

Topic 14

EMERGE
Supporting Farmer Led Groups

A collaborative project between
TAS FARM INNOVATION HUB
RMCG

Constitution

The purpose of a board constitution is to serve as the foundational legal document that establishes your group's core structure, defines legal powers and responsibilities of the board of directors, and sets the rules for internal governance. A constitution sets out the basic rules for how your group operates.

The resources section provides links to example templates you can use.

When developing or reviewing your constitution, consider the following:

Membership categories

Decide who can join your group and whether you need different types of membership. These might include:

- Individual members – your standard membership.
- Student members – usually offered at a reduced fee.
- Associate members – supporters who may have limited or no voting rights.
- Business or group members – businesses, organisations or other groups.
- Life or honorary members – people recognised for significant or long-term contributions.

Keep membership categories as simple as possible and clearly state who can vote and make decisions.

Committee size

A committee of around 5–8 people is often large enough to share the workload while remaining practical. Aim for a mix of skills, experience and perspectives. Different viewpoints can lead to better discussion, stronger decisions and new ideas. Your constitution should explain how committee members are appointed or elected, how long they serve and what happens when someone leaves.

Financial year

Your constitution should state when your financial year begins and ends.

The committee is generally responsible for:

- Keeping appropriate financial records;
- Monitoring income, expenditure and budgets;
- Preparing required financial statements; and
- Holding an AGM within 3 months of end of financial year and completing any required reporting.

Online meeting permission

If your group wants to hold meetings online or allow people to attend remotely, make sure your constitution allows this. Your rules should also explain how attendance, voting and decision-making will work online. Get permission before recording a meeting.

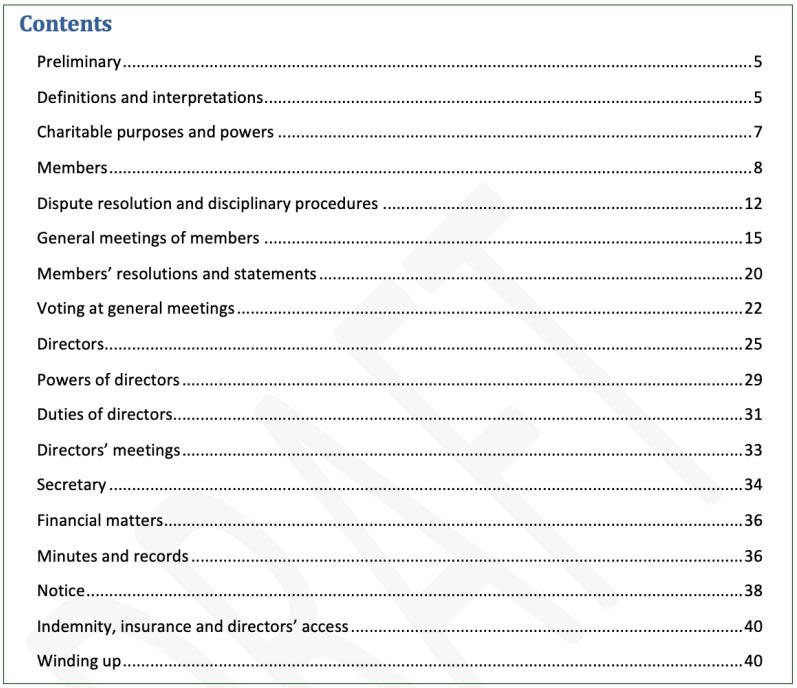
Winding up

Your constitution should explain what happens if the group closes, including how debts, costs and any remaining assets will be managed. Depending on the rules and legislation that apply, current or recent members may have limited responsibilities when an incorporated association is wound up.

Grant / partnership powers

Make sure your constitution gives the group appropriate powers to apply for and receive grants, enter partnerships and manage funding. It should also be clear:

- Who can approve and sign agreements
- Who can manage grants and partnerships on behalf of the group
- How conflicts of interest will be managed
- Who is responsible for financial reporting and grant acquittals.



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Figure 1 - Contents page of Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee contitution template

Resources

- **Tasmanian resources**
  - **incorporated associations**

    https://consumeraffairs.tas.gov.au/topics/clubs-fundraising/incorporated-associations
  - **model rules for associations (including a downloadable template word document)**

    https://consumeraffairs.tas.gov.au/topics/clubs-fundraising/incorporated-associations/constitution-model-rules-amendments-breaches
- **Constitution templates for not-for-profit organisations**
  - **incorporated as a public company limited by guarantee (CLG)**

    https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/templates/charitable-company-limited-guarantee-constitution-template (see Figure 1)
  - **unincorporated association**

    https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/templates/rules-for-charitable-unincorporated-association

How this resource came about

The Emerge project was funded by the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund to support new, emerging and informal farmer groups to develop their skills and knowledge, and to create this set of resources for use by groups into the future. Groups participating in 2026 received coaching and additional learning opportunities to supplement the content of these resources.

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