

Notices of Motion – one-person, one vote for Notices of Motion

It is moved that

work be undertaken on modifications to the New Zealand Branch Constitution so that voting on *Notices of Motion for General Meetings* is managed in such a way as to enable each financial member to be responsible for the allocation of their own vote (often described as 'one-person, one-vote').

Moved Katharine Hoskyn

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Seconded Antanas Procuta

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Rationale:

This Notice of Motion is about a principle. It does not contain the precise detail about how this principle would be enacted. If this motion is successful, changes to the Branch constitution will be brought to a future AGM.

Previous AGM and instigation of working party:

A previous AGM instigated a working party and consultative process to investigate the possibility of the New Zealand Branch regarding adopting a membership-based voting system that enables each financial member to be responsible for the allocation of their own vote – whether directly, by proxy, postal or electronic voting – at General and Special meetings of the NZ Branch.

One reason for the concept (often referred to a one person-one vote) was to recognise that the financial members of the society are entitled to use their vote on matters before General Meetings as they see fit. It may be viewed that in the 'internet era' delegate-based voting is somewhat outdated, and to a certain extent, removed from democratic participation.

Consultation and brief summary of feedback:

The working party has consulted widely through two forums held at Summer Schools, a survey of branch members, online discussion forums, individual conversations instigated by interested parties and receipt of email feedback.

From this consultation it is apparent that there is a considerable body of opinion strongly in favour of the concept of one-person, one vote – from across New Zealand. This group mostly (but not exclusively) favours a process of voting whereby all votes are counted and a simple majority (or two-thirds for constitutional matters) are used to form an outcome.

It is clear that there is also a body of opinion strongly against the concept. If the concept were implemented however, this group of people mostly (but not exclusively) favours a system that employs the retention of proportional voting by regions as at present.

There are also people in the middle ground with a range of views.

As extra-ordinary as it may seem, while members may be divided on their preferred style of voting, they are mostly aiming for the same goals. The points on which all groups are in agreement are:

- The value and importance of discussion within regions prior to voting
- The importance of ensuring that all members can have input into voting
- The importance of preventing a group or region uniting and imposing a decision on the whole branch, based on a regional preference

A key concern by supporters of ‘one-person, one vote’ is the differing practices across regions. This means that the extent to which a member’s vote is ‘counted’ depends on the region within which they reside. For example five regions with only one or two votes are unable to split their vote to reflect diverse views. Some regions decide to cast all votes based on the majority view in their region. Even in large regions, if contrary views do not reach the threshold for one vote for be cast, the contrary views are not represented. Voting is not just about a decision being made, it is also about members feeling that they have been heard and recognised.

Statistics and level of engagement:

Level of engagement in online voting is a concern for people favouring voting at face-to-face meetings. The working party has currently calculated the current level of engagement in voting processes. The attendance at the Branch AGM is typically between 50 – 80 people, of which 40 are region delegates. Attendance in any one year at all region AGMS is typically between 140 – 180, with maximum attendance likely to be 205. This is 20% – 25% of membership. It is impossible to estimate how many people might engage with an online voting system (participation in surveys is completely different to engaging in voting). However numbers need to be assessed against current engagement.

Region AGMs have been described as utilising the ‘one-person, one-vote’ concept, as all members can vote a region AGMs. However other people believe that this is not really the case as travel and date/time of meeting can make meeting attendance difficult. There was also some concern about possible discomfort when regions use a show of hands for voting.

Concern about a group or region swaying a national decision was prevalent by supporters of both voting systems. Some people felt that proportional voting provided assurance that this would not happen. Some felt that this is more likely to occur with delegate voting than with individual member voting. Some people felt that this is a real concern. While others felt that this concern is over-stated and that even with voting by simple majority, it is very unlikely to happen.

Statistical analysis can provide some guidance on this. To aid this analysis the regions have been presented in order of size. This is simply a mechanism to aid mathematical calculation.

