



Constitution and By-laws

Adopted 21/07/2019

Effective 18/08/2019

1. Interpretation

1.1 Definitions

In this Constitution, unless contrary to or inconsistent with the context:

- **annual general meeting** means the members' meeting recognised as the annual general meeting in accordance with Section 7.1 and Appendix A By-laws
- **Baptist Association** means Baptist Union of New South Wales as provided under the *Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1919* (as amended)
- **Baptist church** means any church affiliated with Baptist Association
- **church** means West Ryde Community Church
- **honorary member** means a member who becomes incapable of fulfilling the responsibilities of members due to an absence or disability lasting six months or more
- **Incorporation Act** means *Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1919* (as amended)
- **member** means person who is admitted and continues in membership in accordance with Section 4 and Appendix A By-laws
- **members' meeting** means a meeting of members in accordance with this Constitution and By-laws
- **Property Trust** means Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust as defined in the Property Trust Act
- **Property Trust Act** means *Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust Act 1984* (as amended)

1.2 Headings

Headings are for convenience only and do not affect the interpretation of this Constitution.

2. The church

2.1 Name

The name of the church is West Ryde Community Church ("[church](#)").

2.2 Purpose

The purpose of the [church](#) is to be a Christ-centred community growing in faith and sharing the Gospel with others.

2.3 Composition

The [church](#) consists of followers of Jesus Christ who are committed to the life and community of West Ryde Community Church.

2.4 Authority

The [church](#) is an affiliated church of the Baptist Union of New South Wales ("[Baptist Association](#)") as provided under the *Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1919* (as amended) ("[Incorporation Act](#)").

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The property assets of the [church](#) are vested in the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust ("[Property Trust](#)") in accordance with the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust Act 1984 (as amended) ("[Property Trust Act](#)").

The [church](#) will establish by-laws to govern administrative and procedural matters. By-laws must not conflict with this constitution. By-laws may be adopted, amended, or temporarily suspended by a majority vote at a [members' meeting](#).

2.5 Statement of faith

The [church](#) holds to the doctrines set out in Schedule A of the [Incorporation Act](#) and further expanded in the 1979 Statement of Faith of the [Baptist Association](#) (as amended), in brief:

- a. The Nature and Unity of the Godhead
- b. The Deity and Humanity of Christ
- c. The Holy Spirit
- d. The Divine Inspiration of the Scripture
- e. The Sinfulness of People
- f. Christ's Atonement for Human Sin
- g. The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation
- h. The Church
- i. The Baptism of Believers only by Immersion
- j. The Communion
- k. The Return of the Lord Jesus Christ
- l. The Resurrection of the Dead
- m. Rewards and Punishment in a Future State

3. Ordinances

3.1 Communion

The Lord's Supper will be observed regularly in the life of the [church](#). All believers in Jesus Christ present will be invited to take part.

3.2 Baptism

Any person who declares faith in Jesus Christ may be baptised. Baptism is practised by immersion into water as the form of baptism described in the New Testament.

4. Membership

4.1 Eligibility for membership

A person is eligible for membership if they:

- a. commit themselves to the [church](#); and
- b. declare their faith in Jesus Christ; and
- c. accept the statement of faith referred to in Section 2.5 of this Constitution; and
- d. have performed an act of public declaration of faith, being either:

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- a. baptism as a believer by immersion; or
- b. public declaration of faith according to the rites of another Christian church and is able to affirm the New Testament practice of baptism of believers by immersion

4.2 Admission to membership

An application for membership must be made to the leadership team.

Applicants must sign the Member's Covenant.

The leadership team will appoint two [members](#) to interview the applicant and assess their eligibility for membership. The leadership team may request a letter of transfer where the applicant has transferred from another [Baptist church](#).

The leadership team will then determine whether to admit, refuse, or defer the application for membership.

4.3 Responsibilities of members and the church

The responsibilities of [members](#) and the [church](#) are defined in the Member's Covenant.

4.4 Honorary members

An [honorary member](#) is a [member](#) who becomes incapable of fulfilling the responsibilities of members due to an absence or disability lasting six months or more.

[Honorary members](#) are not entitled to hold positions within the church or to vote at [members' meetings](#).

4.5 Continuance of membership

Membership must be renewed annually by signing the Member's Covenant or membership will lapse.

The membership of [honorary members](#) does not lapse.

4.6 Transfer of membership

If a [member](#) wishes to join another church they may request and will be granted a letter of transfer outlining their participation in the life of the [church](#).

4.7 Revision of membership

The leadership team will oversee the maintenance and regular review of the Members Roll.

The leadership team will mark a [member](#) as an [honorary member](#) on the Members Roll if the [member](#) becomes incapable of fulfilling the responsibilities of members due to an absence or disability lasting six months or more.

A [member](#) may request to be marked as an [honorary member](#) on the Members Roll.

The leadership team will remove a [member](#) from the Members Roll, if the [member](#):

- a. has allowed their membership to lapse; or
- b. becomes a member of another church; or
- c. requests removal; or

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- d. dies; or
- e. has their membership removed in accordance with adopted disciplinary procedures.

