiritual Advisor

The President appoints an appropriate person as the Council Spiritual Advisor.[33]

The Spiritual Advisor to a Council should be a practising Catholic. The Spiritual Advisor should be willing to participate in Festival Masses and to facilitate spiritual activities for Councils.

The term of appointment of the Spiritual Advisor is determined by the Council President. The appointment ceases upon the election of a new President.

The Spiritual Advisor is not appointed to a Council as a member of the Council. The Spiritual Advisor's role is to advise the Council, and they therefore are not involved in decision making (i.e. they do not vote in any Council decisions).

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[33] For a further description of a Spiritual Advisor refer to **Procedure 9**.

Council Spiritual Advisors should make particular efforts to support and coordinate the network of Spiritual Advisors in their jurisdiction.

Term of Appointment of Office Bearers

The term of appointment of office bearers is determined by the Council President. The appointments cease upon election of a new Council President.

Bailly

An outgoing Council President may, at the request of the incoming Council President, act as a Bailly or mentor for the incoming President for a recommended period of up to six (6) months. The Bailly does not have a vote on the Council.

Handover

After the newly elected President has appointed office bearers, the retiring President and Officers are to brief and to promptly hand over to the new Officers all books of minutes, financial records, accounts, and other relevant documents.

Standing Committees and Advisory Committees

Councils may appoint Standing Committees and/or Advisory Committees to assist in carrying out the work of the Society.[34]

ARTICLE 20 – COUNCIL FUNDS

Finances

Councils, where applicable through their incorporated body(ies), and any associated Special Works, must keep accurate and appropriate records of income and expenditure and of business consistent with applicable legislation and professional standards.

A State or Territory Council may establish a central financial management and banking system and may require all lower Councils and Conferences to use that system for all its financial transactions, budgeting, record keeping and reporting.

The Treasurer of each Council monitors expenditure and income of the Council, and any Special Work that operates under the Council and any incorporated bodies operated by the Council. The Treasurer must report any accounting irregularities to the Council and to the next higher Council.

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[34] Refer **Procedure 14** – Council Functions.

Councils receive funds from their constituent Conferences or Councils and may request subscriptions to meet the agreed expenses of the Council. An annual budget for the activities of the Council must be prepared and approved by the Council. Any such subscriptions requested by a Council must be reasonably necessary to support the activities of the Council and relate to items of expenditure that relate to the Council's approved annual budget or approved special projects.[35]

A Council may raise funds and distribute those funds to its constituent Conferences or Councils or may pass the funds to its next higher Council.

Council expenditure is restricted to its activities and assistance to works in which the Society is involved.

Constituent Conferences or Councils in need of funds may seek funds from a Council to which they are attached where that Council has available funds.

Annual Finance and Activity reports

Councils are to report at least annually to their councils and conferences on financial activities and performance of the Council.

Financial records are to be readily available to Members of the Council.

The financial year follows the standard practice in Australia or any industry standard in which a Special Work operates.

Councils must submit a consolidated annual Financial Report and Activity Report to their next higher Council.

In jurisdictions where there is a centralised finance system, Financial Reports and Activity Reports may be produced within a central office and forwarded to Conferences and Councils for approval before being disseminated to higher Councils.

Annual Audit and Special Audit

The financial records of all Councils must be audited every 12 months.

The National Council's, the State or the Territory Council's incorporated body and any Special Works' incorporated body is responsible for appointing an external auditor in accordance with a body's constitution and in accordance with provisions of the *Corporations Act 2001* or other applicable legislation.

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[35] 'Subscriptions' are amounts of funds requested by Councils to allow a Council to operate and which lower Councils contribute.

Where there is a State or Territory company limited by guarantee, the audit of Councils and Conferences within the jurisdiction will follow the requirements of the *Corporations Act 2001* and any relevant State or Territory legislation. Any Special Works operating as a related incorporated body of a State or Territory Council must be included in the annual audit.

