



SUMMARY OF NATIONAL COUNCIL DELIBERATIONS – JUNE 2023

Governance environment

National Council met with the Society's CEOs drawn from the states and territories and from related corporate bodies in Canberra on 2 June 2023. At that meeting we had an address from Mr Frank Brassil, International Territorial Vice President for Oceania (the delegate of the President General International), on *The Rule* and how the Society's governance intersects with civil governance obligations under Commonwealth and State or Territory laws. We reflected on it being a complex environment in which Councils and their CEOs operate when accommodating local laws to deliver obligations arising from *The Rule*.

Mr Warwick Fulton, Deputy President and Chair of *The Rule* Review Committee, indicated that there were still three jurisdictions that are to provide comments on the first draft of proposed new Articles and Procedural Guidelines. A seven month period for feedback was provided. He provided thoughts on two matters that had been identified from comments as raising questions within the context of a secular society.

There were concerns in the interpretation of *The Rule* in relation to National Council as the Society's Superior Council which brings responsibility and oversight for all that happens in the name of the Society in Australia and what should be done with Society excess funds.

Following receipt of the remaining feedback and comments, this paper will be updated and provided to Councils and members in time for the national congress (see below).

We know that all Councils are aware of the potential risks of **cyber attacks** and a need for the Society to be better prepared to mitigate against these threats. An update was received on the progress to put in place a comprehensive plan to address the risks associated with inadequate cyber security systems being in place across all Councils and corporate bodies.

Our state and territory CEOs provided an update on their plans to explore how they could work together to assist National Council deliver its strategic goals as well as explore how they might engage on common back of house initiatives.

National Council (2–3 June)

This was a very forward leaning and strategic meeting of National Council where the following issues were discussed.

As National President I confirmed the [National Council Governance Framework](#) which assists us stay on top of a growing number of subject matters and ensure we consult as far as possible with our members and subsidiary Councils. The membership of the Standing Committees and most Advisory Committees was confirmed. National Council supports a number of national networks such as membership, mission and spirituality and specialised working groups including website, national natural disasters and safeguarding.

National Council has two **national companies**: the National Redress Scheme company which looks after all of the Society's corporate bodies and Amelie Housing Ltd, the Society's national housing entity. Both companies provide biannual reports to National Council in addition to their AGM reports.

National Council also relies on advice from our State and Territory CEOs on various operational matters which harness employees with specific experience through a number of **CEO working groups**.

The recent news from **Catholic Church Insurances** that it is leaving the insurance market means the Society's corporate bodies are needing to go to market to find and sign-up new insurance arrangements. Many new policies are required to be effective from July 2023. National Council's master public liability policy presents some specific issues to quickly get on top of. We noted the approach of our CFOs to address these challenges and expect the tight timeframes can be met.

Members of National Council reviewed the credentials and forward plans of the three candidates for the **President General International**. The election for the next PGI is taking place in Rome on 13 June 2023.

Given the term of the 18th National Council recently commenced, we reviewed the National Council's **Risk Appetite Statement** that includes 15 risk areas to ensure the rating captured the views of the members of the new National Council.

National Council and the Presidents of all State Councils and the Canberra-Goulburn Territory Councils committed to provide support and assistance to the **Northern Territory Council** around the future of its support of Companions who face homelessness. The Society as a whole will stand in solidarity with our Northern Territory members, volunteers and employees to move towards securing better accommodation options that are designed to match the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who come to Darwin for family purposes.

Our initiative to bring together members in Sydney at **Congress23*** on 27-29 October 2023 was very much front and centre of discussion and exploration over the three days. We provided feedback and instruction to our Secretariate and working groups involved in this initiative with a focus on pursuing the themes initially outlined in the Green Paper on Members and Membership which are being advanced at Conference level with the encouragement and support provided by the Regional and State/Territory Councils. Our people will continue to provide new ideas based on research and practices being adopted by other Councils in English-speaking countries.

We reiterated that Congress 23* should not be a heavily structured event; it must be free flowing and adopt a courageous intent so that we come away with a practical and agreed plan to pursue new forms of membership and Conference arrangements.

We considered reports of the dialogue established with our Vincentian National Council Presidents, CGI representatives and our **Overseas Partnership Program** leaders at a meeting convened in Sydney in late April. This was a very successful meeting which concentrated on the promotion of good governance and safeguarding with a view to securing our twinning arrangements across Oceania in the future.

At this gathering, the **Oceania National Presidents** recognised they will need significant support and strategic assistance to enhance their capability for the purpose of securing their capacity to be self-supporting. The National Presidents made a joint request to Australia and New Zealand for help.

Our National Council recognised that if we are to respond to the request for help, this would need to be comprehensive in content and long-term in approach.

Our Secretariate has identified that assistance would address the following areas: general governance, formation and training of Members and position holders, safeguarding, finance and operations, assistance with aggregation and institution, supporting the involvement of youth and in time, extended twinning partnerships.

We are encouraged that the NZ National Council has agreed to partner with Australia to deliver a comprehensive, long-term (up to 10 years) plan of support.

Our next step is to meet all Oceania National Presidents in Rome and ask them to seek their respective Councils' endorsement of the plan outlined in a 'Letter of Intent'.

At the same time, we approved a strategy regarding sourcing some financial assistance and we have requested our Secretariate to prepare the first tranche of a detailed, costed plan covering the first 3 years.

As well, we are heartened to have NZ playing an active role in establish an accounting system in the cloud that can be used by all Oceania National Councils. This will assist delivery on our own accountability and reporting obligations.

I will keep you informed on the initiatives outlined above that are iterative in nature.



Finally, I was pleased to be invited by the Archbishop of Canberra-Goulburn, Christopher Prowse, to address the congregation assembled at the Mass National Council attended on 3 June 2023.

I was able to speak of the wonderful good works our Members provide to people in distress and noted the present crisis of cost of living increases was having a major impact on our Companions across the country.