

# NEWCASTLE AND HUNTER VALLEY SPELEOPLOGICAL SOCIETY

## BY-LAWS

### 1. BADGES

- 1.1 Badges and emblems of the Society in any form shall only be sold to members.
- 1.2 The selling price of badges, emblems and other items shall be determined by the committee.

### 2. INTERPRETATION

- 2.1 The committee shall have absolute discretion and interpretation on all matters where these By-Laws and other Codes of the Society are otherwise silent.
- 2.2 The abbreviation 'ASF', where used in these By-Laws, shall mean the Australian Speleological Federation Inc.
- 2.3 A meeting can be face to face, via a digital platform or where appropriate via online communications to all Committee members as part of a discussion.

### 3. DISCIPLINE

- 3.1 Reprimands or suspension or expulsion may be issued to members for **any** of the following reasons:
  - 3.1.1 Infringements of the ASF Code of Ethics or ASF Safety Code.
  - 3.1.2 Infringements of the Constitution or By-laws or other codes of the Society.
  - 3.1.3 Conduct which may be detrimental to the name or functioning of the Society.
- 3.2 Disciplinary action will only be instigated at a Committee meeting which will be conducted in confidence of which the member(s) involved shall be notified at least seven (7) days in advance. Failure to attend such a Committee meeting, without valid reason, will be deemed as acceptance of any decision the Committee shall make.
- 3.3 In the event of disciplinary action being taken, the member(s) involved shall be informed of such action, in writing, within seven (7) days.
- 3.4 Provided that the Society is notified, in writing, within twenty-one (21) days of disciplinary action having been taken, the member(s) so affected shall have the right of appeal to a Special General Meeting.
- 3.5 Upon receipt of a Notice of Appeal, the Committee shall call a Special General Meeting where the members present at such meeting shall consider the appeal and thence accept, modify or reject the disciplinary action of the Committee.
- 3.6 Pending the outcome of an appeal, all disciplinary action will be suspended.

#### 4. **MEMBERSHIP**

NHVSS members shall be categorised as Introductory Single, Introductory Family, Family, Single Parent Family, Retired Family, Single, Student/Pensioner, Occasional, Social, ASF Already, Honorary Active Life and Honorary Inactive Life, so as to determine fees due when applying for, or renewing membership.

The membership category “Introductory” which appears in the By-Laws, is taken to be the same as the membership category “Novice” which is used in the NHVSS Constitution.

Honorary membership is dealt with in item 4.4.

##### 4.1 **INTRODUCTORY MEMBERS**

Shall be those members either single or family who:

- 4.1.1 have expressed an interest in speleology and are within their first 12 months of membership with NHVSS, OR
- 4.1.2 have not progressed to another membership status as defined below.
- 4.1.3 An Introductory Membership is not renewable after the expiry of 12 months, nor can this category be used to renew a membership which has lapsed.

##### 4.2 **FULL MEMBERS**

Shall be those persons aged 18 years and over who satisfy the Committee that they have a Responsible and safe attitude towards caving. They must demonstrate the ability to:

- 4.2.1 Possess, use and maintain their own equipment in good working order;
- 4.2.2 Be conversant with and adhere to the ASF Code of Ethics and other policies, and the safety code of the NHVSS and the ASF, accept the principles of these codes and undertake to cave by these standards.
- 4.2.3 Full members shall be in the following categories:-

**Family** – two parents with dependent children who join the Society. Dependants of a family can remain covered by family membership until such time as they cease to be a dependant (as per the taxation laws). The family pays membership fees at the rate set by the Society for a given membership year.

**Single parent family** – one parent with dependent children who join the Society. Dependants of a family can remain covered by family membership until such time as they cease to be a dependant (as per the taxation laws). The single parent family pays membership fees at the rate set by the Society for a given membership year.

**Retired family** – two retired adults with or without dependent children. Dependants of a family can remain covered by family membership until such time as they cease to be a dependant (as per the taxation laws). The retired family pays membership fees at the rate set by the Society for a given membership year.

**Single** – an individual who joins the Society but does not qualify for the other categories set out in the By-Laws and pays a single membership fee at the rate set out by the Society for a given membership year.