A State or Territory Council President may require an audit of any Conference, Special Work or lower Council at any time, in addition to the annual audit.

Delegation

A State or Territory Council may establish requirements for financial authorisation and delegation for lower Councils, Conferences and Special Works.

Any payments by the Society must be in accordance with the delegations of authority.

Excess Funds

A Council with excess funds has an opportunity to share with the broader Vincentian family in service of those in need. Excess funds are those which exceed the expenditure in the previous year allowing for any exceptional items in that year and allowing for any planned expenditure in the coming years. State and Territory Councils may prudently invest funds that are surplus to current needs in order to meet their future budgeted needs. A State or Territory Council may delegate this decision to a lower Council.

Any funds in excess of those budgeted or invested needs should be treated as excess funds. Councils with surplus funds should discuss with their higher Council what should be done with those funds and, in particular, whether those funds may be redirected to another Council or Conference with a current need for funds.

Excess funds may be distributed to Conferences or to Councils that have the greatest need or used to establish or support Special Works for the service of those in need of the Society's support in their own area or sent abroad, with a preference for those countries twinned with the Society in Australia.

'Excess Funds' do not include moneys held by a Council that originated from a bequest, a donation that is tied to a specific necessitous circumstance(s), government funds excluding surplus funds derived from

government contracts or any funds or assets that are tied to legislation. If a bequest exceeds the needs of the circumstances for which it is left, an alternative written agreement may be reached with the family/executor.

Bequests should be for the Society's general purposes if possible.

Collections for People in Need

Collections, contributions and fundraising must be carefully managed. Tax deductible receipts must be issued to those who make financial donations of $2 or more. An account must be given to donors for the use of collected funds.

Conferences and Councils should be aware of those in need in other areas of Australia and the world.

Use of Funds

The funds of the Society shall be used solely for the works of the Society. Funds may not be given as donations, contributions or subscriptions to organisations or charities that are not part of the Society unless the Society is engaged collaboratively with such an organisation and the funds are in connection with the objectives of that collaboration.

A State or Territory Council may approve funds being given to an organisation with whom the Society is collaborating on behalf of people in need. In such instances, the Society must be represented on the management committee or as part of a joint management committee.

Councils are able to send excess funds directly to other Councils.

Administration is necessary for the good order and governance of any organisation and the Society must direct funds for appropriate administrative expenses. Councils must allocate funds for administration in the Council's budget.

Reimbursement of Expenses

Vincentians entrusted to undertake approved missions or tasks for or on behalf of the Society are entitled to the reimbursement of reasonable expenses incurred on presentation of relevant receipts or pertinent information and according to the policies of the Council or its incorporated body. Such expenses shall be modest and appropriate, reflecting the aims and spirit of the Society and the intentions of those who donated or raised the funds.

Dissolution and winding up of State or Territory Councils, Special Works and other entities

To the extent permitted by Australian law, in the event of the dissolution or winding up of a Council, a Special Work or other entity, all debts and liabilities legally incurred by and on behalf of the Council, a Special Work or other entity shall be fully discharged by the next higher Council of the Society where the Council, a Special Work or other entity being wound up does not have the resources to cover its debts and liabilities. Any remaining money or property and all files and documents must be passed promptly to the next higher Council.

ARTICLE 21 – NATIONAL COUNCIL AND NATIONAL COUNCIL FUNCTIONS

National Council

National Council of Australia is instituted by the Council General International and is the Superior Council of the Society in Australia (*The Rule* Part II, 1.6).

National Council is at the service of Members and Conferences and all lower Councils in Australia. It works in consultation with State and Territory Councils.

In exercising its authority, National Council is bound by the Vision, Mission, Aspiration and Key Values expressed in *The Rule* and is guided by the principles of Subsidiarity (Part I, 3.9 & Part III, 1), Democracy (Part I, 3.10) and Servant Leadership (Part I, 3.11).

National Council shall forward an Annual Report to the Council General International.

