

THE SECULAR ASSOCIATION OF NSW INC.

CONSTITUTION

OBJECTS AND RULES

1) OBJECTS

The objects of the Association are to advance the principles of secularism while acknowledging that secularism is not atheism.

Atheism is a lack of belief in gods while secularism provides a political structure for a democratic society.

While recognising that atheists have an obvious interest in supporting secularism, secularism itself does not seek to challenge the tenets of any religion, or belief, neither does it seek to impose atheism on anyone.

In particular, the Association seeks to advance the following through publications, media releases, public lectures, seminars, representations to parliament, and public inquiries:

Constitutional Separation of Church and State in an Australian Republic where religious groups do not interfere in affairs of state, and the state does not interfere in religious affairs, with a public sphere where religion may participate, but not dominate.

Freedom to practice one's faith or belief without harming others, or to change it, or not have one, according to one's own conscience.

Equality so that religious beliefs or lack of them does not put any citizen or resident at an advantage or a disadvantage.

Freedom of belief Secularism seeks to defend the absolute freedom of religious and other beliefs and protect the right to manifest religious belief insofar as it does not impinge on the rights and freedoms of others. Secularism ensures that the right of individuals to freedom of religion is always balanced by the right to be free *from* religion.

Fairness In a secular democracy all citizens are equal before the law and parliament. No religious or political affiliation gives advantages or disadvantages, and religious believers are citizens with the same rights and obligations as anyone else.

Human rights above religious demands. Secularism upholds equality laws that protect women, LGBTQI people and minorities from religious discrimination. These equality laws ensure that non-believers have the same rights as those who identify with a religious or philosophical belief.

Equal access to public services Citizens all share hospitals, schools, the police and the services of local authorities. It is essential that these public services are

secular at the point of use, so no-one is disadvantageded or denied access on grounds of religious belief (or non-belief). All state-funded schools should be non-religious in character, with children being educated together regardless of their parents' religion. When a public body grants a contract for the provision of services to an organisation affiliated to a particular religion or belief, such services must be delivered neutrally, with no attempt to promote the ideas of that faith group.

Free speech and expression Religious people have the right to express their beliefs publicly but so do those who oppose or question those beliefs. Religious beliefs, ideas and organisations must not enjoy privileged protection from the right to freedom of expression. In a democracy, all ideas and beliefs must be open to discussion. Individuals have rights; ideas do not.

Facilitating the ideals above, if a majority of the committee agrees, the Secular Association of NSW Inc may award a grant of up to \$5,000 to citizens who have advanced the aims above in the arts, science, social sciences, public life, through publishing, and other forms of public activism.

RULES

2) MEMBERSHIP

- a) Membership shall consist of the acceptance of the definition of secularism as set forth above, and agreement to abide by the Constitution and Rules of the Association and payment of the annual fee as determined by the Committee.
- b) The Secretary shall keep a Members' Roll with the names and addresses of all the members.
- c) Any member may be suspended by a majority vote of the Committee with the right to appeal the suspension at the following Annual General Meeting

3) MANAGEMENT

- a) The management of the Association's activities, finances and property shall be vested in the Committee appointed by the Annual General Meeting (AGM) or other General Meeting convened for the purpose of electing a committee. The Association's revenue shall be derived from investments, term deposits, subscriptions, sale of literature, donations and bequests.
- b) The Committee shall be appointed for a period extending to the next AGM.
- c) The Committee shall consist of:

President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, a number of Committee persons not exceeding six.

- d) Only members of at least three months standing, and who are fully financial at the AGM where the election takes place, shall be eligible for election.
- e) A quorum at any Committee Meeting shall consist of four members present.
- f) The Committee shall not meet less than four times in each calendar year.
- g) The Committee shall make an Annual Report with a written Annual Account attached for consideration by members present at the AGM.
- h) The Committee shall have the power to co-opt members to fill vacancies on the Committee, subject to them having at least three months standing as a member.

4. GENERAL MEETINGS

- a) At all AGMs or Committee Meetings, the President, if present, shall be in the Chair. If absent or unable, the Vice-President or other member of the Committee may be appointed to chair the meeting.
- b) At AGMs and General Meetings each financial member will have one vote.
- c) Proxy votes may be submitted for the election of officers of the committee members, alteration to the Constitution, and Motions for the AGM and General Meetings.
- d) A quorum at an AGM shall be five, excluding Proxy votes.
- e) Notices of meetings shall be given by email or in writing not less than three weeks before the date of such meetings.
- f) The AGM shall be held as soon as practicable after 30 June, preferable in September or October.
- g) Adjournment of an AGM or Special General Meeting must be held with three months, determined by a two-thirds majority vote of members present at such meetings.
- h) The business of the AGM shall be
 1. Conformation of the Minutes of the previous AGM and subsequent Special General Meetings.
 2. Business arising out of the Minutes.
 3. Consideration of the Committee's Annual Reports, and Accounts.
 4. Special Reports.
 5. Election of officers and members of the Committee.