**Student/Pensioner** – full time independent student or a pensioner actively attending trips and pays a student/pensioner membership fee at the rate set out by the Society for a given membership year.

**Occasional** – retired adult who has been an active caver but now occasionally attends trips and pays an occasional membership fee at the rate set out by the Society for a given membership year.

**Social** – A person who attends social functions, and may attend caving trips but shall not participate in underground activities and pays a social membership fee at the rate set out by the Society for a given membership year.

**ASF Already** – A person who is already an ASF member through another club and pays an ASF Already membership fee at the rate set out by the Society for a given membership year.

#### 4.3 **HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS**

Shall be those persons who:

- 4.3.1 are recommended in writing by the Committee and
- 4.3.2 are elected to such membership by a seventy five (75) percent majority at a General Meeting in recognition of special qualities and/or services rendered to the NHVSS.
- 4.3.3 Shall enjoy all the privileges of a full member for LIFE or for such other time as may be determined by the Life member (in writing) or NHVSS members. This membership status may only be altered by NHVSS members by a 75% majority vote at a General Meeting.
- 4.3.4 Honorary Life Members (**ACTIVE and INACTIVE**). Membership can be either active if they attend trips regularly, or inactive if they no longer attend trips.

#### 4.4 **CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION**

- 4.4.1 Any changes in membership category shall be confirmed or otherwise by the committee and ratified by the next General meeting of members.

### 5. **DUTIES OF OFFICERS**

#### 5.1 The **PRESIDENT** will:

- 5.1.1 chair all meetings at which he is present, in accordance with the Society's Constitution, By-Laws and meeting procedures;
- 5.1.2 ensure that all Committee members are executing their portfolios;
- 5.1.3 encourage new members to be active and vocal in the Society's affairs;
- 5.1.4 ensure that all members are treated fairly and equally;
- 5.1.5 prepare an annual report outlining the Society's aims and achievements for the preceding year.
- 5.1.6 In general terms, the President is to be like a company managing director:-
  - converting member's wishes into realistic policies.
  - being visionary & versatile and able to see trends both within & outside the Society and advise & guide the Society accordingly – giving leadership but being willing to delegate authority.
  - having an overall knowledge of all the Society's activities, particularly those of the Officers,

without dominating or concentrating unduly on any particular area.  
- above all, representing the Society, it's principles and objectives.

5.2 The **VICE PRESIDENT** will:

- 5.2.1 assist the President, and in his absence, assume the role of President;
- 5.2.2 oversee that a thorough training program is being provided for members;
- 5.2.3 advise the Society of new techniques and safety concepts and recommend amendments of By-Laws and safety codes;
- 5.2.4 prepare an annual report on safety and accidents within the Society.
- 5.2.5 In general terms the Vice President:
  - complements the activities and duties of the President.

5.3 The **SECRETARY** will:

- 5.3.1 be the information and administration centre of the Society;
- 5.3.2 record business transacted at all meetings;
- 5.3.3 conduct the correspondence of the Society;
- 5.3.4 prepare the Annual Report of the Committee for the Annual General meeting;
- 5.3.5 maintain a register of members, including addresses, membership grading and other relevant details.

5.4 The **TREASURER** will:

- 5.4.1 maintain the accounts of the Society in an accurate and responsible manner;
- 5.4.2 receive and bank monies;
- 5.4.3 pay accounts as directed by the Committee;
- 5.4.4 record all receipts and payments of the Society;
- 5.4.5 present regular statements of accounts to meetings;
- 5.4.6 prepare the Annual Budget of the Society;
- 5.4.7 ensure the expenditure is reconciled with the Annual Budget;
- 5.4.8 prepare the Annual Accounts of Receipts and Expenditure together with supporting statements/documentation;
- 5.4.9 present the audited Annual Accounts of Receipts and Payments to the Annual General Meeting if the Committee deems it necessary.

5.5 The **EQUIPMENT OFFICER** will:

- 5.5.1 acquire, store and maintain equipment owned by the Society;

- 5.5.2 ensure that all equipment is in safe working condition and recommend the disposal of unsafe equipment;
- 5.5.3 maintain a register of equipment and goods, their acquisition and disposal;
- 5.5.4 establish and maintain an Equipment Loans Book;
- 5.5.6 recommend to the Committee items of equipment for inclusion in the Annual Budget.