In accordance with *The Rule*, National Council is constituted from the Presidents of the State and Territory Councils and the office bearers, including the Youth Representative, as specified in *The Rule*, Part III, 25. It is led by a President of National Council who is elected by its members according to *The Rule* and *The Procedures.*

National Council operates in Australia as an incorporated body. The Objects of National Council's incorporated body are defined in its Constitution and align with *The Rule*. National Council's operations are bound by its Constitution which includes how National Council can support National Councils in overseas countries.

National Council is the sole representative before the Council General International and any international jurisdiction.

National Council is accountable to the Council General International for all things done in the name of the Society in Australia.

The Council General International does not accept any responsibility for any event occurring in Australia without its full and proven knowledge (*The Rule*, Part II, 1.7.2). In order to discharge its responsibility, the National Council has general oversight of all that is done in the name of the Society in Australia through the State and Territory Councils.

Decision making by National Council follows *The Rule* and is referenced to Catholic Social Teaching. In making decisions, National Council will take into account legislative obligations applicable to an incorporated body(ies).

National Council strives to reach consensus in its decision making where possible.

Where this is not possible and National Council proposes to make a decision on a financial or a property matter that is binding on a State or a Territory Council without the support of the applicable Council President, then agreement is required from at least 75 percent of the National Council members.

National Council decisions are binding upon all Councils and Conferences in Australia.

Functions of National Council

National Council has domestic and international functions.[36]

Domestic Functions

National Council:

- oversights that Councils are compliant with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards and have appropriate systems in place to safeguard children and adults at risk;[37]
- ensures that the Vincentian Spirituality and Vocation, *The Rule* and the Values of the Society are upheld;[38]
- ensures the spirit of *The Rule* is followed in collaboration with the State and the Territory Councils;

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[36] Refer to **Appendix J** – National Council Governance Framework.

[37] Refer to **Appendix K** – Safeguarding Standards Office.

[38] Refer to *The Rule*, Part I and **Appendix L** – Working Together Guidelines and *The Vincentian Way*, 2025.

- sets the strategic mission and vision for the Society in Australia in consultation with State and Territory Councils;[39]
- approves the boundaries of Councils on the recommendation of the appropriate State or Territory Council;
- approves the Institution of Councils and Aggregation of Conferences in Australia;
- approves the establishment of corporate bodies that operate in the name of the Society;
- supports, encourages and, where requested by a Council, facilitates the works undertaken by Conferences;
- provides assistance to a State or Territory Council, or a Special Work, where requested and provides assistance to those in necessitous circumstances;
- owns and is the steward of the Society's intellectual property and national brand assets and manages their use by lower Councils according to its policies (*The Rule*, Part II, 1.12.1);[40]
- interprets the meaning or the effect of *The Rule*;
- works with the State and Territory Councils to achieve solidarity within the Society in Australia;
- informs Conferences and Councils of the activities of the Society nationally;
- establishes Special Works, where this advances the national interest of the Society in Australia;[41]
- advocates for a fairer Australia at the national level;
- represents the Society to civil and religious authorities on a national basis particularly in the area of social justice advocacy and the freedom to advocate on behalf of people who are disadvantaged;
- upholds the spirit of *The Rule* throughout all Councils and Conferences by means of access, where necessary, to all funds and other information. A State or Territory Council may be authorised to perform this function where appropriate.

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[39] Refer to **Appendix M** – National Council Strategic Plan.

[40] Refer to **Appendix N** – Brand Trade Mark Licence Agreement.

[41] St Vincent de Paul Society Housing Australia Limited and Society of St Vincent de Paul National Redress Ltd.

