THE RULE

Society of St Vincent de Paul Australia

PART III THE PROCEDURES

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St Vincent de Paul Society
good works

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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.

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PREAMBLE

Unless otherwise stated in the text, these Procedures have been approved by National Council of Australia.

The Articles contained in *The Rule* Part III must be followed.

The Procedures have been prepared by National Council to provide additional detail on the governance arrangements of the Society in relation to specific Articles in Part III.

National Council may amend and add to these Procedures and these shall be published online.

The Procedures must be followed unless there are sound reasons not to do so in a particular circumstance and these reasons should be documented.

Where an inconsistency between an Article and a related Procedure arises, the Article takes precedence.

Any Conference or Council before departing from a Procedure first must seek advice from the President of their next higher Council.

Note: These Procedures were endorsed by National Council on 18 April 2026 via Resolution 42/2026. National Council may add to or amend these Procedures. Please check the National Council website for updates.

SECTION 1: MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS

ARTICLE 2 – THE RULE AND CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND DEMOCRACY

Catholic Social Teaching is the collective name given to the Catholic Church's statements on matters of social structures and social justice which have been published from the late nineteenth century.

The Society of St Vincent de Paul has a close connection to Catholic Social Teaching. Blessed Frédéric Ozanam's writings provided a rich background for the first Papal Encyclical (letter) *Rerum Novarum* in 1891.

'Catholic Social Teaching does not offer an ideology, nor does it offer a political program. While the Church's teaching is essentially theological in nature, it is grounded in the critical social questions of the day and draws on contemporary economics, and social and political sciences. The dreaming is not wishful thinking.'[1]

The Principle of Subsidiarity

The Principle of Subsidiarity is a Catholic Social teaching which 'protects people from abuses by higher-level social authority and calls on these same authorities to help individuals and intermediate groups to fulfil their duties…because every person, family and intermediate group has something original to offer to the community (Compendium, §172, Laudato Si', §15).'

'Subsidiarity is at work in the Conference structure which says that the conference is closest to the person in need and is best placed to make the decision about how to help. The structure of councils, from regional councils up to national council, is also putting this principle into practice. *The Rule* tells us that "Councils exist to serve all the Conferences they coordinate". The principles of participation and empowerment are also put into practice each day as we work with people to help them find solutions to their problems.'[2]

This 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...). In

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[1] Honner. J, *Dreaming as a Single Human Family.* National Council. 2021, p.16
[2] *op. cit.*, p.17

this way, the Society promotes local initiatives within its spirit. This freedom of action of Conferences and Councils faithfully retains the principle that has been kept since the origins of the Society and enables the poor to be assisted spontaneously and effectively.

However, in some matters higher Councils may be better placed to make some decisions where these involve particular matters of expertise or where a higher Council determines that a uniform approach to some aspects of the Society's presence across a number of local communities, Conferences or Councils is for the benefit of Members or of our Companions; e.g. Conferences and retail centres following decisions and directions made by a State or Territory Council during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Conferences can also seek advice and support from higher Councils when they feel underfunded or are restricted in their decision making.

Meaning of Consensus

Refer to Appendix B.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 3 – MEMBERS

Youth in the Society

Young Vincentians reflect the original spirit and charism of the Society by enhancing its mission with their enthusiasm, dynamism and thirst for social justice.

As a general rule, Conference Members should be at least 18 years of age. At times, Conference Members have to deal with some confronting issues to assist our Companions and we should not ask Young Adult Conference Members to undertake work that they are not comfortable with.

Young members should also not be underestimated in their capacity to navigate complex or challenging situations. When they are willing, they should be given meaningful opportunities to do so, supported by appropriate mentorship and guidance.

UNDER REVIEW

School-Based Conferences (Mini Vinnies and Secondary Conferences)

Mini Vinnies has been a successful initiative that engages primary school children in learning about the Society and its Good Works. Secondary school conferences, also known in parts as College or Youth Conferences, are a great extension of student's studies of Catholic Social Teaching and should be encouraged and actively supported by and connected into different parts of the Society including at the local Conference level.

When an intentional relationship is developed between a school and a local Conference or youth team, there is a real opportunity for students, upon leaving school, to continue their involvement in the Society. This may include joining a Young Adult Conference, volunteering in different Special Works of the Society, and/or becoming a Society Member. Ideally Conferences and Members should look to provide pathways that enable school students at various stages of education to engage with the Society. In partnership with schools, Conferences might reach out to engage the parents or guardians of children in Mini Vinnies and in secondary school Conferences; e.g. the place of safeguarding practices when taking images of children are central to the Society's involvement in schools and with students.

UNDER REVIEW

Another area of activity for secondary school students (e.g. children aged between 16 and 18 years of age) might involve volunteering in one of the Society's retail centres or youth programs. Each State or Territory Council has induction, training, safeguarding and supervision procedures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of an individual student.

Young Adult Conferences

Young Adult Conference Members are typically aged between 18 and 35 years.

Young Adult Conferences generally engage with social justice issues that relate to their own interests and studies. Whilst activities vary, typically Young Adult Conferences are involved in leading youth-based activities such as Kids Days Out/Buddies Days, Kids Camps or tutoring activities.

If in the course of these activities a Young Adult Conference Member(s) encounters issues that they have difficulty understanding or managing, the Conference should feel free to call on other Conferences or Members

with particular expertise to mentor these younger Members. To strengthen and sustain membership and formation, Young Adult Conferences should consider having a Bailly member consistently connected to Youth Conferences[3]. A dedicated Bailly can walk alongside young Members, sharing experience, wisdom, and Vincentian insight and helping to build their confidence and leadership capacity.

When Young Adult Conference Members volunteer in any such activities with children they must always be mindful of and align to all requirements of the program as well as any civil legislative requirements and associated obligations (e.g. child safeguarding standards).

Presidents of Councils, after consultation with Young Adult Conference Members, appoint a Youth Representative who is able to reflect and advocate for the opinions of young people in all matters discussed by the Council.

Presidents are encouraged to seek out young Vincentians to serve as office bearers of Conferences and Councils.

UNDER REVIEW

The Society and Ecumenical Relationships

The Society is a lay Catholic organisation.

It is recognised that people from other Christian Churches and ecclesial communities and non-Christian communities may attend Conference meetings and are welcomed; they may elect to become Conference Members.

It is also recognised that other people who volunteer in the various Good Works of the Society may be from other faith traditions and they are equally welcomed.

Members, Volunteers and employees should be comfortable with and support the Society's Mission and the ethical and social principles of the Catholic Church and Catholic Social Teaching.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

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[3] The role of Bailly takes its name from the Society's first conference President, Emmanuel Bailly (age 39), who provided wisdom to the young members who gathered around Frédéric Ozanam (age 19) to found the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

See Procedure for Article 9 for further explanation.

ARTICLE 5 – CONFERENCES

Charity must never look to the past, but always to the future, because the number of its past works is still very small and the present and future miseries that it must alleviate are infinite.

