

# The Australia Society

in Belgium

## Proposed Constitution

September 1998

### Preamble:

The Australia Society in Belgium, since its formal inauguration from *The Australian Residents Group*, in October 1991 has seen some rapid growth in both members and annual budget turnover. From a loosely organised group of like minded friends, meeting for regular morning coffees, to a membership of around 100 families and single people living in Belgium; an estimated readership of *The Boomerang* in excess of 150 households and annual financial turnover growing from less than a thousand francs, in 1991, to more than 150,000 Belgian Francs in the year 1997/98 the potential for further growth in membership and financial turnover is without doubt.

Further interest in the group is anticipated to increase, from the wider expat and indigenous communities, with the inauguration, this year of several contact organisations for foreign residents of Belgium and at least two internet web pages targeted specifically to “new” residents of Belgium. These contact groups all list The Australia Society in their communications and on their web pages and are expected to contribute to the increasing profile of The Australia Society in this part of Europe in the future.

Selected members of the 1997/98 committee were called upon to answer around a dozen letters and enquiries received through The Australia Society’s own internet site or directed through the contact groups already mentioned. The Australian Embassy in Brussels also directed a number of people to designated committee members regarding enquiries on “Australian social activities” in Belgium and more general membership questions. Thus the Embassy has become a significant first contact point bringing together The Australia Society and “new” Australian residents to Belgium.

Limited correspondence was also initiated with two similar Australian groups to ours, one from Holland and another based in Paris.

It is therefore expected that growth in interest and membership of The Australia Society in Belgium, and with it financial turnover, will continue to grow in the foreseeable future, if at a slower rate.

The current committee considers that, with the future in mind, some of the key roles and responsibilities of the committee need to be incorporated into the Constitution.

The main issues at stake are:

1. To restate the purpose of The Australia Society.
2. To formalise certain key roles within the committee
3. To preserve the “Australianness” of the group.

### Name:

**The Australia Society in Belgium.**

Also referred to here after as “The Society” or “Society”, as appropriate.

The Name **The Australia Society in Belgium** and the two “*Boomerang*” logos used (see attachments) are owned by The Society and may only be reproduced, used or affected in any way or form with the express consent of a majority decision of the committee (see Committee)

*The Boomerang* is the name of The Society’s regular newsletter.

### Mission Statement:

The Society was set up, as a **non-commercial, non-profit** making organisation to be **run by volunteers**, for the benefit of Australian residents of Belgium, their families and friends, and to present a means/forum by which they may meet on a social basis through social and cultural gatherings and activities.

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**Membership:**

**Membership is by application only** and is open to:

1. all Australian citizens, and their families, living or working in Belgium.
2. to other people who have family ties with Australia or those who can demonstrate strong links with the country, at the discretion of the committee.
3. Membership may also be extended to persons who satisfy any of the above criteria but live in Australia or another part of Europe, at the discretion of the committee.

Honorary Membership

May be granted to certain individuals, for their service to The Society, at the discretion of the committee for a period of time as determined by the sitting committee at the time.

**Honorary Membership** means normal membership to The Society and full rights as a member, without payment of annual membership fee.

Membership disputes/problems

Membership problems and disputes should be discussed at a full Committee Meeting with The President arbitrating if necessary.

Membership may be suspended, or cancelled by a majority decision of the sitting committee in the event that any individual member or members are found, by the committee, to have brought the Society into disrepute or found to be in breach of the terms set forth in this Constitution.

**Subscription:**

Membership will be for twelve months, from September to August and will cost **BF500 per family per year**.

Membership fee

This subscription fee may be reassessed annually with the subscription level being voted on and formally announced at the AGM and printed in the first issue, of *The Boomerang*.

**Office Bearers:**  
elected

The Society will be administered by a **volunteer committee** who shall be democratically for **terms of twelve months** (September to August).

Election of office bearers

shall take place at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held in September, of every year, or on a date, set by the sitting committee as close to September as practical. (See also Society Meetings; AGM).

Nominations

for all committee positions will be called for at least one month prior to the AGM, and will be advertised for in *The Boomerang*, with nominations remaining open until fifteen (15) minutes prior to the AGM.

**Executive Committee**

The committee will include **seven (7) Executive members**, comprising **President, Vice-President, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Treasurer, Editor** and , a **Children's Functions Coordinator**.

