



Constitution Update #1 September 2026

Frequently Asked Questions

The constitution of the New Farm and Districts Historical Society (the Society) hasn't been updated since 2005. The management committee has worked with a specialist not-for-profit lawyer to bring it up to date with current Queensland law and modern governance practice with support from the Historical Organisation Assistance Grant provided by the Brisbane City Council. These FAQs and answers explain why, what's changing, and how members can have their say.

Background

Q 1. Why is the Society updating its constitution?

The current constitution of the Society was registered in 2005 and hasn't been reviewed since. Queensland's template rules for incorporated associations (the "Model Rules", published under the Associations Incorporation Act 1981) were last updated in 2024, and expectations have grown around good governance for community organisations, charities, and not-for-profit groups.

Q 2. Was there a specific issue that triggered this review?

No. As part of good governance, committees are expected to periodically ensure that their Society's constitution still reflects current law and best practice. The management committee identified that our constitution no longer aligned well with the Model Rules or modern best practice and decided to act now rather than wait for a problem to arise. The committee treated this process as a proactive health check.

Q 3. How was this review funded?

The review was funded and approved under Year 2 of the Brisbane City Council's Historical Organisational Assistance Grant. This meant a properly qualified specialist lawyer could be engaged to help guide the process, giving members confidence that the new constitution has been through a genuinely professional review.

Who was involved and what was the process?

Q 4. Who drafted the new constitution?

The management committee sought out a lawyer with specific expertise in corporate governance for not-for-profits, charities, and community organisations and engaged Lesleigh Mayes from Mayes Law to assist in the review.

- The committee reviewed our existing constitution and identified the areas it believed needed to change or be improved, based on the Society's own experience and gaps identified against the current Model Rules.
- The committee requested Lesleigh Mayes to professionally review the committee's suggested changes and recommendations.
- Lesleigh reviewed those recommendations, checked them against the current Model Rules and relevant law, and then drafted a new constitution. This incorporated the committee's requested changes within a document that meet (and in a number of places exceed) the Model Rules' requirements.
- The committee reviewed the new draft constitution in detail to ensure the changes were appropriate, well explained, and in the Society's and members' best interests.

What's actually changing for members?

Q 5. What are the most important changes for members, in plain terms?

Several useful protections and improvements are being introduced, including:

- Members' rights are written in plain language for the first time, including your right to receive notices, view Society records, nominate for the committee, vote, and take part in Society activities.
- Formal recognition of email as a valid way to receive notices, which is more reliable than relying on post alone.
- Stronger conflict-of-interest rules, confirming when committee members must declare, and step back from, any matter they may have a personal interest in.
- A fair process for resolving disagreements. Previously there was no formal way to resolve a dispute between members, or between a member and the committee. The new constitution introduces clear steps, including independent mediation if required.
- Insurance provisions, allowing the Society to insure committee members and staff, which wasn't provided for in the old constitution.
- Better protection of our history and assets in the unlikely event that the Society is ever wound up.

Q 6. What is staying the same?

- ✓ The purpose of the Society stays the same: to research, record, conserve and promote the history of New Farm and surrounds.
- ✓ The Society remains a not-for-profit organisation. No Society funds or assets can ever be paid out as a profit to members, and the new constitution actually spells this out in more detail than before.
- ✓ Ordinary and Life memberships continue as they always have.

Q 7. Will my membership fee change because of this?

The new constitution changes the authority to set the annual membership fee from a member vote to a decision of the management committee. This is a common approach used by similar organisations. It does not mean fees will increase; any fee decision remains the committee's responsibility to exercise reasonably and in members' interests. Fees were last reviewed in 2025 and the committee aims to maintain these at the present level as long as possible.

What happens next, and how can I have my say?

Q 8. Has the new constitution already been decided, or can members still have input?

Adopting a new constitution is a decision for the members, not the committee alone. Members will have the opportunity to review it and ask questions before any vote occurs. Under both the current constitution and the new draft, constitutional changes require a special resolution, with at least 75% of eligible members present at the meeting voting in favour. This is designed to ensure any change to our governing document has strong support. Once passed, the new constitution will be formally registered with the Queensland Office of Fair Trading before it takes effect.

Q 9. When will the vote take place?

The proposed new constitution will be put to a members' vote at a general meeting on 24 October 2026. A copy of the new constitution will be shared on the society website before then. A copy will be emailed to you on request.

More information will be provided via email and in the October newsletter. Depending on feedback received, an updated list of FAQs and answers will be issued before the 24 October meeting.

We want every member to feel comfortable with this process. If anything in this FAQ or the new constitution isn't clear, or if you have a concern you'd like the committee to consider before the vote, please get in touch.

- 1/ Email - president@newfarmhistorical.org.au or secretary@newfarmhistorical.org.au; or
- 2/ Have a chat with one of your committee members; or
- 3/ Drop into our office each Thursday 2 – 4pm in the Ron Muir Room next to the New Farm Library.