Frédéric Ozanam

Conference Meetings

From the very beginning in 1833, our Society has been much more than a one-dimensional Society. This is how it differs from many other Societies which help those in need. In October 2003, the Society's National Presidents of the World gathered for a General Assembly and decided by an overwhelming majority that the Society should maintain and develop all three of the dimensions of the Society described in Article 5 which Blessed Frédéric Ozanam and the co-founders established under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

In a fuller way than ever before, these dimensions were enshrined in the International Rule: Chapter 1 describes the first dimension – to help the poor; Chapter 2 describes the spiritual dimension which, by bringing us closer to Christ, enables us to grow in every aspect of love; and, Chapter 3 describes the dimension of mutual support, inspiration and friendship.

Throughout the history of the Society, the second and third dimensions have been found to be profoundly beneficial for both those we seek to help and the Members themselves. Through weekly meetings (say 50 times a year) or fortnightly (say 25 times a year), the National Presidents of the world were convinced that this precious heritage – preservation of all three dimensions – could be maintained. If there was only a monthly meeting, which realistically Members would attend less than 12 times a year, the second and third dimensions could not, they considered, be fully preserved. The requirement mentioned in the above Article to spend perhaps five minutes in prayer and reflection at any informal gathering in between a monthly meeting, is important to achieve this very desirable continuity with the spirit of our Society.

Conference meetings should include the following:

1. Start with an Acknowledgement of Country or Prayer of Acknowledgement (**National Council Resolution 108/2025**)[4].

[4] The 2023 *Opening Prayers* includes a Prayer of Acknowledgement. National Council (2023)

2. Opening prayers, formal and spontaneous.
3. A spiritual reading or meditation, on which Members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith and deepening their mutual understanding. Reflection on service is a key aspect of the Conference meeting.
4. General business which may include:
    - review and confirmation of minutes of the previous meeting
    - presentation and confirmation of Treasurer's report
    - correspondence
    - President's report
    - reports on visits to allow Members to consider the action taken or to be taken to further charity and justice – see below.
5. Other matter which may include:
    - regular reports on the Overseas Partnerships Program including Twinning and Assist A Student
    - Safeguarding – the safety and wellbeing of children and adults at risk
    - occupational health and safety
    - a secret collection of funds for the Conference or Council or overseas twinning works
    - training opportunities.
6. Closing prayers

Meetings can be *in situ*, face to face or conducted online. Some Conferences may convene their meetings using a variety of these methods. Face to face meetings are preferred.

Membership and New Forms of Conference

The Society faces the prospect that if it does not change by evolving the way it interacts in the modern world, it risks not continuing to be a member-based organisation.

Relying primarily on parishes as the main source for Conference recruitment is failing along with a declining church attendance. We must look to other avenues for membership and be willing to accept and support new forms of Conference that are not parish based.

That is not to say that parish Conferences are not important to us. They remain the core work of the Society with its home visits or its Conference rooms in Centres of Charity (shops) or its separately located Conference facilities.

Young people in particular may be interested in exploring being a participant/being involved in other forms of Conference and Special Works.

In some places Conferences undertaking visits are locality based; e.g. city workers forming a Conference to undertake visits after work. A Conference may be formed to support a Special Work of the Society such as our shops, homeless shelters, aged care, affordable and social housing etc... where visits and companionship may be just as important as the professional assistance provided by the specialists.

There are already many Volunteers in Night Patrol, soup kitchens or in other Special Works mentioned above. They should be given the opportunity and encouraged to form Conferences around their Special Work or volunteering activity. Becoming a Member enables the Volunteer to share in the spiritual dimension of the Society at a level they are comfortable with and provides personal support and a chance to socialise with others who have similar values and beliefs. They also become part of the governance structure of the International Confederation of the Society of St Vincent de Paul and have a say in the future direction and the way the Society is managed in Australia.

Only by embracing change can we hope to maintain the core values of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Australia as a member-based organisation.

Aggregation, Suspension and Termination of a Conference

For a Conference in Australia, Aggregation is the visible bond of unity by which a Conference is incorporated juridically into the Society; it is granted by Council General, normally on the proposal of the Superior (National) Council.

When a Conference is needing to go into abeyance, *The Rule* states that its records and funds are transferred to the competent higher Council to safeguard the Society's patrimony[5] and works.

Dissolution or suspension of the Aggregation of a Conference is foreseen

[5] In this context 'patrimony' means those possessions that Members have established and that belong to the Society. 'Patrimony' in this context means anything that derives from the Society's or a Council's predecessors (refer to Mirriam-Webster).

in *The Rule* and the Statutes and may only be decided at the level of Council General, usually following procedures initiated by the Superior (National) Council in serious cases. Formal Suspension of the Aggregation of a Conference is different to just placing a Conference on hold or into abeyance and, is an exceptional governance measure that must safeguard the vocation, Members, assets and works, and always respect *The Rule* and the principle of subsidiarity.

PROCEDURE TO AGGREGATE A CONFERENCE

This procedure assumes an application from an existing Conference group already living the Vincentian vocation and now seeks full juridical membership as a Conference aggregated through the National Council of Australia.

1. Discernment and preparation at Conference level

A. The prospective Conference ensures it meets the basic requirements of *The Rule*: minimum of four active Members; regular meetings (ideally weekly, at least fortnightly); life of prayer, service of those in need, and fraternal life; acceptance of *The Rule* and Australian statutes; Catholic lay leadership for the President and other office bearers as described at Procedure 8.

B. The Members need to have, at some stage of the Conference formation, formally adopted the name of the Conference (saint, blessed or Marian title, or parish name), formally elected the President according to *The Rule*, and recorded these in local minutes.

2. Initial request through the Council structure

A. The Conference President writes, on behalf of the Members, to the relevant Regional, Central, Diocesan Council or State/Territory Council expressing the Conference's desire for Aggregation and affirming adherence to *The Rule* and to the National Council of Australia's statutes and policies.

B. The letter includes the completion of the aggregation form which seeks information on: Conference name and location, parish or work to which it is attached, date of establishment, brief description of works, membership details, meeting pattern, and confirmation that formation in *The Rule* and Vincentian spirituality has commenced.

3. Discernment and endorsement by Intermediate Council

A. The Regional, Central, Diocesan Council or State/Territory Council reviews whether the Conference is functioning in a genuinely Vincentian way, including spiritual life, collegial leadership, relationship with the parish, financial transparency, and compliance with civil law and Society policies.

B. If satisfied, the Council passes a resolution supporting Aggregation, passes to the State or Territory Membership Team for documenting, and then is formally submitted by the State or Territory President (or their delegate) to National Council of Australia (as Superior Council) with its recommendation.

4. National Council of Australia process

A. National Council (or its delegated board/secretariate) verifies that the application aligns with Part I and Part III of *The Rule* and the Australian statutes, including any national criteria for new Conferences (e.g. governance, safeguarding, formation, insurance, financial systems).

B. The National President, as Superior Council President, signs the Aggregation proposal and submits it electronically through the Council General's online Aggregation Portal or other process set out in the international Aggregation Guide.

5. Decision by Council General International

A. The Permanent Section of Council General examines the application with reference to the international criteria (age of the Conference, minimum membership, meeting frequency, compliance with *The Rule*) and pronounces Aggregation, normally twice a year (15 June and 15 December).