4.8 Discipline of members

The leadership team will investigate misconduct by a [member](#) which is contrary to the Member's Covenant, or any other adopted policies and standards. The investigation will be in accordance with adopted disciplinary procedures.

5. Leadership

The [members](#), through the [members' meeting](#), have final authority in deciding matters which affects the [church](#)'s life.

5.1 Pastors and staff

The pastor(s) of the [church](#) will be a person or persons whom the [church](#) believes to have been called and gifted by the Lord to fulfil a ministry of pastoral leadership within the [church](#).

To become a pastor of the [church](#), a person must be eligible for and obtain membership of the [church](#).

One pastor will be appointed as the lead pastor to oversee the ministry of the [church](#) in consultation with the leadership team.

The lead pastor will supervise all other pastors and staff.

The lead pastor may appoint student pastors, ministry interns and administrative staff provided the associated budget is approved by the [church](#) through a [members' meeting](#).

If there is no lead pastor an interim lead pastor will be appointed and a pastoral search process will be initiated.

The pastoral search process will follow the [Baptist Association](#) recommendations unless otherwise approved by the [church](#) through a [members' meeting](#).

A written employment contract and role description must be agreed and accepted by the pastor and the [church](#).

The appointment of a pastor must receive the approval of seventy-five percent (75%) majority vote at a [members' meeting](#) convened for that purpose.

The dismissal of a pastor must receive the approval of a majority (50%+1) vote, at a [members' meeting](#) convened for that purpose. Such a motion should be put to a [members' meeting](#) in accordance with adopted disciplinary procedures, and following consultation with the ministry standards unit of the [Baptist Association](#).

5.2 Leadership team

The leadership team will exercise oversight of the [church](#)'s life and ministry.

The leadership team is directly accountable to the [members](#) through the [members' meeting](#).

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The leadership team will be appointed and perform its functions in accordance with adopted policies, standards, and this Constitution.

The leadership team will meet at least once every two months. Half of the leadership team forms a quorum. Records of the decisions at all meetings must be kept.

The leadership team will consist of the pastor(s) and [members](#) elected to positions of oversight.

Any [members' meeting](#) may decide the number of members of the leadership team, including the number of elected positions, with effect from the following [annual general meeting](#). Such a decision will not shorten the term of any [member](#) serving on the leadership team.

Each person on the leadership team must be assigned one or more roles to oversee particular ministries and activities of the [church](#).

One person on the leadership team must be designated church secretary.

5.3 Ministry leaders

The leadership team may appoint ministry leaders to lead the ministries and activities of the [church](#).

The [members](#) must affirm such appointments at a [members' meeting](#).

The [members](#) must elect the following ministry leaders:

- a. a treasurer, to oversee the finances of the church
- b. a financial reviewer/auditor, to review/audit the financial records of the church

Ministry leaders must meet the requirements of adopted policies and standards.

Ministry leaders are directly accountable to the leadership team.

6. Finances

6.1 Not-for-profit

The [church](#) is a not-for-profit organisation registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

The assets and income of the [church](#) must be applied solely to further its objects and no portion will be distributed directly or indirectly to the [members](#) except as genuine compensation for services rendered or expenses incurred on behalf of the [church](#).

In the event of the [church](#) being dissolved, all assets that remain after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities, other than trust property vested in the [Property Trust](#), must be transferred to another organisation with similar purposes, which is charitable at law and which has rules prohibiting the distribution of its assets and income to its [members](#).

6.2 Annual budget

An annual budget for the next church year must be approved by the [members](#) at a [members' meeting](#).

6.3 Financial reporting

The financial year of the church is from 1 January to 31 December.

The treasurer must prepare and present financial statements at each [members' meeting](#) and an annual statement at the first [member's meeting](#) of each year.

The financial reviewer/auditor must prepare and present a financial review/audit report of the financial records at a [members' meeting](#) each year.

7. Members' meetings and procedures

Resolutions to direct the [Property Trust](#) to act in relation to trust property must comply with the [Property Trust Act](#).

7.1 Members' meetings

[Members' meetings](#) must be held at least four times each year.

One of these meetings will be recognised as the [annual general meeting](#).

Special [members' meetings](#) may be called by the leadership team or one quarter of [members](#) eligible to vote.

Notice of the time, place and major business must be given to [members](#) on at least two consecutive Sundays prior to the holding of any [members' meeting](#).

7.2 Introduction of business

[Members](#), other than [honorary members](#), wishing to introduce business to a [members' meeting](#) must submit details of the business to the church secretary two weeks prior to the meeting. The leadership team will decide how the business will be dealt with.

The leadership team will prepare an agenda for each [members' meeting](#).

7.3 Quorum

The quorum for any [members' meeting](#) is one quarter of the number of [members](#).

The quorum for any [members' meeting](#) that includes as business the appointment or removal of a pastor or alteration to this Constitution is one half of the number of [members](#).

The quorum excludes [honorary members](#).