6. A Motion or Special Resolution of a meeting must be passed by a majority of members present, being those entitled to vote.

7. Special General meetings (SGMs) shall be convened by the Secretary of the Committee under the following circumstances:

* When it is considered necessary by the Committee.

*Whenever it is considered necessary by the President and Secretary together, after notifying members of the Committee of their intention to do so, and also of the objects of the Meeting.

*On Notices convening SGMs, the special business must be stated and no other business shall be transacted at the Meeting.

*Adjournment of an AGM or SGM may be convened by a two-thirds majority vote.

5. OFFICES

a) For the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and committee persons, there must be a nominator and seconder, both of whom shall be financial members, and nominees must give their consent in writing or verbally.

b) The President at an AGM shall invite nominations. In the event of only one nomination being received for a position, the person so nominated shall be declared duly elected. In the event of a number of nominations the President may appoint a Returning Officer to hold an open or secret ballot.

6. THE DUTIES OF OFFICERS

a) The duty of the Secretary shall be

1) Take charge of books or documents of his/her office and attend to the correspondence.

2) To report to the Committee at each meeting.

3) Convene meetings.

4) Submit a report to the AGM.

5) Take Minutes of Committee Meetings, AGMs and SGMs.

b) The duty of the Treasurer shall be

1) Take charge of all moneys belonging to the Association and keep the necessary accounts.

2) Supply a Report on the finances to the Committee Meetings, AGMs and SGMs.

3) Make all payments on behalf of the Association.

7. FINANCIAL YEAR

The Financial year shall end at midnight on 30th June each year.

8. TRANSACTIONS

All cheques drawn on an ordinary bank account with the Commonwealth Bank shall be signed by any two of the following: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, or other members of the Committee so decided at a Committee meeting or AGM.

9. THE CONSTITUTION

a) The Constitutions, Objects and Rules of the Association may be altered by vote at any SGM of the members provided that full particulars of the proposed amendment shall be given with the notice convening a Meeting.

b) All notices of Motion to amend the Constitution, Objects and rules of the Association shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary. An SGM to deal with a Motion will be held only when a Motion is supported by five per cent of the total membership.

c) Any proposed amendment to the Constitution shall only be effective when approved by a two-thirds majority of financial members present at a meeting including proxy votes.

10 COMMON SEAL

The Common Seal of the Association shall be held by the Secretary and shall be used on all official documents where necessary with the signatures of the Secretary and one other office bearer.

11. INSURANCE

The Association must maintain Public Liability Insurance as stipulated by government regulation and the Association may maintain other insurance, if required.

12. RESOLUTION OF INTERNAL DISPUTES

Disputes between members, in their capacity as members, of the Association, are to be referred to the community justice centre for mediation.

13. MEMBERS LIABILITIES

The liability of a member of the Association to contribute to the payment of debts and liabilities of the Association, or the cost, charges and expenses of the winding

up of the Association is limited to the amount of the Member's unpaid subscription to the Association.

14. LIFE MEMBERSHIP

a) Life Membership may be granted to members who have rendered distinguished and continued service to the association over a period of not less than ten years. This will be a decision of a majority of the Committee.

15. HONORARY ASSOCIATES

The Committee will have the authority to appoint Honorary Associates.

16. NON-PROFIT CLAUSE

The assets and income of the Association shall be applied solely in furtherance of its above-mentioned objectives and no portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members of the Association, except as bona fide compensation for services rendered or expenses incurred on behalf of the Association.

17. WINDING-UP

In the event of the Association having to wind up, the following conditions may apply:

- a) The Association is unable to function properly due to lack of interest or will of the members or through financial deprivation, or through cancellation of the Incorporated Association.
- b) A SGM shall be convened to adopt the following measures:
- c) The assets of the Association shall be deposited in an interest-bearing account at the Commonwealth Bank in the name of the Association.
- d) The amount which remains after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall be transferred to any organization, in Australia or overseas, which has similar objects, after advice has been obtained by the Australian Tax Office concerning the legitimacy of the transfer.
- e) The committee shall send financial members a progress report and a final audited account of all transactions in this regard.
- f) All records, books, and other documents belonging to the Association shall be deposited for safe keeping in the archives section of the State Library of New South Wales.

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