6. Role of National Council

Once Council General grants Aggregation, the National Council of Australia communicates the decree and provides an electronic copy of the Aggregation certificate to the Conference and State or Territory Council, records and uploads a copy into the national database and encourages a suitably prayerful celebration at Conference and parish level.

7. Ongoing obligations of an aggregated Conference

A. The Conference remains faithful to *The Rule*, national statutes and

directions of its Councils, maintains good standing through regular meetings, formation, reports to the higher Council and, participates in the broader life of the Society.

B. Any significant change (e.g. relocation, change of name, merger with another Conference) is discerned with the higher Council and, where necessary, notified to National Council for advice or confirmation, respecting the unity of Aggregation.

PROCEDURE TO SUSPEND (ABEYANCE) A CONFERENCE

Suspension or placing a Conference 'into abeyance' is a serious step used when a Conference cannot currently live its vocation or operate in good order, but where there is hope of renewal.

1. Grounds for considering abeyance

A. Persistent inability to meet (e.g. very few Members, advanced age, loss of parish base), serious internal conflict or breakdown of fraternal life not resolved by normal accompaniment, or repeated failure to comply with *The Rule*, safeguarding requirements or governance requirements despite support from the higher Council.

B. In all cases, the principle of subsidiarity applies: the immediate higher Council first offers pastoral accompaniment, mediation, and formation to help the Conference recover its full Vincentian life.

2. Local discernment and consultation

A. The Conference President, after prayer and discussion with Members, consults the Regional/Diocesan Council President to explore options such as recruitment, merging with a neighbouring Conference, or changing meeting patterns before considering abeyance.

B. If abeyance appears necessary, the Conference (if still able) votes on a recommendation to the higher Council, recorded in minutes; where the Conference is no longer functional, the higher Council may initiate the process in the best interests of the Members and the people served.

3. Decision and formal act by the higher Council

A. The competent higher Council (usually Regional/Diocesan or State Council, under delegation from the National Council of Australia)

considers the situation, documents reasons, and passes a resolution to suspend the operation of the Conference (place it into abeyance) while the Aggregation remains formally in place unless and until Council General decides otherwise.

B. The decision is communicated in writing to the Conference Members, parish priest (where applicable) and National Council, clearly stating that the Conference is not currently operating, identifying any interim arrangements for works, and outlining possible paths to reactivation.

4. Wind up arrangements during abeyance

A. All Conference records (minutes, membership lists, case records, spiritual reflections where appropriate) and funds are transferred to the designated higher Council, in line with *The Rule,* that directs records and funds to the central or higher Council when a Conference is suspended or in abeyance.

B. The higher Council assumes responsibility for any continuing works (e.g. home visits, assistance centre, special works) and may temporarily attach these works to another Conference or run them directly as a Council work to preserve the Society's presence in the locality.

5. Review and possible reactivation

A. The higher Council undertakes a periodic review (e.g. every 12–24 months) to discern whether conditions now exist to re-establish the Conference with new membership and stronger support.

B. If reactivation is possible, the higher Council accompanies the formation of the renewed Conference; depending on time elapsed and membership guidance, it may seek advice from National Council on whether a fresh Aggregation or notification to Council General is appropriate.

PROCEDURE TO TERMINATE A CONFERENCE

Formal termination (dissolution) is distinct from abeyance of a Conference. Termination is normally used when there is no realistic prospect of renewal or where serious and lasting reasons require definitive closure in accordance with *The Rule* and International Statutes.

1. Grounds for dissolution

A. Long term lack of Members or long term lack of capacity that makes reactivation unrealistic, even after sustained efforts by the higher Council; or because of lasting structural changes (e.g. parish closures, reorganisation of works) that permanently remove the Conference's base.

B. Very serious and persistent breaches of *The Rule*, civil law, safeguarding requirements or financial integrity which, after due process and support, make continuation incompatible with the Society's mission and good name; such cases require close coordination with National Council and, where necessary, canonical and legal advice.

2. Discernment, consultation and decision path

A. The higher Council, in dialogue with the National Council of Australia, conducts a careful discernment including listening to Members, the parish, and those served, and documents the pastoral, canonical and civil considerations. It is important that the State or Territory President advises National Council as soon as possible if this course of action is likely.

B. Where dissolution is judged necessary, National Council follows the procedure in *The Rule* for commencement of dissolution or suspension: it prepares a dossier and, where the Aggregation is to be cancelled, initiates the appropriate procedure with Council General as foreseen in the International Statutes.

3. Formal act and communication

A. Once Council General or the competent authority has taken a decision to cancel or suspend Aggregation definitively (if required by the circumstances), the National Council of Australia and the higher Council formally dissolve the Conference within the national structure, recording the date and reasons.

B. Members, the parish priest, and relevant stakeholders are informed sensitively, emphasising gratitude for the Conference's history, the continuity of the Society's mission through other Conferences or works, and any support available for former Members' ongoing Vincentian vocation.

4. Wind up and transfer to higher Council

A. All assets, funds and records of the Conference are transferred to the designated higher Council (Regional/Diocesan, State, or National) in accordance with *The Rule*, national statutes, charity law, and any trust or gift conditions.

B. The higher Council determines the future of local works (continuation, transfer to another Conference, or orderly closure) ensuring the Companions we serve are not abandoned and that the Society's patrimony is preserved in line with the Society's mission.

5. Recording and remembering the Conference

A. The National Council maintains a national register of Conferences including dates of Aggregation and, where applicable, dissolution, so that the history of the Society in Australia remains visible and honoured.

B. A simple liturgical or community act of thanksgiving is encouraged at parish or Council level to honour the Conference's service and commend its Members and the people it served to the care of Christ and Saint Vincent de Paul.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 8 – CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

Electing a President is one of the most important responsibilities of a Conference and all Members have a clear responsibility to ensure that a suitable person is found and elected.

The outgoing Conference President should notify in a timely manner the end date of his or her term of office and invite nominations from eligible Members.

A period of at least four (4) weeks or 28 days should elapse between the nomination of candidates and the ballot to elect a Conference President. All Conference Members should be informed, and all Members asked to pray, both personally and in meetings, from the beginning of the nomination process.

A candidate needs a clear majority of votes to be elected as a President. Votes should be counted by two persons other than nominees.

UNDER REVIEW

In the event of a tied election, after a short period of prayer and reflection, a further vote should be conducted at that time between the two candidates with the most votes in the first election.

If a stalemate still arises then the President of the Council to which the Conference is attached should appoint a President from those nominees who have the equal number of votes.

Where there is only one candidate a vote must still be taken to confirm that the candidate is elected by a majority of electors.

If the only candidate(s) is unsuitable then no appointment should be made, and a new election called.

Calling a fresh election in these circumstances might bring forward someone suitable who has not put themselves forward for the first ballot. If there is no-one suitable then perhaps the Conference should be put on hold.[6]

UNDER REVIEW

Requirement for President, Vice-President and Spiritual Advisor to be Catholic

References:

ARTICLE 8 – CONFERENCE PRESIDENT

ARTICLE 9 – CONFERENCE OFFICE BEARERS

ARTICLE 11 – SPIRITUAL ADVISOR

ARTICLE 16 – COUNCIL PRESIDENT

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

ARTICLE 23 – PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL COUNCIL

ARTICLE 25 – NATIONAL COUNCIL OFFICE BEARERS

[6] Refer to **Appendix H** for reference.