5.6 The **EDITOR** will:

- 5.6.1 disseminate information on the Society's activities to its own members and others associated with speleology ;
- 5.6.2 produce on a regular basis the Society's newsletter "Newcaves Chronicles" and ensure a high standard of articles and publication is maintained;
- 5.6.3 ensure that trip reports are submitted;
- 5.6.4 distribute "Newcaves Chronicles" to financial members and other subscribers.

5.7 The **LIBRARIAN** will:

- 5.7.1 collect and maintain information pertaining to speleological and other relevant activities;
- 5.7.2 establish and maintain a catalogue of all publications owned by the Society;
- 5.7.3 ensure that publications are kept in a safe, neat and orderly manner;
- 5.7.4 recommend acquisition of publications considered desirable for the Society;
- 5.7.5 establish and maintain a Library Loans Book;
- 5.7.6 prepare an Annual Report including publications acquired and use of the library resource during the year;
- 5.7.7 establish and maintain a register of resource availability;
- 5.7.8 take into archives all trip and other reports pertaining to the activities of the Society.

5.8 The **PUBLICITY OFFICER** will:

- 5.8.1 publicise activities in an attempt to increase the membership and status of the Society in the community;
- 5.8.2 ensure adequate publicity of Society functions and activities;
- 5.8.3 arrange for the production and distribution of posters, handbills and notices.

5.9 The **TRAINING OFFICER** will:

- 5.9.1 arrange and assist in the training of members to further their caving skills in accordance with the ASF Caving Leadership Scheme;
- 5.9.2 notify the Committee when a member has gained appropriate skills to be recommended for a higher qualification;

- 5.9.3 Nominate at a General Meeting, any person who has (in the opinion of the Training Officer), gained the appropriate skills of a leadership qualification, ie Trip leader – Horizontal, Vertical Laddering, Vertical SRT, Vertical Multi Pitch;
- 5.9.4 maintain a register of members qualification and leadership grading. Liaise with the secretary to ensure that both registers are up to date;
- 5.9.5 maintain an up to date training manual in accordance with the ASF Caving Leadership Scheme, and provide updated copies to the nominated members as detailed in the manual for preparation, maintenance and control of training documents;
- 5.9.6 the Training Officer shall arrange Search and Rescue exercises at a time and venue to be of the most benefit to Society members, (preferably one per year).

## 6. TRIPS

- 6.1 Official trips of the Society are those that have been approved by the Committee and announced to the membership by newsletter or a General Meeting or as defined in 6.4.
  - 6.1.1 The trip leader should ensure that the trip be announced well in advance to all members and may be open to members of other clubs, depending on the trip;
- 6.2 Restricted trips are defined as official trips which are not open to all members by virtue of:
  - 6.2.1 restrictions on numbers by the land owner/manager. In such cases, members will be accepted in order of application or noted on a reserve list if the number has been reached;
  - 6.2.2 nature, location and /or level of competence required for safe participation. In such cases, the decision of the Trip Leader is final and absolute.
- 6.3 Any member wishing to participate in a trip shall contact the Trip Leader or the President before the closing date.
- 6.4 Other trips not defined above may be arranged at short notice by a member, but must be approved by 2 executive members and recorded in the trip register.
- 6.5 Trip Leaders must be FULL members of the Society and be person(s) approved by the Committee as holding leadership qualifications according to ASF standards suitable for the trip being undertaken.
  - 6.5.1 Trip Leaders on cave diving trips must further demonstrate to the Committee that they are a suitably certified cave diver through acceptance into the ASF Cave Diving Special Interest Group or other Australian accredited cave diving organisation.
  - 6.5.2 additionally, all participating cave divers on the trip must be suitably certified cave divers who demonstrate this to the Committee through acceptance into the ASF Cave Diving Special Interest Group or other Australian accredited cave diving organisation.
- 6.6 Provided that the Constitution, By-Laws and various codes to which the Society subscribes are not contravened, the Trip Leader has:
  - 6.6.1 authority over all members on the trip;
  - 6.6.2 the duty of determining the location of the nearest telephone and emergency procedures;
  - 6.6.3 the responsibility of collecting trip fees and forwarding such fees to the Treasurer;
  - 6.6.4 the responsibility of submitting a verbal or written trip report to the following monthly meeting and ensuring that a written trip report in completed, and submitted for publication in the Newcaves Chronicles.