	No of Members	% of total	No of Delegates	% of total
Auckland	241	33.4%	13	31.7%
Wellington	140	19.4%	7	17.1%
Canterbury	104	14.4%	6	14.6%
Waikato Bay of Plenty	89	12.3%	5	12.2%
Rangitikei	53	7.4%	3	7.3%
Nelson Marlborough	34	4.7%	2	4.9%
Otago	30	4.2%	2	4.9%
Hawkes Bay East Coast	15	2.1%	1	2.4%
Southland	9	1.2%	1	2.4%
West Coast	6	0.8%	1	2.4%
	721	100.0%	41	100.0%

With the largest region being only 33% of the branch membership, it would require very considerable apathy across the whole of the rest of the branch for that region to implement something alone (and it would require the near-impossible task of getting the whole of the region to fully engage and vote in the same direction). Calculation of other scenarios (groups of regions) are also shown to be unlikely scenarios.

Other options:

A number of options, other than one-person, one-vote have been considered, such as altering the principle of 1 vote for every 20 member or part thereof. There are issues involved with that option. Other options involve trying to influence regions in how they manage their voting – something which is not part (and never likely to be) of the branch mandate.

Next steps:

Taking into account all the feedback from over the period of consultation, the Consult 2020 working party now believe that it is time to put this issue to an AGM vote. It is unclear whether support for 'one-person, one-vote' is sufficient to instigate change. However that can only be determined by putting the principle to an AGM.

If this motion passes, further work on the constitution would be required to implement. It is most likely that the process would be based on the concept of a simple majority voting. This work would take into account issues raised such as ensuring fairness for all members including those not using email or internet, whether a quorum/minimum level for a vote is needed etc. Discussion about processes, systems and timing would also be part of the implementation. Processes for notification of the vote and the role of the AGM also need to be considered in the process.

One aspect that is clear – the highly-valued discussion at region AGMS would still be part of the process. Feedback from all perspectives (both for and against the concept) would be part of the formulation of processes.

One -person, one vote – Motions regarding Determination of Branch Fees and Expenses for Office Bearers

It is moved that

work be undertaken on modifications to the New Zealand Branch Constitution so that voting on *Determination of Branch Service Fees and Expenses of Office Bearers* is managed in such a way as to enable enables each financial member to be responsible for the allocation of their own vote (often described as 'one-person, one-vote').

Moved Katharine Hoskyn



Seconded Antanas Procuta



Rationale:

As for previous notice, with the added comment that members need to have direct input into how their membership fees are spent.

This motion uses the expression used in the New Zealand Branch Constitution - *Determination of Branch Service Fees and Expenses of Office Bearers*. This encompasses the payments to Management Committee and other roles such as shop keeper, editor, summer school organiser or any other role that Management Committee chose to decide at the AGM.

The determination of fees and expenses differs from other Notices of Motion. If the motion recommended by Management Committee is defeated, an alternative mechanism for the decision needs to be available such as default to the status quo or having the decision made by delegates at an AGM.

This gives the best of both worlds. Management Committee can identify the will of individual members. If the membership do not like the recommendation of Management Committee, there is a second chance to formulate a decision.

Notice of Motion – Amending a Notice of Motion

It is moved that

The following clause be added as Clause 8.7 to the New Zealand Branch Constitution and subsequent clauses be re-numbered:

8.7 Amendments to Notices of Motion for an Annual General Meeting and Motions relating to the Determination of Branch Service Fees and expenses of Office Bearers:

- (1) Notices of Motion and Motions relating to the Determination of Branch Service Fees and expenses of Office Bearers must be pre-circulated via regions and/or directly to members by the Branch Secretary in a timeframe that allows discussion within regions prior to the formal distribution of the Notice of the meeting as described in Clause 8.2;*
- (2) Proposed amendments to such motions must be received by the Branch Secretary in writing, signed by two Branch members as mover and seconder; within a time frame that is advised by the Branch Secretary;*
- (3) The timeframe for pre-circulation of such motions and receipt of the proposed amendments must be advised by the Branch Secretary at least four months prior the Annual General Meeting;*
- (4) If more than one amendment to a motion is received, the President determines the order in which the amendments are considered at the AGM;*
- (5) An amendment to a motion can only be raised at the Branch AGM if it is a matter of urgency, and only with the agreement of delegates*

Moved: Katharine Hoskyn



Seconded: Quentin Currall



On behalf of the Consult 2020 Working Group

Rationale:

A previous AGM instigated work on the New Zealand Branch Constitution regarding pre-circulation of amendments. This current motion has been prepared by a working party (known as Consult 2020) to change the New Zealand Branch Constitution to implement this principle. The notice of motion has been informed by a survey of Branch members, online discussion groups and other feedback received from members.