Part I of *The Rule*, Article 6.5 provides '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…. 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.'

The comments in the Statutes elaborate on 6.5 to say 'In addition to the Spiritual Advisor, the President has an obligation to promote Vincentian spirituality and the Catholic ethos (see 3.11). This also applies to the Vice-President who, when necessary, fulfils all the duties of the President. Such an obligation should not be imposed on someone who cannot in conscience discharge it. The intention of the Society's 1999 General Assembly was to allow at least Catholic, Orthodox and High Anglican members to hold these offices.'

UNDER REVIEW

A lot of change has occurred in the Western World's faith bases since 1999 and inter-faith relations are much more imbedded in the main religions. The emphasis of suitability to hold certain leadership roles in the Society is now more focused on an individual's personal attributes, their faith commitment and their commitment to the Spirit and Ethos of the Society rather than just relying on the test of whether they are a baptised Catholic.

Congress 23+ and the three rounds of consultation on revising Part III have clearly indicated that Members generally consider a Member's suitability to be considered for the role of President to be based on their commitment to the Spirit and Ethos of the Society.

In addition, it has become apparent that in some small Conferences and emerging new forms of conference the leader may not be a baptised Catholic but nevertheless upholds the Spirit and Ethos of the Society. An example that occurs with some frequency is a person who is baptised Anglican, married to a Catholic, bringing their children up in the Catholic faith and supporting the children by regularly attending mass with them and encouraging them to partake of the Sacraments.

If the Conference is satisfied, having taken these matters into account, that that person is suitable then, subject to prior consultation with the Diocesan Bishop, they may be elected as Conference President. This is a requirement of Part I Article 6.5. The Regional President should

consult with the Bishop on behalf of the Conference. The same goes for a candidate for Conference Vice-President.

A word of caution however, is that such an outcome should be an exception rather than the rule. It is always preferable to have a Catholic as Conference President and Vice-President noting that Council Presidents must be Catholic and if too many Conference Presidents are non-Catholic it will narrow the pool of potential candidates for Regional Council President and above.

Part III Article 16 provides 'The elected President of a Regional Council must be of the Catholic faith[18]. In exceptional circumstances and where required after consultation with the Diocesan Bishop, 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.'

UNDER REVIEW

There can be no exceptions to these requirements outlined in Article 16.

The Spiritual Advisor must be of the Catholic faith – no exceptions. They should also be a practising Catholic and have a sound knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Vincentian spirituality.

Notes: Footnote #18 in Part III relates to a number of Articles identified in this Procedure for Article 8.

Footnote #27 refers to *The Rule*, Part I, 6.5.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 9 – CONFERENCE OFFICE BEARERS[7]

In the Society every Member is equally valued. The assumption of office implies no dignity or honour. It simply means that there are some who, for proper management of the Society, are prepared to accept additional responsibilities. Every Member ought to in turn be willing to accept an office as part of their Vincentian commitment and should not withdraw from it in a false sense of humility. On the other hand, every assistance should be afforded to office bearers.

All Members of a Conference should consider taking on leadership roles within the conference to gain leadership experience and to share

[7] Refer **Appendix F** for Conference Office Holder position descriptions.

their skills with the Conference for the benefit of the Conference, our Companions and for the Society. The Conference should support and encourage any Member considering taking a leadership role. The next higher Council should offer to provide a mentor or buddy for anyone new to a leadership role in a Conference or Council.

When considering taking on an office bearer role, especially that of President, a Member should undertake due diligence to be confident that they have the necessary skills and the available time to fulfil the role. It is preferable that office bearer roles are not delegated to other Members during a person's term of holding the office.

Each Conference should have at least a Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer to assist the President in the management of the Conference.

Spiritual Advisor to Conference

In keeping with the tradition since the beginning of the Society, a Spiritual Advisor should be appointed to help foster the Members' spiritual life within the Conference under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

As per Article 5, 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 in consultation with Members, should appoint an appropriate person/s as the Conference Spiritual Advisor. The Spiritual Advisor can be an external Member of the Conference, 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 local priests, deacons or religious members may be invited to be the Spiritual Advisor or to propose an appropriate person.

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 the harmony between Members which enables 'Christ in their midst' to live and love through the Conference.

The Spiritual Advisor models and encourages Members to lead the prayers and spiritual reading or meditation. In conjunction with the Conference

Presidents, they provide guidance on matters of faith, morals and Catholic Social Teaching.

It is imperative that those who act in the role of Spiritual Advisor understand their duty not to just provide spiritual and pastoral formation for Conference meetings, but to play a special role in restoring harmony when conflict arises between Members.

Where a decision-making process gives rise to disharmony among the Members of the Conference, a Member appointed from the Conference to be the Spiritual Advisor ought to abstain from voting on non-unanimous decisions in order to avoid any potential conflict that might arise when seeking to achieve harmony within the Conference Members.

In some Conferences, Members may not be confident taking on the role of Spiritual Advisor. Whilst it is important for a Conference to have a Spiritual Advisor, until a Spiritual Advisor is appointed, the Conference Members may choose to lead the Conference in spiritual reflection and by doing so, in rotation, Conference Members may become more comfortable with and willing to accept the role of Spiritual Advisor. This should not be a barrier to forming or maintaining a Conference.

If a Parish Priest who has declined to be the usual Spiritual Advisor, does occasionally attend a Conference meeting, he will always be invited by the President to contribute to the sharing during the Spiritual Reading or Reflection.

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

A Spiritual Advisor shall not have a vote arising from that role. In the case of a Spiritual Advisor being a member of a lower Council, the Spiritual Advisor shall have a voting right by virtue of being elected to that lower Council.

Bailly

Presidents of Conferences, and higher Councils in particular, acquire experience and knowledge during their term and it is desirable that their knowledge and experience be made available to the incoming President to support and assist them to grow confidence in the role. It is recommended that the incoming President of a Conference or a Council consider appointing the outgoing President as the Bailly to the Conference or the Council for the purpose of handing over knowledge and mentoring the new President and

supporting the Conference or the Council.

The suggested length of time for this role is determined by the President but would be no longer than six (6) months. The Bailly role is a non-voting role.

The Bailly is an experienced Vincentian (e.g. a former Conference President) providing guidance in a non-voting capacity on matters discussed by the Conference.

Youth in the Society may also engage a Bailly who provides Young Adult Conference Members with mentoring and support, particularly for newly appointed Youth Representatives or newly established Youth Conferences where an experienced Member guides the activities and Good Works conducted by Youth Conferences.

The role takes its name from the Society's first conference President, Emmanuel Bailly (age 39), who provided wisdom to the young Members who gathered around Frédéric Ozanam (age 19) to found the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 10 – CONFERENCE FUNDS

The procedures described below recognise that each State and Territory Council will have different approaches to how Conference funds may be raised, receipted and expended including funds provided to a Conference from the next higher Council.

A Conference is normally funded through the Members' secret collection, the church collection box (Poor Box), fundraising and donations and is supplemented, where necessary, from its next higher Council. Raising funds is a part of Conference work and should not be confined to situations where the Conference needs to exceed its capacity to provide funds.

