

Territory Council Meeting: Key Updates for Members

Merimbula, 30 May 2026

The Territory Council gathered in Merimbula on 30 May for its second meeting of 2026, advancing several important initiatives to strengthen support for members, enhance services for companions, and equip Conferences for the year ahead.

Preparing for Changes to the Rule

With updates to the Rule coming into effect on 1 July 2026, the Territory Council highlighted the importance of member awareness and engagement. John Feint, the Canberra–Goulburn Rule Ambassador, will be available to attend Regional and Conference meetings, offering guidance and clarity on the changes.

A recorded presentation will also be accessible via Member Connect Online, and members are strongly encouraged to attend the National Council's online Town Hall sessions to stay informed and engaged with national developments.

Strengthening Support in the ACT

In a significant step forward, the Council supported refunding of a Case Worker position in Canberra-Goulburn's 2026-27 budget to support Conferences across the ACT and Queanbeyan region. Funding has also been included to increase two existing part-time case worker roles in our NSW regions to full-time, particularly where support services are limited.

This initiative reflects the Society's continued commitment to supporting members in responding to increasingly complex situations. The role will be reviewed at the end of 2027, with further details on responsibilities and eligibility to be shared with Conference Presidents following the Board's consideration of our 2026-27 budget at its next meeting on 24 June.

Building a Stronger Membership

A new Membership Strategy and Implementation Plan has been endorsed, providing a coordinated approach to growing and strengthening membership across Canberra-Goulburn.

Due for launch by the end of June 2026, the strategy recognises the work of Andrew Rice and the Membership Working Party and aims to ensure the Society remains vibrant, connected, and sustainable into the future.

A Stronger Voice for Advocacy

The Council supported a new Social Justice Strategy for Canberra-Goulburn including a Regional Advocacy Statement for our NSW regions. The Strategy was developed by the Social Justice and Advocacy Committee.

The strategy will guide local advocacy efforts, reinforcing the Society's commitment to tackling the root causes of disadvantages and promoting social justice across the region. Members interested in advocacy are encouraged to consider joining the Committee, which is currently welcoming new participants.

Improving Systems and Reporting

Enhancements to the Companion Data System (CDS) are underway, with a focus on improving training, data quality, and reporting capabilities.

Regional and Conference Presidents will play a key role in championing these improvements, with support from a training and awareness program throughout 2026. Additional system upgrades and refreshed reporting tools will further support Conferences in their work.

Updates to Complaints Processes

The Council also agreed to improvements to the handling of complaints, particularly those made by companions about members to make sure all affected receive justice. The Society's Human Resources Manager (currently Michael Rennick) will manage all complaints received with respect to members, staff and volunteers.

For those made against members, hopefully never, they will be automatically referred to the relevant Conference President to respond to including engaging with members involved.

The Board will consider these changes also and further guidance will be provided to Conference Presidents in the coming months.

In the meantime, following the guidance in our brochure 'Conversations with Companions' when conducting visits is very important and Conferences need to review the brochure at their meetings.

Ongoing Commitment to Safeguarding

Safeguarding remains a priority, with continued progress on online training initiatives designed to increase accessibility and participation.

Additional modules will be released throughout the year and Conference Support will continue working closely with members to ensure strong engagement.

Recognising Regional Efforts

The Council acknowledged reports from Regional Presidents, highlighting the dedicated work being carried out across Canberra-Goulburn to support members, volunteers, and companions. Building special works in our NSW regions is of the highest priority.

Continuing the Conversation

Members are encouraged to discuss these updates within their Conferences and connect with their Regional Presidents if they have questions or would like further information.

Together, these initiatives reflect the Society's ongoing commitment to strengthening its mission, supporting its members, and walking alongside those in need.