Prior to discussing the notice of motion, the Consult 2020 working party would like to comment that generally, it is preferable if amendments to motions are not needed. The working group recommends that sufficient consultation is undertaken prior to the submission of motions. It may also be preferable to allow a motion to be lost at an AGM and bring a revised motion to a future meeting. However there will be situations when members may wish to propose an amendment and this current motion covers that situation.

Key principles in preparing this motion:

- To ensure sufficient guidance in the Constitution about the process while still allowing flexibility for processes and timeframes to vary without the changing the constitution
- The process in the Constitution is the minimum requirement. As at present, Management Committee may go beyond what is in the Constitution.

From a survey of Branch members, 60% of responses preferred only general principles be in the Constitution. 40% prefer more detailed specification of timing and process. We have endeavoured to strike a balance between these views.

Each point in the proposed new clause is now discussed:

Point (1): This has actually been current practice for many years, although not currently required by the New Zealand Branch Constitution. This point is simply placing a current well-established practice into the Constitution. The method of communication allows flexibility. The current practice is to communicate notices of motion to regions. Direct communication to members is not precluded but is not essential thus preventing the need for a specific postal mail-out.

Point 2 is the part of the motion requiring that amendments are pre-notified to the Branch Secretary. This means that, instead of amendments to Notices of Motion arising from the floor at AGM, they would be pre-notified, similar to the current practice for the RSCDS AGM. (For example, notices of motion received and circulated, amendments are sent to the Branch Secretary, the original motion and the amendment/s are then sent to members).

The Consult 2020 Working Group has identified that the current practice of amending motions from the floor at the AGM is problematic for the following reasons:

- It is difficult for region representatives as they have no opportunity to discuss the amendment with the members they represent
- Cumbersome wording can occur through drafting amendments 'on the spot' from the floor during the meeting
- There are potential difficulties in managing meeting procedures for Branch officers and meeting attendees with spontaneous or unnotified amendments, especially if complex
- The financial implications cannot be fully explained for an amendment only received at the meeting

The purpose of circulating amendments, as well as the original motion, is to enable better member-based discussion prior to the AGM.

Point (3) is about timeframe. Our recommendation is for timing to be advised to the membership by the Branch Secretary four months prior to the AGM. Adjustments to the timeframe can be made each year if required, without requiring a change to the constitution.

There is also a relatively short time frame within which to work. Consult 2020 did not consider it advisable to request earlier submission of notices of motion. The current timeframe in the lead up to the AGM is:

- Four months prior to AGM: Notices of Motion received by Branch Secretary;
- In September – notices of motion and determination of fees and expenses are circulated by Branch Secretary to regions
- September/October and early November: Region AGMs held
- Mid-November – Formal notice of Branch AGM circulated to members

Our survey showed differing views about whether notification of amendments should occur before or after region AGMs. A good approach would be to encourage amendments prior to region AGMs however require this pre-notification after region AGMs to give maximum flexibility. This would also allow amendment based on region discussion and differing timeframes in regions.

This approach would seem to be a good compromise between the differing points of view and offers the greatest flexibility.

Point (4) is again simply stating current practice, that the President decides how to handle multiple amendments to a motion – as would currently happen, if multiple amendments were raised at meeting. The difference is that at a meeting, the President would have to make an instant decision with little opportunity to consult with others. With pre-notification of amendments, the President has the opportunity to seek advice. This question was raised at three of forums held at the time of the survey of members about the issue of amendments to motions.

Point (5) is also in response to queries received at forums and from people contacting the Consult 2020 working party. This enables an amendment to a motion to occur at the AGM should something unexpected arise that is important or critical. It is described as a matter of urgency, as it would generally refer to an issue that must be handled straight away and cannot be left to a future year or special meeting. It is a ‘backstop’ to cover the “unexpected”, which hopefully would not be needed.

While differing views may be held about several aspects of this motion, consultation at forums and through a recent survey has shown how much members value discussion about Branch matters, especially at their Region AGM. The importance of delegates being able to represent the members in their regions has also been highlighted. The Consult 2020 working party has attempted to prepare a Notice of Motion that enables both those critical principles to be maintained, building in flexibility and compromise as much as possible.