Conference Members need to be diligent to mitigate the risk that some fundraising activities may not be appropriate; e.g. the name of the Society cannot be used to raise funds for another charity or organisation.

Consultation with the Parish Priest is essential in matters of fundraising within the parish. Members make a commitment to perform works of

charity within the framework of the Society. They fulfil their commitment financially according to their means.

All fundraising undertaken by a Conference must comply with Commonwealth Government legislation and regulations (e.g. the Australian Taxation Office for tax deductible donations issued in the name of the Society of St Vincent de Paul) and State or Territory Government legislation and regulation where these exist.

Any funds received by the Conference are deposited into the State or the Territory Council's collective banking system using the required banking procedure as prescribed by the State or Territory Council's finance section. Where there is a collective banking system, funds are then redistributed back to Conferences for expenditure on Good Works.

Where there is central accounting system, the Conference may be allocated a budget and would generally be expected to operate within or close to that budget unless there are extraordinary demands on the Conference. In the latter instance the Conference should discuss any projected shortfall in Conference funds with their next higher Council which may reallocate funds from other Conferences or seek additional funds from its next higher Council. Funding for Conferences and Councils should be managed by Conferences and by Councils with assistance from the State or Territory Council.

Conferences generally may not generate enough funds to carry out their works of charity. Through the centralised budget arrangements (collective banking), based on historical use of funds, each Conference is allocated its funds from the central collection of funds (this include the types mentioned above) but mainly through profits from the Society's retail operations. Conferences also share in the funds donated to the Society from general bequests, special fundraising, such as the CEO Sleepout™, general donations from corporations etc... Monies left to local Conferences by benefactors are only to be used for the purpose(s) expressed in the terms outlined by the benefactor or in the benefactor's Will.

Funds that are sourced from specific fundraising campaigns (e.g. the theme of the annual CEO Sleepout campaign) must only ever be expended for the purposes for which donors have donated the funds.

Funds and donations to the Society's Overseas Partnership Program, administered and managed by National Council, have specific

requirements to follow in order to meet the compliance regimes of the Australian Taxation Office. Only National Council can transfer moneys to National Councils in overseas countries for twinning purposes, Assist A Student or other approved development initiatives.[8]

Conferences should not hold funds surplus to their requirements. There is always a need for funds elsewhere and they should be made available to the next higher Council.

The Society is not a funding organisation, and *The Rule* does not permit Conferences or Councils to donate funds to other charitable bodies unless members of that charitable body are directly involved as Vincentians in that activity.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 12 – FESTIVAL MASS AND MEETINGS

To encourage and maintain a unity of both spirit and action among the Members, Conferences and Councils celebrate liturgical ceremonies, such as Vincentian festival masses and gatherings, throughout the year.

It has been customary to hold festival masses and meetings for Members, Associate Members and Volunteers on or about the feast of Bl Frédéric Ozanam on 9 September, of St Vincent de Paul on 27 September and the feast of the Annunciation on 25 March.

However, it is acknowledged that in some jurisdictions it is more desirable to ensure that festival masses and meetings are dispersed throughout the year to ensure appropriate levels of support. It is anticipated that each Conference and Council would gather for this purpose at least once per calendar year.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

UNDER REVIEW

[8] Refer to Procedure under Part III Article 21 for information about the Overseas Partnership Program and to **Appendix P** for the protocols relating to the receipting and the transfer of funds.

SECTION 2: COUNCILS

ARTICLE 14 – COUNCIL FUNCTIONS

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

The Council determines the mandate, terms and membership of the Standing Committee or the Advisory Committee. Chairs of Standing Committees are drawn from the Council to which the Standing Committee is attached and, generally, where this is possible, the majority of members of a Standing Committee must be Members. Generally, Chairs of Advisory Committees should be drawn from a Council.

Members of a Standing Committee or an Advisory Committee may be drawn from outside the Society when a Council determines that particular expertise or skills are required.

Each Standing Committee and each Advisory Committee shall be provided with a Terms of Reference to govern its purpose and to outline responsibilities. Standing Committees and Advisory Committees will report to the State or Territory Council at least four times per year.

The term of appointment of the members of a Standing Committee or an Advisory Committee is determined by the Council.

Youth Committees shall have the same relationship with the Council under which they operate as the rest of the other committees linked to the same Council.

Incorporated Bodies

It is good governance practice for non-incorporated and incorporated bodies to appoint Standing Committees for the purpose of supervising some of the governance responsibilities of the body; e.g. in the areas of audit, risk and finance, cyber security and data management, or strategic planning, etc…Another reason to have a Standing Committee would be to provide advice on a specific new project; for example, a property development.

The constitutions of incorporated bodies may specify the entity's governance arrangements which require the establishment and

maintenance of a particular Standing Committee(s) that reports to the body's board of directors; e.g. Safeguarding; Governance; Audit; and Risk Standing Committees. The Chair of the board of directors may determine, with fellow directors, that a particular Standing Committee would assist the work of the board.

In these instances, the incorporated body should provide Terms of Reference that outline the specific areas of responsibility the Standing Committee has been established to assist in the management of the operations of the body, including areas of compliance.

The Chair of an incorporated body's board of directors may determine, with fellow directors, that a particular area of interest or operations of the body could be assisted by establishing an Advisory Committee for the duration of a particular initiative of interest to the board of directors.

In these instances, the incorporated body should provide Terms of Reference that outline the specific areas of responsibility the Advisory Committee has been established to assist the board of directors to implement.

Standing Committees or an Advisory Committee offer an incorporated body mechanism to appoint external persons with specific expertise that is not available from the body's board of directors. Chairs of Standing Committees established by an incorporated body are drawn from the board to which the Standing Committee is attached and the majority of members of a Standing Committee must be directors of the board. Generally, Chairs of Advisory Committees should be drawn from the board of directors.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 15 – COUNCIL MEETINGS

Format for Council Meeting Agenda

State and Territory Councils should consider adopting a regular format for their Council Meeting Agenda. An example of matters to be included on an agenda include, but are not limited to:

1. Start with an Acknowledgement of Country or Prayer of Acknowledgement **(National Council Resolution 108/2025)**

2. Opening prayers, formal and spontaneous.
3. A spiritual reading or meditation, on which Members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith and deepening their mutual understanding. Reflection on service is a key aspect of the Council meeting.
4. Catholic Social Teaching.
5. General business which may include but is not limited to:
    - review and confirmation of minutes of the previous meeting
    - confirmation of any Circular Motions passed since the last Council Meeting
    - the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people presentation
    - confirmation of Treasurer's report
    - consideration of decisions or recommendations from Standing Committees including any matters relating to the Council's Statement of Risk Appetite
    - correspondence
    - reports from Special Works
    - regular reports on the Overseas Partnerships Program including Twinning and Assist A Student
    - social justice and advocacy activities/reports
    - summary reports from higher Councils
    - occupational health and safety matters.
6. Closing prayers.

Lower Councils may not have the need to include all of the general business matters described above.