6.7 Persons requiring transport to and /or from trips will:

6.7.1 share fuel costs as determined by the driver;

6.7.2 abide by the driver's time schedule and wishes.

## 7. **FEES**

7.1 Members who have not paid the prescribed membership fees after 3 months of them falling due automatically have their membership terminated. They shall remain as members until such action is taken.

7.1.1 Introductory members automatically have their membership terminated at the end of the prescribed period of membership unless further fees are paid.

7.2 The prescribed fees are determined annually at the Annual General meeting.

7.3 Trip fees are not charged to members when participating in training or rescue training exercises.

7.4 Trip fees will be established at each Annual General Meeting and may be varied from time to time at a Special General Meeting.

## 8. **PERSONAL & SAFETY**

8.1 The following equipment is the minimum acceptable to allow members to participate in Society trips:

8.1.1 protective lightweight helmet with a properly attached chin strap;

8.1.2 suitable outer clothing such as combination overalls;

8.1.3 main light source, preferably a helmet mounted variety;

8.1.4 secondary light source (eg waterproof torch, candles & waterproof matches);

8.1.5 spares for the above light sources as appropriate for the planned trip;

8.1.6 strong soled and deep tread boots or sandshoes, etc, without hooked eyelets, hobnails, tricounis or other fittings / attachments liable to cause damage to formations in caves;

8.1.7 personal equipment as appropriate to the cave / karst area (eg water, food/snacks, tape, harness, ascenders, descenders, pee bottle, etc).

8.1.8 a basic first aid kit including at least:-

A triangular bandage

emergency space blanket

band aids

a dressing pad and bandage

antiseptic (individually packed swabs are recommended)

small notebook and pencil

any personal medication.

8.2 Details of any accident must be reported as soon as possible to the vice president

- 8.3 Any physically dangerous situation in a cave or dangerous practices being carried out are to be reported to the safety officer.
- 8.4 Explosives are to be used only with the express approval of the Committee and then only by persons suitably qualified and licensed to use explosives.
- 8.5 The Society shall endeavour to arrange or participate in at least one (1) Search and Rescue exercise in each calendar year.

## **9 GENERAL**

### **9.1 SOCIETY EQUIPMENT**

- 9.1.1 Equipment is available for all official trips.
- 9.1.2 Loan of equipment to individual members and/or for other trips is at the discretion of the Equipment Officer.
- 9.1.3 Society equipment:
  - 9.1.3.1 must be signed for when borrowed and countersigned by a Committee member when returned
  - 9.1.3.2 is to be returned to the Equipment Officer within three (3) days after the conclusion of a trip unless otherwise arranged;
  - 9.1.3.3 must be returned clean and neat and in proper working order;
  - 9.1.3.4 that is damaged or suspected to be damaged must be brought to the attention of the Equipment Officer and not used until declared safe by the Equipment and/or Safety Officers.

### **9.2 LIBRARY**

- 9.2.1 Books, periodical and other publications held by the Society are available on loan to members at no charge for a period of up to one (1) month.
- 9.2.2 Loans may be renewed at the discretion of the Librarian.
- 9.2.3 A late fee of \$1.00 per overdue item is payable for each month or part thereof.
- 9.2.4 All loans must be signed for when borrowed and countersigned by a Committee member upon return.

### **9.3 CAVE NAMES**

- 9.3.1 The proposed name(s) of any newly discovered system, cave or feature should be in accordance with the ASF Nomenclature Code.
- 9.3.2 Members proposing names must submit them to the Committee for ratification and recommendation to a General Meeting.
- 9.3.3 Proposed names may not be mentioned in any publication until ratified by the Committee.

## **10 AMENDMENT OF BY LAWS**

- 10.1 These By-Laws may be amended by:
  - 10.1.1 the affirmative vote of a seventy-five (75) Percent majority at a General Meeting OR
  - 10.1.2 ordinary resolution of the Committee, subject to confirmation by the next General Meeting of the Society.
  - 10.1.3 Proposed amendments shall be notified to members in the manner detailed in Section 10.2 of the Constitution.