



Constitution of the Tasmanian Council of Churches

I. **Name:** The name of this organisation shall be the Tasmanian Council of Churches.

II. **Basis:** The Tasmanian Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which “confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”

III. **Functions:**

The Tasmanian Council of Churches exists to promote a closer unity among Christians in Tasmania, specifically,

1. To assist the growth of ecumenical consciousness in the members of all Churches and generally to promote Christian unity;
2. To promote co-operation between the Member Churches through the study of that which we hold in common and the sharing of our different standpoints in such a spirit that the unity to which God calls us may become clearer;
3. To facilitate common action by the Churches within Tasmania as a proclamation of the hope of the Gospel to the whole community;
4. To establish and maintain close relationships with the National Council of Churches in Australia and to increase the contact of Tasmania with Church thought and action throughout the world,

and in these terms promotes the advancement of religion.

IV. **Membership:**

1. **Representatives of the Churches:** The Council shall consist of representatives of Member Churches calculated on the following basis:
 - a. Heads of Member Churches;
 - b. A basic group of three (3) representatives from each Member Church;
 - c. Additional representatives in increments of four (4) on the following scale, based on the number of local units (parishes, churches, corps, etc.) for which there are normally one or more full-time ministers:

0 - 9 local units	0 additional representatives,
10 - 19 local units	4 additional representatives,
20 - 29 local units	8 additional representatives,
30 - 39 local units	12 additional representatives,
40 - 49 local units	16 additional representatives,
50 plus local units	20 additional representatives.
 - d. The Executive shall review every three years the number of representatives which Member Churches are entitled to appoint and make appropriate adjustments.

2. **Representatives of Associated Bodies and Churches:**
 - a. Each associated body shall be entitled to appoint one representative to the Council. Unless otherwise determined by the Council, those recognised as associated bodies shall be Australian Church Women, Converge International, Jane Franklin Hall, and Spiritual Care Australia (Tasmanian Branch).
 - b. Each Church in Associate Membership with the Council shall be entitled to appoint one representative to the Council.
3. **Co-opted Members:** Up to ten (10) co-opted members, who shall be practising members of constituent Churches, may be appointed to the Council either by the Council or the Executive.
4. **Officers of the Council:** Officers of the Council who are not representatives of their own Church shall be ex-officio members of the Council.
5. **Consultants:** The Council shall have power to invite representatives of Christian organisations (not more than two from each) to attend as consultants.
6. **Alternates:** Each Member Church has the right to appoint an alternate in place of a representative who is unable to attend a meeting of the Council. The alternate shall have the same status as the representative including the right to vote, and shall be entitled to receive copies of the minutes of the meetings of the Council.
7. **Union of Churches at present in membership:** Any Church which consists of an amalgamation of denominations already in membership of the Tasmanian Council of Churches shall be deemed to be in membership of the Council from the date of its formation. If a union of Churches involves a denomination not previously in membership of the Tasmanian Council of Churches, the new denomination will need to apply for membership as detailed in clause 8.
8. **Applications for Membership:**
 - a. Before any application for membership of the Council is made, representatives of a Church must normally have attended meetings of the Council's Executive as observers for at least one year. (The Council may waive this requirement in the case of a Church that is a Member Church of the National Council of Churches in Australia.)
 - b. Election to membership of the Council shall require a three-quarters vote in favour at a meeting of the Council, following a report from the Executive.
 - c. A Church applying for membership in the Council shall indicate, to the Council's satisfaction, its endorsement of the Basis and Functions of the Tasmanian Council of Churches (Sections II and III).
 - d. In preparing a report upon such application the Executive shall give consideration inter alia to the following points:
 - i. The applicant's association with such bodies as the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches in Australia;
 - ii. Duration of existence of the applicant body and its history;
 - iii. Geographical area covered;
 - iv. Statistics of membership.

9. Applications for Associate Membership
 - a. A congregation, parish, or group of congregations not in membership of the Council through denominational membership may apply for Associate Membership.
 - b. Election to Associate Membership of the Council shall require a three-quarters vote in favour at a meeting of the Council, following a report from the Executive.
 - c. Associate Membership carries with it the entitlement to appoint one representative to the Council.

10. Observers from Non-Member Churches:
 - a. The Executive may invite a Church not in membership of the Tasmanian Council of Churches to send observers to meetings of the Council. Such an invitation may be extended either to a Church eligible to seek Membership under paragraph IV.8 or to a congregation, parish, or group of congregations eligible to seek Associate Membership under paragraph IV.9.
 - b. A church accepting the Executive's invitation to send observers shall be entitled, for a period of twelve months, to appoint:
 - i. two observers to meetings of the Council;
 - ii. one observer to meetings of the Executive;
 - iii. one observer to each Commission of the Tasmanian Council of Churches.Such observers will have the right to speak, but not to vote or to propose business.
 - c. The invitation may be renewed by the Executive each year.
 - d. An invitation by the Executive to a non-member Church to send observers may originate either in an initiative by the Executive or in an expression of interest by a non-member Church. In making its decision, the Executive shall give consideration to the same criteria that would be considered in the case of an application for membership (IV.8.c&d).