Formal meetings of the Council must have prayer and spiritual reflection and include the President, Spiritual Advisor and provision for a youth perspective where applicable.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 16 – COUNCIL PRESIDENTS

A Council President is responsible for the following activities:

- convening meetings
- appointing office holders
- encouraging input from all Members
- keeping a clear focus on the mission and spirituality of the Society
- ensuring that funds and other resources are used with integrity and consistently with the Society's principles
- ensuring that all Council members are fully engaged in decisions
- regularly visiting subsidiary Councils or Conferences
- ensuring the observance of Festival Meetings and other occasions
- facilitating and promoting formation and training within the scope of the Council
- regularly addressing matters of social justice and advocacy and appropriately advocating to civil authorities and other organisations within the scope of the Council
- maintaining awareness and engagement with Twinning and other activities of the Society that engage with Vincentians and our Companions around the world
- promoting information about the Society and its works at the national and international level and ensuring that Councils, Conferences and Members within the scope of the Council are aware of and have access to information about the wider Society
- identifying and mentoring future leaders
- ensuring that whenever possible, the work of the Council uses the talents and skills of Members to the greatest extent.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

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

Electing a President is one of the gravest responsibilities of a Council and all Council members have a clear responsibility to ensure that a suitable person is found and elected.

Notice of Election

The President shall appoint two (2) persons to act as Returning Officers for the election of a new President.

The Returning Officers or the Council Secretary must notify the Members of the Society within the geographical boundary of the Council that an election of a President is to occur.

There must be at least seven (7) weeks or 49 days' notice given to Members of the date of the election and this notice must: call for nominations for the position of President; and provide the date by which nominations for the position of President are to be received as outlined below.[9]

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 20 – COUNCIL FUNDS

Benefactors

Benefactors help the Society by making financial or material donations. Benefactors may be provided regularly with information on 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 this must be respected.

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.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

[9] Refer to **Appendix H** for the protocols and details of how elections for Regional, Central or Diocesan, State and Territory Council Presidents are convened.

ARTICLE 21 – NATIONAL COUNCIL FUNCTIONS

Overseas Partnerships Program

The International Rule (Part I, Section 4) requires Vincentians to help others in need overseas. For the Society in Australia, these good works are facilitated by the National Council's Overseas Partnerships Program including the following:

- **Twinning** is the direct link between two Conferences or Councils 'consisting of sharing prayer, a profound friendship and material resources'. This requires the Conference or Council engaged in twinning to communicate with their twin and provide funding including periodic twinning support, optional Christmas and Easter grants and optional financial support for projects initiated by overseas conferences through their National Councils.
- **Projects** provide a means for Conferences or Councils in our overseas partners to identify projects that support community development and request funding from the Society in Australia via their Superior Councils. Special Vincentian Support Projects provide a means for Superior Councils of our overseas partners to request support for one-off activities to strengthen administration.
- **Assist A Student** provides students in need with one-off support to meet their educational needs in a given year. Recipients are selected by the participating overseas partner countries who administer and report on its implementation.
- **Emergency Relief** can be requested by our overseas partners at times of natural or humanitarian disaster.
- **Supporting the establishment and formation of overseas national councils in twinned countries.**

As the Superior Council in Australia, the National Council of Australia is the entity responsible for the Overseas Partnerships Program and ensuring it is operated in line with both Vincentian and Australian Government governance arrangements. National Council has established an Overseas Fund Management Committee to oversee the transfers of moneys from Australia to overseas twinned National Councils .

While the National Council has overarching responsibility for the Overseas Partnerships Program, it is implemented through a Society-wide

partnership across jurisdictions in Australia:

- National Council establishes and maintains an Overseas Partnerships Program National Network.
- The National Overseas Partnerships Advisory Committee is established by the National Council and is responsible to it and reports regularly. The Secretariate provides facilitation, administration and financial support for the Overseas Partnerships Program.
- State/Territory Councils establish Overseas Partnerships Committees and Administration and Finance teams to support the implementation of the Overseas Partnerships Program at Council and Conference level in their jurisdiction.
- A State or Territory Council may seek to become part of another State or Territory Council's Overseas Partnership Committee initiative and, in these instances, both jurisdictions must inform National Council of such arrangements.
- Conferences, Central and Regional Councils may choose to appoint Twinning Officers to support their engagement in the Overseas Partnerships Program.

These national structures are supported internationally and overseas through the following:

- the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) Oceania program that involves national councils in Oceania in partnership with the Societies in the region, the New Zealand National Council and the Council General International.
- Council General International has International Commissions for Twinning and International Aid and Development. It also has International and Zone Twinning Officers and Territorial Vice-Presidents. They coordinate the allocation of countries that the national donor Societies support.
- The Superior Councils of our overseas partners are responsible for engagement in, implementation of, and reporting on Overseas Partnerships Program initiatives for their own country.
- The Councils and Conferences in our overseas partner countries who are engaged in twinning must be: aggregated; not twinned already; and willing to communicate with their Australian twin.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 22 – NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

National Council meetings should include the following:

1. Start with an Acknowledgement of Country.
2. Opening prayers, formal and spontaneous.
3. A spiritual reading or meditation, on which Members are always invited to comment as a means of sharing their faith and deepening their mutual understanding. Reflection on service is a key aspect of the Council meeting.
4. Catholic Social Teaching.
5. Standing Items
   - reports from National Council Standing Committees
   - reports from National Council Special Works
   - reports from National Councils' Overseas Partnerships Program
   - Safeguarding – the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable people.
6. General business which may include but is not limited to:
   - review and confirmation of minutes of the previous meeting
   - re-confirmation of any circular motions passed since the previous meeting
   - presentation and confirmation of Treasurer's report
   - summary reports from State and Territory Councils
   - reports on National Council initiatives involving State and Territory Councils
   - review of the implementation of National Council's Strategic Plan
   - review of the National Council Risk Management Register
   - correspondence
   - occupational health and safety matters
   - other relevant matters.
7. Closing prayers.[10]

[10] Refer **Appendix R** for National Council Agenda format.

National Council has adopted a protocol about the preparation of Minutes of National Council Meetings.[11]

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 24 – ELECTION OF NATIONAL COUNCIL PRESIDENT

Electing a President is one of the gravest responsibilities of a Council and all Council members have a clear responsibility to ensure that a suitable person is found and elected.

Notice of election

The National Council President shall appoint two (2) persons to act as Returning Officers for the election of a new President.

The Returning Officers or the Council Secretary must notify the Members of the Society within the geographical boundary of the Council that an election of a President is to occur.

There must be at least seven (7) weeks or 49 days' notice of the date of the election to the Members and this notice must:

(i) call for nominations for the position of President; and

(ii) provide the date by which nominations for the position of President are to be received.[12]

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 27 – RESOLUTION COMMITTEE

Article 27 requires each State and Territory Council to have a Resolution Committee.

It may be too late to start setting up a Resolution Committee once a disagreement or dispute arises.

It is a requirement that each State and Territory Council set up a Resolution Committee as a Standing Committee of the Council with an approved terms of reference. Such terms of reference should be consistent with the principles of Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness, and in line with the protocols outlined in Article 27.

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[11] Refer **Appendix R** for protocol on the preparation of National Council Minutes.

[12] Refer to **Appendix T** for the protocols and details of how elections for the National Council President are convened.

Members of a Resolution Committee should have an appropriate level of training in conflict resolution.