International Functions

National Council:

- contributes to the general funding of the Council General International;
- supports the National Council President in the role as a member of the Board of the Council General International;
- promotes safeguarding best practice in the National Councils of Twinned countries and through the International Council General;
- supports the efficient and effective operation of national councils in the Oceania Territory in partnership with the Societies in the region, the New Zealand National Council and the Council General International;
- informs Conferences and Councils of the international activities of the Society;
- facilitates the Overseas Partnerships Program including:
  - coordinating the Society's response to overseas emergency relief in Twinned countries and internationally;
  - establishing an Overseas Partnerships Standing Committee;
  - ensuring compliance with Vincentian, National Council and Australian Government governance and legal requirements across jurisdictions in Australia and with the National Councils twinned with Australia and all legislative obligations applicable to a National Council;[42]
  - establishing annual funding agreements with National Councils twinned with Australia[43];
  - coordinating the receipt and provision of communications and funds from Australian Conferences and Councils to the appropriate Overseas Partnerships Program, overseas partner and/or Twinned Conference or National Council on their behalf[44]; and
  - ongoing liaison and reporting to stakeholders related to the above.
- informs the Council General International of the Twinning activities of the Society in Australia through annual reports;
- provides support to the General Council International.

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[42] Refer to **Appendix O** – Overseas Development Fund Committee of Management – Terms of Reference.

[43] Refer to **Appendix P** – Overseas Partnership Program – Protocols for the Transfer of funds to Overseas National Councils.

[44] Refer to **Appendix J** – National Council Constitution, Clause 41.

Delegated Domestic Functions

National Council may delegate some domestic functions to a State or Territory Council or to the State and Territory Councils.

These delegations may include receipting donations on behalf of National Council and using the Society brand in the form of trademarks registered to National Council.

ARTICLE 22 – NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

National Council meets regularly. The frequency, manner and agenda of the meetings are determined by the Council.

Matters considered at a National Council Meeting shall include the matters listed in *The Procedures*.[45]

National Council meetings provide a forum for State or Territory Councils and Special Works established by National Council to report on their activities, discuss matters of common concern and make decisions on action to be taken.

Presidents of National Council Special Works and Chairs of National Council Standing Committees, or their representative, report to Council meetings on their activities, as required.

Policy decisions that relate to matters of national civil public policy are made at National Council meetings.

Decisions are taken by consensus, where possible after prayer, reflection and consultation. The democratic spirit is fundamental within the Society and, when necessary, a vote may be taken consistent with other relevant Articles.

Where a matter under consideration relates to a policy or an operational matter within one or more State or Territory Councils or of a Council's Special Work, there shall be consultation with that Council(s) and/or Special Work as part of the decision making process.[46]

Decisions made by National Council are conveyed to National Council Special Works by the National President and to State and Territory Councils and to their Special Works by the State and Territory Council Presidents.

Following the review of the National Council Meeting Minutes by the

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[45] Refer to **Procedure 22**.

[46] Refer to **Appendix Q** – *Implementation of Collaborative and Consultative Projects Involving National Council and State and Territory Councils (2025).*

National President, the Minutes are distributed to State and Territory Councils and to Society Chief Executive Officers through State and Territory Council Presidents and the Chairs of National Council Special Works. Minutes record the decisions of National Council by resolution. These resolutions are implemented or followed up by the National Council's Secretariate on behalf of National Council.[47]

Members of National Council who cannot attend a National Council meeting should be represented at the meeting by a member of their State or Territory Council. The representative will have the same rights and responsibilities as the Member they represent.

Multiple non-attendance at a National Council meeting by a State or Territory Council President must be for health reasons or unavailability due to family commitments or unforeseen travel.

ARTICLE 23 – PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL COUNCIL

The National Council is guided and served by the President of National Council.[48]

The President of National Council must be of the Catholic faith.

The President of National Council, or their representative, should visit each State and Territory Council periodically, preferably at least once a year. The State or Territory Council shall facilitate such a visit and provide the National President with reasonable opportunity to address the State or Territory Council.

The President of National Council has the authority to suspend a Member, a Conference or a Council in accordance with Article 28.

In the circumstances defined in Article 28, the President of National Council may annul the election of a Conference or Council President or suspend a Member's membership of the Society.

The President of National Council is a member of the Council General International.

ARTICLE 24 – ELECTION OF NATIONAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT

The President of National Council is elected by a majority of votes conducted by a secret ballot of the members of the National Council.