V. Officers

The officers of the Council shall be:

President,
Vice-President,
Executive Officer, and
Treasurer,

each of which, except the Executive Officer, shall be elected annually.

The Executive Officer shall be appointed by the Council for such term as the Council, after receiving a recommendation from the Executive, shall decide.

The office of President shall not be held by any member for more than two years in succession or within two years of retirement from that office.

All the officers, if not representatives of Member Churches, shall have the same rights as representatives.

When a casual vacancy occurs in the office of President, the Vice-President shall become President. In such case this President is still eligible to serve two years in his/her own right as President.

When a casual vacancy occurs in the office of Vice-President, the Executive may appoint an Acting Vice-President to serve out the unexpired term.

VI. Executive:

1. The Executive shall consist of:
 - a. The Officers, Conveners of Commissions of the Council or their alternates, the Immediate Past President (or, if the Immediate Past President is unable to serve, another Past President appointed by the Executive), Heads of Churches or their alternates, a representative of Australian Church Women Tasmania Unit, a representative of Converge International, the Principal or another member of the Council of Jane Franklin Hall appointed by the Council of Jane Franklin Hall, and a representative of Spiritual Care Australia (Tasmanian Branch);
 - b. A representative of such other associated bodies as the Executive from time to time shall determine;
 - c. One member appointed by each Member Church;
 - d. Five members, each being an appointed representative of a Member Church or a church in Associate Membership, elected by the Annual Meeting;
 - e. Not more than three other members, each being a member of a Member Church or a church in Associate Membership, co-opted by the Executive for such purposes as may assist the work of the Council; and
 - f. Observers from non-member Churches, as appointed under IV.10.b.
2. The Executive shall carry out the decisions of the Council and shall prepare business for it and shall act as the Standing Committee for Council between Council meetings.
3. The Executive shall meet at least three times a year. Eight members, representing 50% of the Member Churches, shall form a quorum. The President of the Council shall chair the Executive.
4. In the event of the death or resignation of an elected member of the Executive, the Executive shall have power to fill the vacancy until the next meeting of the Council.

VII. Council and Executive Meetings:

The Council shall meet at least once a year. Twenty-one members shall constitute a quorum. At the Annual Meeting, officers and members of the Executive shall be elected; reports of the Executive, Commissions and Committees, and financial statements shall be tabled. Special meetings of the Council shall be called at the request of the Executive or of not fewer than twelve (12) members of the Council.

VIII. Authority:

The Council may speak and act on its own behalf as a Council. The Executive shall have the same powers as the Council. In the making of public pronouncements, two-thirds of the members present shall be in agreement. The President and/or Executive Officer, or a person authorised by them in relation to a particular issue, shall have authority to make public statements on already agreed policy of the Council.

IX. Commissions and Committees:

The Council or the Executive may appoint such commissions or committees as are deemed necessary. The Council may appoint as a member of a commission or committee any member of:

- a Member Church,
- a congregation, parish, or group of congregations in Associate Membership, or
- a non-member Church appointing observers to attend meetings of the Council or its Executive.

Conveners of Commissions must be members either of a Member Church or of a congregation, parish, or group of congregations in Associate Membership. Commissions may appoint any person as a consultant. Commissions and committees shall report to and be accountable to the Council through the Executive.

X. Local Inter-Church Councils:

Local Inter-Church Councils may be associated with the Council at the discretion of the Council or its Executive.

XI. Finance:

1. Each year the Executive shall prepare and adopt a budget for the ensuing year. This budget shall be tabled at the Annual Meeting of the year to which it applies.
2. Each Member Church shall contribute each year as a minimum an amount apportioned to the requirements of the approved budget.
3. Churches in Associate Membership with the Council shall contribute an annual association fee as determined by the Executive.
4. In order to assist its operation, the Council is open to receive donations from those in sympathy with its aims, including non-member Churches sending observers to Council meetings.

XII. By-laws:

The Council shall make such by-laws as it deems necessary.

XIII. Alteration of Constitution:

No alterations shall be made to this Constitution except at the Annual Meeting or at a meeting specifically called for that purpose. One month's notice of any proposed alterations shall be given to members of the Council. Heads of Churches shall receive notice in writing of such proposed alterations.

XIV. Dissolution:

The Tasmanian Council of Churches shall be deemed to be dissolved when either of the following events has occurred:

1. 75% of members present at a meeting of the Council vote to dissolve the Tasmanian Council of Churches, with such decision to be ratified by the heads of at least 75% of the Council's member churches;
2. Fewer than three churches are members of the Tasmanian Council of Churches.

XV. Distribution of Surplus Funds if Dissolved:

1. If the Tasmanian Council of Churches is dissolved by the vote of the Council (as in XIV.1), and if such dissolution is for the purpose of enabling the creation of another statewide ecumenical body, the funds of the Tasmanian Council of Churches (after assets are realised and liabilities settled) shall be transferred to the newly created body.
2. If the Tasmanian Council of Churches is dissolved in any circumstances other than described in XV.1, the Council's surplus funds shall be distributed to programmes of the National Council of Churches in Australia and/or programmes of member churches of the Council at the time of its dissolution. This distribution of the Council's funds shall be determined by the heads of the Council's member churches at the time of the Council's dissolution.