Clauses from New Zealand Branch Constitution relating to AGM

The section in italics (8.7) is the new clause.

8. Branch Meetings

- 8.1. The Annual General Meeting of the Branch shall be held within six months after the end of its financial year at such place and time as may be determined by Management Committee. The Branch financial year shall end on 31 August each year. A Special General Meeting may be called at any time by the President. A Special General Meeting must be called if a requisition is signed by not less than 5% of the membership of the Branch.
- 8.2. Notice of Meeting: Notice of any General Meeting must be sent to all members at least six weeks before the holding of the meeting, specifying place and time the meeting is to start and the nature of the business to be transacted at that meeting. A Special General Meeting may be convened by giving less than six weeks' notice (but not less than one week's notice), if Management Committee deems it expedient to do so.
- 8.3. Voting:
- (1) At any General Meeting, each Region shall be entitled to one vote for every 20 members (or part of twenty) resident in the Region as at 30 September each year.
 - (2) These votes shall be exercised by the Region delegates appointed under clause 5.5. All votes to which a Region is entitled may be exercised by the Region's delegates, except that no delegate may carry more than three votes in total.
 - (3) A vote by ballot by post and electronic means of individual Branch members may be held at the discretion of the Management Committee or if approved at a Branch Annual General Meeting, in accordance with the requirements of clause 9.3(2) to (8) inclusive.
 - (4) The Chair of the meeting (as determined by clauses 7.1 and 7.2) shall have a casting vote. 8.4 Quorum: Delegates representing not less than one quarter of the membership
- 8.4. Quorum: Delegates representing not less than one quarter of the membership and two-thirds of the Regions shall constitute a quorum for any General Meeting.
- 8.5. Business of AGM: The order of business at the Annual General Meeting shall, as nearly as may be, consist of:
- (1) the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting and of any Special General Meeting held in the course of the year;
 - (2) report of the President or the Secretary on the year's working of the Branch;
 - (3) the Treasurer's Report and Approval of the Annual Financial Statements, which shall be audited or reviewed;
 - (4) reports from each of the other members of the Management Committee including accounting for use of budgeted funds;
 - (5) election of each of the members of the Management Committee;
 - (6) appointment of an appropriately qualified individual to conduct an independent audit or review of the Annual Financial Statements for the coming year;
 - (7) determination of Branch service fees, and expenses of Office Bearers;
 - (8) voting on Notices of Motion;
 - (9) any other business raised by any Branch member or by Management Committee.

8.6 Notices of Motion: Notices of Motion must be:

- (1) received by the Secretary of the Branch at least four months before the Annual General Meeting, subject to clause 8.7;
- (2) in writing, signed by two Branch members as mover and seconder; and
- (3) circulated with the notice of meeting (see clause 8.2).

8.7 Amendments to Notices of Motion for an Annual General Meeting and Motions relating to the Determination of Branch Service Fees and expenses of Office Bearers:

- (1) Notices of Motion and Motions relating to the Determination of Branch Service Fees and expenses of Office Bearers must be pre-circulated via regions and/or directly to members by the Branch Secretary in a timeframe that allows discussion within regions prior to the formal distribution of the Notice of the meeting as described in Clause 8.2;*
- (2) Proposed amendments to such motions must be received by the Branch Secretary in writing, signed by two Branch members as mover and seconder; within a time frame that is advised by the Branch Secretary;*
- (3) The timeframe for pre-circulation of such motions and receipt of the proposed amendments must be advised by the Branch Secretary at least four months prior the Annual General Meeting;*
- (4) If more than one amendment to a motion is received, the President determines the order in which the amendments are considered at the AGM;*
- (5) An amendment to a motion can only be raised at the Branch AGM if it is a matter of urgency, and only with the agreement of delegates.*

8.8 A Notice of Motion for discussion at a Special General Meeting need not be received at least four months before the meeting, if it was included in the requisition of the meeting or is received by the Secretary at least one week before the last day on which the notice of meeting can be circulated in accordance with clause 8.2.