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[47] Refer to **Appendix R** for protocols regarding the approval of minutes of National Council.

[48] Refer to **Appendix S** for description of the responsibilities of the President of National Council.

The President of National Council is elected for a period of up to four (4) years. An outgoing President is eligible for re-election after an absence of two (2) years.[49]

ARTICLE 25 – NATIONAL COUNCIL OFFICE BEARERS

The President of National Council, after consultation with the members of the Council, shall appoint up to six (6) office bearers, including at least a Deputy President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Vice-President – Youth and up to two other Vice-Presidents from among Society Members and in accordance with Part I to assist in the efficient operation of the Council.[50]

The Deputy President and other Vice-Presidents must be of the Catholic faith.

Together, the President of National Council and the appointed members (excluding their Spiritual Advisor) must number at least two (2) less than the National President and the six (6) State and the two (2) Territory Council Presidents (eight [8] elected State and Territory Council Presidents).

The President of National Council shall appoint a Spiritual Advisor who shall not have a vote arising from that role.

The term of appointment of office bearers is determined by the President of National Council. The appointments cease upon election of a new President of National Council, but the appointees are eligible for reappointment.

ARTICLE 26 – NATIONAL COUNCIL FUNDS

National Council must keep accurate and appropriate records of income and expenditure and of its business. The records are to be readily available to members of the Council and through them to the members of State and Territory Councils. The financial records of the Council must be audited annually.

National Council receives funds from State or Territory Councils and may request subscriptions to meet the proper expenses of the National Council. An annual budget for the activities of the National Council must be (i) prepared by National Council; (ii) approved by National Council; and (iii) provided to the State and Territory Councils prior to any request for subscription.

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[49] Refer to **Procedure 24** for protocols for electing a President of National Council.

[50] Refer to **Appendix T** – National Council Position Descriptions.

National Council may raise funds and may spend those funds in support of its works or the works of State or Territory Councils.

National Council may hold funds from the Commonwealth Government. These funds may be held and distributed to State and Territory Councils where the purpose of these funds is to provide assistance to people in need. National Council will work collaboratively with State and Territory Councils to offer assistance through Society Members to people in need across the jurisdictional boundaries of one or more State and/or Territory Councils.

National Council expenditure is restricted to its activities and assistance to works of the Society. Urgent financial needs of State or Territory Councils have a priority in the allocation of funds held by the National Council.

ARTICLE 27 – RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

National Council and each State and Territory Council shall establish a Resolution Committee to address Member Matters including disputes or grievances between or with Members, Conferences or Councils within their jurisdictions, allegations of misconduct of a Member, or a matter relating to the well-being and/or health of a Member.[51]

Conferences and Councils may, after exhausting all efforts at resolving the matter at the Conference or Council level, refer these Member Matters to the State or Territory Council's Resolution Committee for investigation and determination within an approved framework.[52]

A grievance between Society entities within a jurisdiction will be referred to the State or Territory Council's Resolution Committee at first instance.

The State or Territory Council's Resolution Committee will make a recommendation to the State or Territory Council for a decision.

Any grievance between State or Territory Councils, between a Society entity and a National Council entity, between members of the National Council, between a member of National Council or a National Council entity and National Council, and any other Member Matter involving a member of National Council, will be referred to the National Council's Resolution Committee for investigation and determination within an approved framework.

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[51] Refer to **Appendix U** – Identifying and addressing Minor, Medium and Major Complaints.

[52] Refer to **Procedure 27** and **Appendix V**.

The National Council's Resolution Committee will make a recommendation to National Council for decision or it may determine that the matter referred to it is best addressed by the National Tribunal which will then make such a recommendation to National Council.

A State or Territory Council or the National Council may make a recommendation to the National Council President to annul the election of a President or to suspend the membership of a Member in accordance with Article 23.

Nothing in this Article prevents a grievance involving an allegation(s) of criminal conduct to be referred to State, Northern Territory or Federal police.