All reasonable attempts should be made to resolve a disagreement or dispute between Members at the local level. Escalating a dispute to a higher-level Council should only occur when every reasonable attempt to resolve it locally has been undertaken.

Any dispute involving a Member as a company director of a Society-related company should be dealt with in accordance with the company's constitution.

Example of steps in a dispute resolution process:

- The adjudication of a dispute must ensure that natural justice is followed.
- The party that is the subject of a dispute may appoint any person to act on their behalf during the dispute resolution procedure.
- The party responsible for applying a dispute resolution procedure must ensure that:
  - (i) each party to the dispute has been given an opportunity to be heard on the matter that is the subject of the dispute; and
  - (ii) an unbiased decision-maker determines the outcome of the dispute; and
  - (iii) the decision-maker notifies each party to the dispute, in writing, about the decision and gives the reasons for the decision; and
  - (iv) to the extent that doing so is compatible with paragraphs (i) to (iii), the dispute resolution procedure is completed as soon as is reasonably practicable; and
  - (v) there is an appeal process available to the party if there is an adverse finding made against that party.

Appendix V provides an example of a framework that State and Territory Councils can take to establishing and relying on a Resolution Committee.

National Council Tribunal

National Council shall establish a National Council Tribunal as a Standing Committee of National Council. The Chair of the National Tribunal shall be a member of National Council. The National President shall appoint

members of the National Tribunal upon the recommendation of the Chair of the National Council Tribunal. Members of the National Council Tribunal, other than the Chair, shall be drawn from outside National Council and shall include Members with a diversity of skills and experiences.

The purpose of the National Council Tribunal and the operational protocols to guide the National Council Tribunal are outlined in the procedure for Article 28.

Where a Council does not have the capacity to establish its own Resolution Committee, it may, with the agreement of both Councils, access the services of the Resolution Committee of another jurisdiction. This arrangement must still comply with the principles of Natural Justice, Procedural Fairness, and the protocols outlined in Article 27.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 28 – NATIONAL COUNCIL TRIBUNAL : ADDRESSING DISPUTES INVOLVING A MEMBER, CONFERENCE OR COUNCIL AND THE SUSPENSION OF A MEMBER, CONFERENCE OR COUNCIL

Outlined below are processes to be followed when handling a dispute involving a Member, when disciplining a Member, when seeking to suspend the membership of a Member or when seeking to annul the election of a President.

This Article addresses instances that are separate from those where a Member, in the role of a Volunteer or an employee, may be stood down as a Volunteer or employee by the Chief Executive Officer of the corporate body that engages them.

A Process for handling a dispute involving a Member and/or Council

1. A dispute involving a Member of the Society arises within the National Council or in a State or Territory and concerns Members, Conferences or Councils only within that State or Territory.
2. Either party to the dispute may refer the matter to the National Council's or to the State or Territory's Resolution Committee via the State or Territory Council Secretary.

3. The Resolution Committee will attempt to mediate between the parties and may make a recommendation to the Council.
4. The State or Territory Council will make a decision on the matter and communicate that decision to the parties.
5. Either party may appeal the decision to the National Council Tribunal via the National Council Secretary.
6. The National Council Tribunal may decide whether to accept the appeal and if so will either refer the matter to the National Council Resolution Committee or may itself hear the matter anew and make a recommendation to the National Council for its decision.
7. In the case where a dispute involves the National Council President, it is referred to National Council and National Council may make a recommendation to the President General International.
8. National Council may make a recommendation to the National Council President to exercise the power in Article 23 to annul the election of a President or to suspend a Member.
9. Subject to 8 the decision of the National Council is final with no further appeal.
10. An appeal against the decision of the National Council may be made to the President General International or their delegate[13] only in matters where the National Council President has annulled the election of a President or has suspended a Member in accordance with Articles 23 and 28.
11. If a dispute involves a Member, Conference or Council in more than one State or Territory or involves a State or Territory Council Member or a State or Territory Council, either party to the dispute may refer the matter to the National Council Resolution Committee via the State or Territory Council Secretary and the National Council Secretary.
12. Where a matter has been referred to the National Council Resolution Committee, the Committee will attempt to mediate between the parties and may make a recommendation to the National Council for its decision which may include a referral to the National Council Tribunal.
13. The National Council Tribunal may consider the matter as an appeal or may decide to hear it anew. The National Council Tribunal will recommend its decision to the National Council for its decision.

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[13] In general, the delegate of the President General International is the International Ombudsman – refer to The Rule Part II.

14. National Council may make a recommendation to the National Council President to exercise the power in Article 23 to annul the election of a President or to suspend a Member.
15. Subject to 12 the decision of the National Council is final with no further appeal.
16. An appeal against the decision of the National Council may be made to the President General International or their delegate only in matters where the National Council President has annulled the election of a President or has suspended a Member in accordance with Part III Articles 23 and 28.

Process for disciplining a Member

16. The President of a Conference or Council within a State or Territory may refer a matter for disciplining of a Member of their Conference or Council or of a lower Conference or Council to the State or Territory Resolution Committee via the State or Territory Council Secretary.
17. The Resolution Committee may make a recommendation to the State or Territory Council for its decision.
18. The Member dissatisfied with the decision may appeal the decision to the National Council Tribunal via the National Council Secretary.
19. The National Council Tribunal may decide whether to accept the appeal and if so, will hear the matter anew and make a recommendation to the National Council.
20. A matter for disciplining a Member of a State or Territory Council may be referred by the State or Territory Council via the National Council Secretary to the National Council Tribunal.
21. A matter for disciplining a State or Territory Council may be referred by the National Council via the National Council Secretary to the National Council Tribunal.
22. The National Council Tribunal will make a recommendation to the National Council for its decision.
23. Subject to the decision of the National Council is final with no further appeal.
24. The National Council may make a recommendation to the National Council President to exercise the power in Article 23 to annul the election of a President or to suspend a Member.

25. An appeal against the decision of the National Council may be made to the President General International or their delegate only in matters where the National Council President has annulled the election of a President or has suspended a Member in accordance with Articles 23 and 28.

Recommendation that the membership of a Member be suspended or that the Election of a President be annulled

26. The National Council Tribunal may make a recommendation to the National Council President that the election of a Conference or Council President should be annulled or that the membership of a Member should be suspended under Article 28.
27. The National Council President may make a decision to annul the election of a President or to suspend the membership of a Member.
28. It is only on the above two matters that the President or Member may appeal the decision to the President General International or their delegate.

Misconduct

The term 'misconduct' includes but is not limited to the following behaviours where a behaviour is alleged to have been carried out by a Member of the Society:

- a behaviour where the consequence is deliberate ignoring of an obligation owed to a matter(s) or a process described in *The Rule*;
- a behaviour that goes against one or more of the Values expressed by the Society in Australia;
- a behaviour described as 'unreasonable behaviours' in *Working Together Guidelines* (May 2021) – refer Appendix L;
- a behaviour that goes against a clause contained in the Constitution of an incorporated body that is attached to the National Council, a State Council or a Territory Council or a policy adopted by an incorporated body where lack of compliance with such a clause has a consequence including bringing the name of the Society or the Society brand into disrepute;
- a matter regarded as Serious Misconduct that falls under the **Fair Work Act 2009** which includes theft or fraud; sexual harassment; being

intoxicated at work; or

- a matter that falls under the occupational health and safety legislation applicable to the jurisdiction and causes a serious or imminent risk to the health and safety of a person or the reputation, viability or profitability of a business in which alleged behaviour(s) has occurred.

