Constitution Review – Summary of Changes

1. Background and Purpose

St Patrick's Hockey Club's existing rules were recently reviewed to ensure they remain relevant to the Club's size, operations and governance requirements.

With over 400 members, the Club requires a clear governance framework that supports effective decision-making, accountability, continuity of operations and the participation of its members. The review also provided an opportunity to modernise the language, update the structure and establish a clearer distinction between governance responsibilities and the operational roles undertaken by volunteers.

The objective was not simply to update individual clauses, but to produce a consolidated Constitution that reflects the Club's current operating model and provides a sound foundation for its future development. As part of this project of work, care has been taken to ensure that the identity, objectives and purpose of St Patrick's Hockey Club remain in our updated version.

2. Approach and Alignment

The Constitution has been comprehensively redrafted rather than amended clause by clause. The review has used the following as its principal reference points:

- ACT Model Rules: The structure and presentation of the Constitution have been organised into Parts and sequentially numbered rules, broadly following the format of the model rules for incorporated associations in the ACT.

- Associations Incorporation Act 1991 (ACT): The Constitution recognises the legislative framework governing the Club's incorporation, including matters such as membership, meetings, financial administration and winding up. All elements required under legislation are included in the Club's new draft Constitution.

- Hockey ACT (HACT) and Hockey Australia (HA): The Constitution recognises the Club's affiliation obligations and the applicable governing rules, policies and competition requirements.

- Contemporary sporting governance: The draft places greater emphasis on accountability, procedural fairness, financial stewardship, conflicts of interest, inclusion and transparent decision-making.

- St Patrick's operating model: The rules have been tailored to the Club's agreed governance arrangements, including an elected Executive, appointed Committee Members, separate operational role descriptions and reference to discipline process requirements consistent with current standards.

The document has been consolidated into eight Parts, consisting of a set of Rules numbered sequentially. Committee position descriptions have been removed from the Constitution and are intended to sit in a separate Roles and Responsibilities document, which is consistent with guidance received.

3. Major Changes from the Existing Rules

A. Modernised language and objectives

The Constitution uses gender-neutral language and consistent terminology throughout. The former provided a longer list of club objects and purposes and has been replaced with a more succinct statement of the Club's objectives that focuses on; participation, player and coach development, sportsmanship, inclusion, volunteerism, sound governance, responsible financial management and social engagement. The name of the document has been changed from Club Rules to Constitution which is consistent with other organisations like ours.

Reference to purchasing, developing or leasing property has been removed from the updated version.

The Club's colours remain Green and White and its financial year remains 1 October to 30 September.

B. Clearer governance structure

The former Executive Committee terminology has been replaced with 'the Executive'. The Executive consists of four elected positions:

- President;

- Deputy President;

- Secretary; and

- Treasurer.

The Deputy President has been added to strengthen leadership capacity and provide greater continuity should the President be unavailable. These are the only positions elected directly by Club members. Other Committee Members are appointed by the Executive and remain appointed until they resign, are removed or are replaced.

The Constitution no longer lists individual Committee positions. These will be detailed in the separate Roles and Responsibilities document, allowing the Club to adjust its operational structure without repeatedly amending its Constitution.

C. Membership and member rights

The membership provisions have been reorganised to clarify admission, membership categories, fees, the register of members, resignation and cessation of membership.

The draft recognises Playing Members, Associate Members and Life Members. It also addresses approved payment arrangements and the consequences of outstanding fees for voting rights.

Life Membership remains the Club's highest honour. The draft retains the 75% approval threshold, provides for nominations to be considered before the Annual General Meeting, and limits awards to two per calendar year unless members approve otherwise by Special Resolution. Life Members retain voting rights and are exempt from membership fees.

D. Meetings and decision-making

Meeting provisions have been consolidated and expanded to support modern Club administration. The draft provides for electronic and hybrid meetings, electronic communications and proxy voting.

The General Meeting quorum has been increased, reflecting the Club's membership size. A Special General Meeting must be convened when requested by at least 20% of members entitled to vote.

Executive decision-making outside formal meetings has also been formalised. Out of Session Decisions must be recorded by the Secretary, maintained in a register and reported at the next Executive meeting. This is consistent with current governance standards and creates a clearer record of decisions and improves accountability.

E. Governance continuity and conflicts of interest

New or expanded provisions address temporary absences from elected Executive positions and appointed Committee positions. The Executive is responsible for putting mitigation arrangements in place when an Executive member is temporarily unavailable and advising the Committee. Committee vacancies or absences may be managed by carrying the gap, appointing another person or using a deputy where available.

The Constitution also introduces a specific conflict-of-interest requirement, including disclosure and recording of conflicts and arrangements for managing participation in affected decisions.

F. Discipline and procedural fairness

The disciplinary provisions have been expanded to establish the Club's authority to consider complaints and disciplinary matters, take appropriate interim measures, impose sanctions and refer matters to external bodies where appropriate.

The Constitution establishes minimum principles of procedural fairness, including advising a member of the substance of a complaint, providing an opportunity to respond, considering relevant information and communicating the outcome.

Detailed procedures will remain in the separate Club Discipline and Complaints Process consistent with the recommended approach for organisations like ours. This allows operational procedures to be refined without requiring a constitutional amendment for every change.

G. Financial management and administration

The financial provisions have been strengthened to clarify the Executive's responsibility for financial oversight and the Treasurer's responsibility for day-to-day financial administration.

The draft addresses banking arrangements, expenditure controls, financial reporting, audit or review requirements, and the maintenance and security of Club records. A two-Executive-approval expectation for electronic payments remains in place, subject to any arrangements approved under the Constitution.

4. Overall Outcome

The proposed Constitution represents a shift from the previous set of club rules towards a more structured and updated governance framework. It clarifies who is responsible for governing the Club, how members participate in decisions, how operational responsibilities are allocated and how complaints and financial matters are managed.

The Constitution is also designed to work alongside supporting documents, particularly the Roles and Responsibilities document and the Club Discipline and Complaints Process. This separates enduring governance rules from operational detail and should make the Club's framework easier to maintain as its needs evolve.

Thank you to the many people that provided feedback and guidance as we work through the process of updating our club rules. This piece of work commenced in early 2025 and various drafts and versions of the document have been circulated for review and feedback. In particular we thank Life Member Peter Elliott and Committee member Nicole Bettiol who both gave helpful context relating to the 2017 review of the Club Rules and valuable advice and suggestions relevant to our updated Constitution.

Dan Sagrott 28 Oct 26

Secretary
St Patrick's Hockey Club