Election to **Executive Committee** positions will be open to all financial Society members who are **Australian Citizens at the time of election**.

General Committee

The committee will also comprise an **Editors sub-committee, Coffee Morning Coordinator, Internet Communications/IT Coordinator** and a group of **General Committee Members** whose positions will be open to all financial Society members.

Any member of the Society may be appointed to the General Committee, or to any newly created position on the committee as the need arises provided that person satisfies the basic criteria for the position being filled, in line with this constitution..

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**Office Bearers (continued):**

Committee Vacancies

Committee positions that become vacant during the year may be filled, until the end of the operating year, from within the committee by a majority decision of the committee, or by appointment of another financial member if no other suitable candidate can be found, at the discretion of the committee.

Financial Society members may be appointed to the General committee during the year as seen appropriate by the sitting committee.

**Office Bearer's Positions:**

**President**

Shall be an elected office. (See also, **Office Bearers**).

Duties include managing the administration of the Society, in accordance with The Society's **Mission Statement** and this **Constitution**, chairing meetings, and will be responsible to members for general Society business.

The **President** will at times need to make decisions that ensure the smooth running of The Society. These decisions should be ratified at the next committee meeting.

The President may be called upon to adjudicate in any disputes that may arise from normal Society activities.

Members of the **Executive Committee** will report to **The President** either through normal **Committee Meetings** or as necessary.

**Vice-President**

Shall be an elected office. (See also, **Office Bearers**).

Duties include assisting The President and standing in, as appropriate.

**The Vice-President** will chair meetings in the absence of **The President**.

**Secretary**

Shall be an elected office. (See also, **Office Bearers**).

Duties include handling Society correspondence and taking minutes of meetings.

**Membership Secretary**

Shall be an elected office. (See also, **Office Bearers**).

The Membership Secretary will be responsible, to the **Committee**, for managing and maintaining the Society database, as required; collecting and filing correspondence related to membership matters; and keeping adequate records of member's details.

The Society database is an important Society asset and it is the responsibility of the Membership Secretary to manage the database in accordance with The Society's **Mission Statement**, this **Constitution** and EU laws governing the use of databases and mailing lists.

**Editor**

Shall be an elected office. (See also, **Office Bearers**).

The Editor will be responsible, to the committee, for all matters relating to *The Boomerang*. The Editor will have full **Editorial responsibility** for *The Boomerang*, and will manage the newsletter in accordance with The Society's **Mission Statement** and other **guidelines laid down by the Committee**, as appropriate.

The Editor will also manage the **Editor's Committee**, in accordance with The Society's **Mission Statement**.

The Editor will be responsible for all correspondence relating to *The Boomerang* and for passing copies of these on to The Secretary for archival purposes, as appropriate.

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**Office Bearer's Positions (Continued):**

**Treasurer**

Shall be an elected office. (See also, **Office Bearers**).

The Treasurer will be responsible for managing The Society's accounts, including a **Bank Account** and a **Petty Cash Float**.

The **Treasurer** will be responsible for making decisions that ensure the smooth running of The Society, on a day-to-day basis. This will include the authorisation of the payment of bills and accounts, as they fall due for payment. These decisions/actions should then be ratified by the committee at the next committee meeting.

**Financial Statements**

The Treasurer will also be responsible for providing up-to-date accounts details to Committee Meetings and for **compiling and presenting annual statements to The AGM**, in accordance with normally accepted standards or as may be ruled on by the Committee.

**Children's Functions Coordinator**

Shall be an elected office. (See also, **Office Bearers**).

The Children's Functions Coordinator will be responsible for managing the **Baby and Toddlers Group(s)**, in accordance with The Society's Mission Statement and Constitution. Where necessary the Children's Functions Coordinator will report to the committee on **Baby and Toddler Group** activities.

The Children's Functions Coordinator will also be responsible for liaison with the committee on other Society's Children's activities and functions and for managing any sub-committees that may be set up to organise these functions or activities.

**Baby and Toddlers Group**

was originally set up as a forum where Australian children, up to three (0-3) years of age, can meet and play with other like Australian children, in an "Australian play" setting.

The Baby and Toddlers Group should remain open to all families, regardless of nationality, **provided they are financial members of The Australia Society**. (This also requires that they are eligible for membership).