Where a grievance involves a Society entity that is an incorporated body, the dispute will follow the resolution procedures in the incorporated body's Constitution and any legislative obligations of the Corporations Act 2001 or other relevant legislation. Society entities will not be permitted to derogate from the rights afforded to members and associations as set out in state- or territory-based associations laws.

Where there is a conflict between legislated grievance or disciplinary provisions and the grievance processes under Articles 27 and 28, the legislative provisions will take priority before any grievance process under Articles 27 and 28.

ARTICLE 28 – NATIONAL COUNCIL TRIBUNAL

National Council shall establish a National Council Tribunal to hear and determine matters referred to it.

Member Matters

A Member, including a Member who is a director of a Society entity, who is dissatisfied with the decision of a State or Territory Council in relation to the recommendation of a State or Territory Council's Resolution Committee, may appeal to National Council which, at its discretion, may make a decision to send the matter to the National Tribunal in accordance with the process set out in *The Procedures*.[53]

Where under Article 27 a State or Territory Council is unable to resolve a matter relating to a Member, a Conference or a Council, or a Society entity,

[53] Refer to **Procedure 28**.

the State or Territory Council shall refer the matter to National Council which may, at its discretion, request the National Council Tribunal to deal with the matter with a view to making a recommendation to the National Council.

Suspension

The authority to suspend any Member lies with the International President General who delegates this function to the President of National Council in accordance with Part II, 6.8 of the International Statutes.[54] Only the International President General can cancel a person's membership.

On the suspension of a Society Member, the person suspended immediately ceases to be an active Member or to hold any office within any Conference or Council by reason of that suspension.

Suspension of membership of the Society is independent of directorship of a Society incorporated body. If a person's membership is suspended, then the chair of the incorporated body shall be informed, and any appropriate action taken under the constitution of that incorporated body.

Appeal[55]

A Member, Conference, President or Council whose membership is suspended by the President of National Council may appeal to National Council which may at its discretion refer the matter to the National Tribunal which will make a recommendation to the National Council. National Council will decide whether or not to accept the recommendation. An appeal against the decision of National Council may be made to the International Ombudsman (or the President General International's delegate) after exhausting all levels of appeal in these Articles.

Where a Conference or a Council is suspended, the President of a State or Territory Council or the National Council as applicable may, on the advice of their Council, appoint an administrator to act for the Conference or the Council until the Conference or Council is re-established.

Annulment of the Election of a President

The National Council President is authorised by Article 23 to annul the election of a Conference or Council President.

A President whose election is annulled may appeal to the National Council

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[54] Refer to **Appendix I** – International Statutes.

[55] Refer to **Appendix W** for explanations of 'natural justice' and 'procedural fairness'.

which may at its discretion refer the matter to the National Tribunal which will make a recommendation to the National Council. National Council will decide whether or not to uphold the appeal.

All Members in dispute are entitled to appeal to the International Ombudsman after exhausting all levels of appeal in these Articles.

ARTICLE 29 – SPECIAL WORKS

A Special Work is an activity or project under the Society's control which requires a management structure independent of the Conference structure.

Special Works may be established where a Council identifies a specific need which cannot be satisfied within the normal scope of Conference or Council activity.

Special Works are responsible to the National Council or to the State or Territory Council under which they operate. A Council may delegate the operational activities of a Special Work to an incorporated body that has a direct relationship to the Council.

The establishment of National Council Special Works will only be established with the agreement of State and Territory Councils.

Incorporated Special Works

A State or Territory Council (in each case the 'Incorporating Entity') may, after consultation with:

1. the relevant Conference or lower Council where appropriate; and
2. National Council

establish a separately incorporated body for the purpose of governing and administering a Special Work(s) on behalf of that Incorporating Entity.

The constitution of the newly incorporated body must include the standard clauses for State and Territory Incorporated Entities detailed in *The Appendices* and have prior approval of the National Council. Such consent shall not to be unreasonably withheld or delayed.