Natural Justice and Procedural Fairness

'Procedural fairness' means acting fairly in administrative decision making. It relates to the fairness of the procedure by which a decision is made, and not the fairness of the actual decision.

The rules of procedural fairness are encompassed in very broad terms in three widely accepted rules encompassing minimum standards of fair decision making. They are:

1. A person has the right to a fair hearing. There are several aspects to this rule:
    - A person must be given notice of the hearing with sufficient time and information for him or her to know the critical issues of fact forming the basis on which the proposed decision is to be made.
    - The information must not be vague or general but complete.
    - It is essential that the person concerned should have a reasonable opportunity to present his or her case.
    - Ordinarily a hearing does not have to be oral. An opportunity to make written submissions will usually be sufficient.
    - Where an oral hearing is required adequate notice of the time and place of the hearing must be given.
    - The decision maker/s must act in good faith and listen fairly to all parties.
2. No one can be a judge in his or her own cause (the 'bias rule'). The decision must be made by a disinterested and unbiased adjudicator(s). Justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done.
3. Decisions must be based upon logically corroborating material rather than mere speculation or suspicion.

A decision maker is under no general duty under the common law to give reasons for its decisions. However, failure to give reasons (or adequate

reasons) may invite a body on appeal to infer that the decision maker had no good reason for the decision and has acted unreasonably.

At all times, the applicable laws of the land need to be understood and followed.

For more detailed guidance in the application of procedural fairness see the paper of the Western Australian Ombudsman at **Appendix U**.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 29 – SPECIAL WORKS

Examples of the needs which may be met through the establishment of Special Works include operation of retail centres, emergency accommodation and support services such as outreach and food vans for people who are experiencing homelessness, unemployment or financial difficulty or people who are in need of specialist mental health support or who need training to overcome disadvantage.

Special Works arise from a need in the community observed by Conferences or Councils. They provide additional opportunities for direct personal contact between Members and those in the community needing support. Where a corporate based Special Work is found to be necessary, its management should include the provision of close personal contact between Members and those being supported noting that employees with specialist training will take the lead where appropriate.

Where Society employees are engaged by Special Works because of their expertise or where persons with specialist skills external to the Society are involved to provide specialised assistance to people in need, Members must be aware of and respect the professional boundaries that likely are required when delivering a package of assistance.

Unincorporated Special Works Management Committees should include Members of Conferences or Councils associated with the Special Work and people with relevant professional expertise. A corporate based Special Work will be managed and led by employees with specialist skills and training, but every opportunity should be taken to involve Conference Members in the Special Work, noting that Members can contribute support and empathy to the Companions which is a special feature of the Society.

Special Works must keep accurate and appropriate records of their income

and expenditure and sufficient other records to ensure accountability as determined by the National Council or the State or Territory Council's incorporated body.

The records are to be readily available to Members and the Council's incorporated body to which it reports at least annually.

The financial records of the Special Works must be audited annually.

The Society, after consultation with the Conferences and Councils concerned, with the approval of the National Council can transfer a Special Work to another organisation or institution if it is considered that it would be more appropriate for such a body to run the Special Work effectively.

National Council Resolution 42/2026

SECTION 3: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP – COUNCILS AND BOARDS

ARTICLE 30 – SOCIETY EMPLOYEES

The Society of St Vincent de Paul engages employees to assist the Society's Members to implement administrative tasks or tasks that require specialist training (which are beyond the capacity of Members). They support Members in their Vincentian vocation and are valued by the Society for such contribution.

Employees are engaged by a State or Territory Council's incorporated body, which may include an incorporated body that operates alongside a State or Territory Council. Some State or Territory Councils operate a number of incorporated bodies.

In general, employees are not Society Members and therefore they do not fall under the provisions of *The Rule* when they carry out their employment duties.

Employees are managed by the Chief Executive Officer engaged by a State or Territory Council or its related incorporated body.

Members ought not give direction to employees that might create confusion or blur the lines of reporting. Any instruction or request by a Member to an employee should be with the prior agreement of the employee's supervisor consistent with any protocol established with the relevant Chief Executive Officer.

All employees are to be engaged under appropriate contracts of employment and are to be provided with adequate induction into the Society's ethos, mission and practices.

It is preferable that any instruction to Members come from the State or Territory Council President or from another Member delegated by the President. Employees generally cannot give directives to Members. An exception to this practice is where a Member has been engaged to conduct activities that operate under the incorporated body; i.e. these

activities fall outside the regular activities of a Member conducting Good Works. Directives to Members on compliance with police checks or other legal requirements should only be given by employees with the prior approval of the State or Territory Council President.

Employees must be fully informed about the principles under which the Society operates, which should include an understanding of how *The Rule* applies to Members and how Members interact with employees, and prevailing government workplace regulations and agree to work consistently within those principles and regulations. Adequate training must be provided to all employees.

Employees, who are Members of the Society, may not hold any office in the Society where they can influence, or be seen to be able to influence, decisions related to their own employment or of management. Where such a conflict may be identified, clarification should be sought from the Chief Executive Officer and State President (or delegate) and appropriate State or Territory Council.

'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.' (Refer Part III, Article 30)

Members who are employees

Members who are employed by the Society cannot occupy the offices of President, Vice-President, Treasurer or be a member of the Council, Conference or a committee responsible for their employment, or of a Council at a related higher level. They may be an employee of one regional council and a member of another but to be a member of the same council or the Diocesan or State Council to which it is attached, places them in a privileged position as an employee which in some circumstances would give the impression of being both employer and employee.

(National Council decision, September 1977; revised with 2026 amendments)

National Council Resolution 42/2026

ARTICLE 31 – INCORPORATION/LEGAL STATUS: VARIOUS MATTERS

Society property

When the Society purchases property, it is for the advancement of the Society's mission and not for the principal purpose of accumulating assets.

The legal signatories of the Society are either trustees or Society Members who are the members of incorporated bodies representing the National Council or their respective State and Territory Councils. They must be members of those Councils and act only with the approval of the Council concerned.

Accordingly, all proposals to acquire property or enter into contracts in the name of the Society must be submitted through Regional and Diocesan Councils, if applicable, for the consideration of State or Territory Council. It is incumbent on State and Territory Councils to investigate all such proposals in relation to the need for such a work, suitability of site, design of building and capacity to pay. There is no Society rule which prevents State and Territory Councils from borrowing but it is expected that arrangements for repayment will take into account funds normally required by Conferences and other special works.

Members are warned that unauthorised signing of contracts or other financial arrangements would render them personally liable for payment.

(National Council decision, 1981)

Financial year

The Society financial year will be from 01 July to 30 June.

(National Council decision, November 1985)

New ventures

When a State or Territory Council intends going into a new venture of a major or unusual nature the proposal is to be presented to National Council for information and advice before commitment.

(National Council decision, January 1988)

Statement of principles for Society incorporated bodies

Refer to **Appendix X**.

National Council Resolution 42/202

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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