Where possible the **Children's Functions Coordinator** should be Australian to preserve the "Australianness" of this group.

**General Committee**

General Committee Members shall be elected to office. (See also, **Office Bearers**).

In accordance with The Society's Mission Statement and Constitution any financial Society Member may be appointed to the General Committee during the year at the discretion of a majority vote by the Committee.

**Patron:**

The Society may have a Patron.

**Society Meetings:  
Committee Meetings**

Committee meetings will be held regularly and will be chaired by the President or in his/her absence by the Vice-President or their appointee.

Committee meetings may be called by the President, or otherwise set by majority agreement with the committee and announced in all "full" issues of *The Boomerang*.

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Voting Rights	<p><b>All committee members and anyone attending the committee meetings</b>, who are fully paid-up financial Society members, <b>shall have equal voting rights</b>.</p> <p>It should be noted that all members of families are members of The Society and as such have equal voting rights.</p> <p>Meetings will be <b>open to all financial Society members</b>, who shall have <b>equal voting rights</b>. In the event of a "tie", in any matter voted on, the President (or Chair as appropriate) may cast a deciding vote.</p>
Minutes of Meetings	will be taken and read by the Secretary (or appointed officer) and copies made available to all committee members and any fully paid-up financial Society member who may request it.
<b>Annual General Meeting (AGM)</b>	<p>The <b>AGM</b> will be held on a date in September, set by the sitting committee, or as close to September as practical.</p> <p>The <b>AGM</b> shall be called by the sitting President, with the agenda and notice, for this meeting, being printed in <i>The Boomerang</i>, to give members reasonable notice of the date and issues concerned.</p> <p>All committee positions will be voted on at the AGM, with selection for nominated position by prior nomination only (see Nominations, below).</p> <p>The out-going President, or in her/his absence The Vice President, will chair the meeting.</p>
Minutes	of the <b>AGM</b> will be taken by The Secretary.
Agenda	an agenda for the <b>AGM</b> will be published in <i>The Boomerang</i> , as above, and will include the following items: <b>Presentation of Financial Statements, Membership Report, and Election of Office Bearers</b> . The AGM will not be used for normal day to day business of The Society.
Financial Statements	in accordance with this Constitution and normally accepted reporting standards will be presented to the meeting by The Treasurer.
Membership Report	in the form of a brief summary will be presented by the Membership Secretary.
Election of Office Bearers	Office Bearers will be democratically elected from nominations received by The Secretary in accordance with the guidelines outlined in this Constitution (see <b>Nominations</b> ).
Nominations	<p>for all committee positions will be called for in <i>The Boomerang</i>, with nominations remaining open until fifteen (15) minutes prior to the advertised starting time of the AGM.</p> <p>Nominations will be collated by The Secretary.</p> <p>Reasonable notice, as determined by the sitting committee at the time, shall be give for members to arrange for their chosen nominations to be registered by The Secretary.</p>
Proxy votes	from fully paid-up financial Society members, either mailed, e-mailed or otherwise delivered to <b>The Secretary and received prior to the meeting or presented</b> on the behalf of a fully financial member by another fully financial member, at the AGM, will be accepted for the election of Office Bearers and any other matters arising from the set agenda or extraordinary business at the AGM.
Extraordinary Meetings	may be called by <b>The President</b> or a <b>quorum of sitting Committee members</b> .

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- Quorum:** A **quorum** for a general committee meeting shall comprise **at least six (6) elected committee members**, and shall include **at least three (3) Executive committee members**.
- A quorum for the AGM** shall comprise at least twenty (20%) percent of the fully paid-up membership.
- Majority** for all Society meetings **shall be a simple majority**, that is fifty one (51%) percent of the those members present at the AGM, committee meeting or extraordinary meetings, plus any proxy votes as appropriate, and, indicated to the Secretary, either prior to or at the meeting (according to the AGM guidelines, above).
- Amendments:** to this Constitution may only be made after being presented to members and voted on either at the AGM or in an extraordinary meeting called for that purpose.
- Notice** of proposed amendments should be mailed or otherwise presented to members in advance of the meeting at which they will be debated and voted on.
- Proposed amendments will be passed or defeated at the meeting called for this purpose by a majority of those present at the meeting plus any proxy votes presented at the same meeting (see Quorum; Majority).
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Presented to members September 1998.