The structure of any Society incorporated Special Works will have the incorporating entity as the sole member of the incorporated entity (e.g. company limited by guarantee; incorporated association).

The structure of any Incorporated Special Works that is established as a joint venture with a non-Society entity must have an appropriate representation of the Incorporating Entity on the Board of Directors of the joint venture entity and hold an appropriate position in the joint venture entity relevant to the Society's investment. All parties to the joint venture must enter into an agreement that is acceptable to the Society.

Transferring a Special Work

A State or Territory Council, after consultation with any relevant Conference or Council, may transfer, gift or sell a Special Work of the Society to another organisation or institution if the Council considers that this would be in the best interests of the people being assisted by the Special Work, and it is more appropriate for such other incorporated body to operate the Special Work and, that doing so is in the best interests of the Society.

Disposal of Special Works undertaken by an incorporated body should be governed by that incorporated body's constitution which would ordinarily include provisions restricting disposal without the approval of the members of the body (i.e. a State or a Territory Council).

SECTION 3: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP – COUNCILS AND BOARDS

ARTICLE 30 – SOCIETY EMPLOYEES

Employees may be engaged only by a legal entity of the Society and only then when the proper processes of that legal entity are followed.

Members engaged by Incorporated Body

Members who engage in the work of an incorporated body as a volunteer or as an employee report through the management structure to the Chief Executive Officer of the incorporated body and are subject to the governance requirements of that body.

Members as Employees

Where a Member is an employee of the Society, they must in this role follow the direction of the Chief Executive Officer or their delegate.

Employees, who are Members of the Society, may not hold any office in the Society where they can influence, or be seen to influence, decisions related to their own employment.

No discrimination shall occur against any employee who otherwise undertakes his or her duties as required but declines to become a Member of the Society.

ARTICLE 31 – INCORPORATION/LEGAL STATUS

Incorporation[56], by whatever means, must include a reference to being subject to *The Rule* as part of the constitution or articles of association and, as far as practical, the constitution or articles of association must not be contrary to or inconsistent with any part of *The Rule*.[57]

Where *The Rule* is inconsistent with any applicable legislation, the latter prevails.

No form of incorporation shall be undertaken or sought without the approval of the relevant State or Territory Council and the National Council.

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[56] Society of St Vincent de Paul in Australia Corporate Governance Structure, Frequently Asked Questions, Oct 2025.

[57] Refer to **Appendix X** – Statement of Principles for Society Incorporated Bodies for standard clauses to be included or considered in the constitutions of State and Territory Councils and the constitutions of State and Territory Council bodies corporate.

Incorporation by whatever means must contain provisions for dispute resolution and grievance procedures.

Special Works incorporated entities should have regard to the standard clauses in the Procedures and include them in their constitutions where appropriate to do so.

ARTICLE 32 – ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING

To provide transparency, and for the benefit of the Members, Conferences and Councils are to report on their activities on a regular basis, and at least annually or when required, to the next higher Council.

State and Territory Councils are to produce an Annual Report to inform Members and Society supporters.

Where Councils employ central accounting or other management systems to collect Conference financial accounting and activity data, reports from these sources are to be available to relevant Councils.

ARTICLE 33 – MANAGEMENT OF FUNDS

The work of the Society depends upon the efficient and effective management of its undertakings and those funds received from the public by way of gifts and otherwise. All funds, or property donated or received by way of grants from government or private organisations or derived from the activities and operations of the Society, its Councils and Conferences in each State or Territory jurisdiction of the Society, are the property of the relevant State or Territory Council and are to be retained or disposed of according to the direction of that Council.

Where in any State or Territorial jurisdiction there is an incorporated entity holding or retaining title to the property of the Society, the funds or property referred to above shall be vested in that incorporated entity for purposes of furthering the Mission of the Society under the strategic direction and supervision of the State or Territory Council.

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Scan the QR Code to view online version of *The Rule*, including the Procedures and links to Appendices.

St Vincent de Paul Society

good works