7.4 Voting method

Voting will normally be by voice or show of hands, however the [members](#) may move to conduct a vote by secret ballot.

All voting relating to the appointment or dismissal of pastors and [members](#) to/from elected positions must be by secret ballot.

Motions will be carried by a majority (50%+1) vote, unless otherwise stated in this Constitution.

7.5 Voting eligibility

All [members](#), other than [honorary members](#) or those subject to the vote, are eligible to vote.

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Absentee or proxy voting is not permitted.

[Members](#) under the age of 18 are not eligible to vote on matters relating to trust property vested in the [Property Trust](#).

7.6 Minutes

Records of the decisions at all [members' meetings](#) must be kept and a copy made available to [members](#) at least two Sundays prior to the next [members' meeting](#).

7.7 Elected positions

[Members](#), other than [honorary members](#), are eligible to be nominated for elected positions provided they meet the requirements of adopted policies and standards.

Nominations for elected positions must be in writing signed by the nominated [member](#) and one other [member](#).

Nominations for elected positions on the leadership team must be endorsed by the Lead Pastor.

The term of service for elected positions is until the end of the next [annual general meeting](#) (nominally one year).

The appointment of a [member](#) to an elected position must receive the approval of seventy-five percent (75%) majority vote at a [members' meeting](#) convened for that purpose.

If the number of nominations for elected positions exceeds the number of vacancies, a second vote is taken and the nominees with the highest number of votes are elected.

The dismissal of a [member](#) from an elected position must receive the approval of a majority (50%+1) vote, at a [members' meeting](#) convened for that purpose. Such a motion should be put to a [members' meeting](#) in accordance with adopted disciplinary procedures, and following consultation with the ministry standards unit of the [Baptist Association](#).

A vacant elected position may be filled at any [members' meeting](#), with the elected [member](#) serving the remainder of the vacated term.

8. Policies and standards

The [church](#) may adopt or alter policies and standards on various matters for the purpose of governing aspects of the [church](#)'s life and mission, or for the purpose of expressing a collective opinion about something that is happening in the wider church or society.

Copies of the proposed policy or standard must be made available to [members](#) at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

9. Alterations to the Constitution

No proposed alteration to this Constitution will be brought to a [members' meeting](#) unless notice of the wording of the proposed alteration has been given to [members](#) at least four weeks prior to the meeting date.

Alterations to this Constitution must receive the approval of seventy-five percent (75%) majority vote at a [members' meeting](#) convened for that purpose.

Appendix A. By-laws

By-laws are established under Section 2.4 of the Constitution. By-laws may be adopted, amended, or temporarily suspended by a majority vote at a [members' meeting](#).

Headings are for convenience only and do not affect the interpretation of the by-laws.

A.1 Interpretation

- a. The [church](#) website can be accessed at <https://www.westrydecc.org.au>.
- b. The [church](#) office is located at 1038 Victoria Road, WEST RYDE and is accessed from Endeavour Street.

A.2 The church

- c. The visual identity of the [church](#) must show affiliation with the [Baptist Association](#), known as the Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT.
- d. The full statement of faith can be accessed at <https://nswactbaptists.org.au/beliefs/>.

A.3 Ordinances

- a. A pastor will offer communion or authorise another person to offer communion.
- b. A pastor will baptise or authorise another person to baptise believers.

A.4 Membership

- a. Copies of this Constitution and Members Covenant will be made available on the [church](#) website and/or from the [church](#) office.

A.5 Leadership

- a. Nominations for positions on the leadership team will be called for at least four weeks prior to the [members' meeting](#).
- b. A [member](#) must not serve continuously in the same elected position for more than 6 years.
- c. The powers and duties of the church secretary include:
 - a. oversee records keeping
 - b. oversee the development and implementation of administrative policies and standards
 - c. conduct general correspondence on behalf of the [church](#)
 - d. maintain the relationship with the [Baptist Association](#)
- d. The powers and duties of the treasurer include:
 - a. prepare an annual budget
 - b. prepare and submit regular financial statements for leadership team and [members' meetings](#)
 - c. oversee the [church](#) finances in accordance with the approved annual budget
 - d. oversee the receipt and payment of monies by the [church](#)
 - e. oversee the [church](#) financial record keeping
 - f. provide financial advice to the leadership team as requested
 - g. report to government and other organisations as required
 - h. appoint [members](#) to a finance committee to assist in the achievement of duties

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- e. The powers and duties of the financial reviewer/auditor include:
 - a. prepare a financial review/audit report of the financial records

A.6 Finances

A.7 Members' meetings and procedures

- a. The [annual general meeting](#) will be held in August each year.
- b. The quorum must be present within 30 minutes from the notified start time of a [members' meeting](#).
- c. [Members' meetings](#) must not exceed 2 hours in duration.

A.8 Policies and standards

- a. Copies of proposed and adopted policies and standards will be made available on the [church](#) website and/or from the [church](#) office.

A.9 Alterations to the Constitution

- a. Copies of proposed alterations to this Constitution will be made available on the [church](#) website and/or from the [church](#) office.