Remit

Sustainable Funding for NZ Regions

The Wellington Region proposes that the NZ Branch Management Committee look to allocate a portion of the annual NZ Branch Membership Fee to the Regions to provide them with a sustainable income. This income to be used to promote Scottish Country Dancing and provide services that enable a sustainable and vibrant dancing community within the Regions. The use of the funds would be at the discretion of the Regions but could include (but would not be limited to):

- Promotion of Scottish Country Dancing at a regional level
- Running teacher training courses
- Funding travel for teachers/club tutors to travel to training being held in another region
- Purchase of fixed assets for region use (promotional flags, music, equipment etc.)

We further propose that change should be implemented by the 2024-2025 Membership year.



Proposed by: Ann Oliver (Wellington Region President)

Date: 25/8/2021



Seconded by: Margaret Cantwell (Wellington Region Treasurer)

Date: 25/8/2021

Rationale:

To ensure a sustainable and vibrant Scottish Country Dancing in the Regions it is essential that regular promotional activities are undertaken and services are provided to encourage teachers, musicians and clubs to work to support and grow the community. Without a sustainable source of funding Regions are unable to commit to medium or long term regional strategies to enhance the vibrancy and sustainability of the local dancing communities.

Historically the Branch has retained the full NZ Branch membership fee and used this to support dancing across NZ. The membership fees collected have exceeded the outgoings of the NZ Branch and annual surpluses have resulted in the NZ Branch having significant accumulated assets.

Branch involvement in promoting Scottish Country Dancing in recent years has been limited to the provision of printed brochures and the awarding of grants for activities undertaken at region level, as approved by the NZ Branch.

While Regions have been able to apply for grants for individual events, processing of

requests takes time and confirmation of funding is not always available in the timeframe required to support Regions committing to an initiative. As the NZ Branch continues to run surpluses and hold significant accumulated assets it seems inappropriate to introduce Regional levies to support the required activities. Any region activities must therefore be funded from surpluses on events held. This results in a small group of regular dancers funding activities that benefit the whole dancing community.

The Regions all have different needs, depending on their size, geography and experience within their dancing community. Each Region is best placed to understand their own development needs and would be empowered address these if funds from the NZ Branch RSCDS membership were allocated to Regions.

Prior to the reduction in fees for 2020-21 (due to Covid considerations) the combined Branch and Society fee for an adult single member had been \$90NZD for a significant period of time. The combined fee for the 2021-22 year has been set at \$81, with the Branch portion being approximately \$6 lower than in pre-covid times. One option would be to revert to the prior fee levels and commit to a fixed amount per member being paid to the Regions.

Notice of Motion

Honoraria and Payments for Management Committee position holders

That Management Committee undertake an assessment of the implementation of the recommendations of the June 2016 Review of Payments prepared by Liz Hickey; and in particular whether the balance between overall cost and fair treatment of all Management Committee members is being achieved in the most efficient and effective way.



Proposed by: Quentin Currall

Date: 31/8/21



Seconded by: Michele Miller

Date: 31/8/21

Rationale:

Recent decisions made by New Zealand Branch AGMs are:

At the 2015 AGM Remit 1A was carried: "That Management Committee and other Branch appointees continue to be able to be reimbursed for reasonable actual expenditure on NZ Branch business".

At the 2016 AGM Remit 1(iii) was passed "that the total package of payments" (to office bearers and other positions) be reviewed. The Management Committee asked Liz Hickey to undertake the review.

In June 2016 the report of the review by Liz Hickey was sent to the Branch membership. In her recommendations was the observation that "there will need to be a balance between the overall cost and the fair treatment of all members of the Management Committee". This report was accepted by the Management Committee and has formed the basis of decision-making for subsequent years.

At the 2017 AGM Remit 2 was passed authorising the Branch Treasurer and Secretary to each claim an annual honorarium of \$1,000 and for all 8 members of the Management Committee the non-dancing Summer School fee (i.e. accommodation and meals) be paid.

Similar Remits (now Motions) were passed at each subsequent AGM.

From time to time, queries about the implementation of the report have been raised. We emphasise that we are not suggesting that the report be reviewed. It is a review of the *implementation* of the report that is recommended.

With the experience of 5 years and in the light of several circumstances that have changed in recent years including costs for accommodation and meals and meeting practices, it is now a good time to review the interpretation and implementation of the June 2016 report, to assess whether the balance between total cost and fairness is being struck and whether there are other steps that could be taken to help with that balance in the future.