

Narara Valley Baptist Church

Constitution

**Adopted by NVBC AGM on
27 November 2022**

Documents which may be helpful in understanding this Constitution include;

- **Narara Valley Baptist Church Structure (Detailed Description)**
- **Narara Valley Baptist Church Ministry Description: Elder**
- **Narara Valley Baptist Church Ministry Description: Church Board Member**
- **Narara Valley Baptist Church Charter**
- **Narara Valley Baptist Church Code of Conduct**
- **Narara Valley Baptist Church Safe Church Policy**
- **Narara Valley Baptist Church Procedure for Conflict Resolution**

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NARARA VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

Nothing in this constitution creates or is intended to create the relationship of partner or a partnership as defined in the Partnership Act 1892.

Recognising the headship of Jesus Christ and the leadership of the Holy Spirit, the Church shall be governed in line with the fundamental Baptist principle of the autonomy of the local church and congregational government, recognising the need for appropriate empowerment of the Church Leadership Team to fulfil the Vision and Mission.

1. DEFINITIONS AND INTERPRETATION

In this Constitution:

- a) "Elders" refers to the Elders as defined in the Narara Valley Baptist Church Structure - Detailed Description.
- b) "Eldership" comprises all elected Elders plus the Senior Pastor.
- c) "Pastors and Staff Team" refers to the Pastors and Staff team as defined in the Narara Valley Baptist Church Structure - Detailed Description.
- d) "Pastoral Team" comprises all, and only, Pastors.
- e) "Church Board" refers to the Church Board as defined in the Narara Valley Baptist Church Structure - Detailed Description.
- f) "Officer of the Church" is an elected, non-Pastoral leader.
- g) "Ministry Partner" means a regular attendee at the Church who subscribes to the beliefs as set out in this constitution (section 3.1), has been accepted by the Elders and has been entered into the roll of Ministry Partners.
- h) "Church Business Meeting" means a gathering of Ministry Partners of Narara Valley Baptist Church for the express purpose of conducting the business of the church. Such meetings shall take place when an appropriate Notice of Meeting has been communicated and a quorum is in place.
- i) "Extraordinary Meeting" means a gathering of Ministry Partners of Narara Valley Baptist Church for a special purpose and only transacts the business of which notice has been given. Such meetings shall take place when an appropriate Notice of Meeting has been communicated and a quorum is in place.
- j) "Church Service" means the regular gatherings of Narara Valley Baptist Church for the purpose of worship, teaching and celebration.

- k) "Ministry Team" refers to groups of people from NVBC who engage in ministries endorsed by the Pastoral team.
- l) "Search Panel" – refers to a group of people suggested by the Ministry Partners of NVBC who are set apart to discern and then recommend to the Ministry Partners a person for a position within NVBC.
- m) Words purporting any one gender shall be deemed and taken to include all genders and the singular to include the plural and the plural the singular unless the contrary as to gender or number is expressly provided.
- n) "The Association" refers to the Association of Baptist Churches of NSW/ACT (known in the NSW Act of Parliament as the Baptist Union of NSW).

2. NAME

- 2.1 The name of the Church shall be Narara Valley Baptist Church (hereafter referred to as "the Church" or "NVBC")

3. BASIS

- 3.1 The Church family at NVBC consists of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ meeting in fellowship together. We welcome into ministry partnership of the Church, all willing believers who have publicly professed their faith and who wish to make a commitment to the church family. Ministry Partners of NVBC hold the following beliefs as true and act accordingly:

- 3.1.1 The Trinity of the Godhead.
- 3.1.2 The Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3.1.3 The sinfulness of people.
- 3.1.4 The atonement for the sin of people by our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3.1.5 The need of the Holy Spirit for conversion, empowerment & ministry.
- 3.1.6 The Divine inspiration and supreme authority of the scriptures.
- 3.1.7 The visible personal return of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 3.1.8 The resurrection of the dead.
- 3.1.9 Rewards and punishment in a future state.
- 3.1.10 The Baptism of believers by immersion or by other means if immersion is not possible.
- 3.1.11 The reality and personality of Satan.
- 3.1.12 The priesthood of all believers exercising the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

4. CHURCH AFFILIATION

- 4.1 NVBC is affiliated with the Association and will encourage the activities and work of the Association in ways as decided by the Ministry Partners of NVBC.
We accept and support the obligation to help and encourage other Baptist and Christian churches.

5. BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

- 5.1 Any believer may be baptised upon application and after consultation with a pastor. The Lord's Supper will be planned to be observed at least once a month.

6. OBJECTS

- 6.1 The object of the Church shall be as outlined in the Vision and Mission statement as accepted by a Church Business Meeting and shall include:
- 6.1.1 To proclaim the sole Lordship of Jesus Christ in the lives of the Ministry Partners of NVBC and to seek to fulfil His commission in the life of the community, the nation and the wider world beyond through vigorous evangelistic and missionary enterprises as commanded in Matthew 28: 19-20.
 - 6.1.2 To encourage those associated with NVBC to assemble regularly for the public worship of God.
 - 6.1.3 To inspire and maintain an active spiritual growth for all.
 - 6.1.4 To proclaim the truths of the Bible by which people experience salvation, and to lead those who believe, into ministry partnership with NVBC.
 - 6.1.5 To promote love and goodwill towards all people.
 - 6.1.6 To assist those who are in need.

7. MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP OF NVBC

- 7.1 Ministry Partners are active in the fulfilment of Vision and Mission and provide a place of accountability and support in ministry oversight. They shall engage in:
- 7.1.1 *Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)*. Partners are saved by and live in the grace of Jesus. This grace is not a licence to sin, but rather the empowering presence of God to live a holy, God-honouring life.
 - 7.1.2 *Growth (2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Peter 3:18)*. Partners engage in spiritual disciplines/ practices which feed their soul. Ministry Partners desire to see on-going evidence of their life changing to reflect Christ.
 - 7.1.3 *Group (Acts 2:46)*. Partners participate in the body of Christ and connect with others in significant relationships. Partners are strongly encouraged to make our Sunday gatherings and participation in a Growth Group a high priority.
 - 7.1.4 *Gifts (John 13:12-15, Romans 12:6-8)*. Partners serve in the area of their giftedness and passion. With Jesus, they take up the servant's towel and seek to serve more than be served. This will see each Partner actively seeking to discover, develop and deploy their spiritual gift(s), skills and abilities.

7.1.5 *Giving (Proverb 3:9-10, 2 Corinthians 9:6-7)*. Partners seek to honour God with their material resources (including time) and support the church using the biblical precedent of the tithe as a goal to reach or exceed.

7.1.6 *Governance (Acts 13:1-3, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Timothy 3:1-12)*. Partners provide a place of accountability and support for the Elders. They set apart Pastors, Elders and Board members to their respective roles and seek to make their ministry a joy and not a burden. They both affirm and support the annual budget. They make decisions regarding the purchase or sale of property.

7.2 Admission of Ministry Partners of NVBC. All applicants will be given a copy of this Constitution and will be interviewed by a member of the Elders, or their delegate. Applicants who give evidence of a sincere profession of faith in Jesus Christ, and who accept our Basis and Objects as set out in this Constitution will be received into Ministry Partnership of NVBC after their name has been accepted at an Eldership Team Meeting.

7.2.1 All Pastors of NVBC are included as Ministry Partners upon appointment to their position.

7.3 Termination of Ministry Partnership of NVBC. If a ministry partner of NVBC consistently & wilfully acts in an unscriptural manner, the Elders may terminate their ministry partnership of NVBC. The Ministry Partner must be informed of the details of the matter in writing and given 14 days to respond. At the meeting of Elders held to review the matter, the Ministry Partner will be given the opportunity to speak and/or be represented by a support person. The Elders will make their decision after prayerful and faithful efforts have been made to bring the Ministry Partner to repentance and amendment as set out in Galatians 6: 1.

7.4 Revision of Roll. If a Ministry Partner of NVBC does not attend a church service of NVBC without sufficient reason for a period of six months, their name will be removed from the roll at the discretion of the Elders.

7.4.1 The roll of Ministry Partners should identify members who have not been baptised as a believer.

Under Section 42 of the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust Act 1984 (NSW), members who have not been baptised as a believer are not eligible for appointment as a delegate of the church to an Assembly of the Baptist Union of New South Wales, nor are they entitled to vote on any resolution proposed for the purpose of giving the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust a direction under that section of the Act.

7.5 Dispute/Conflict. Matters of dispute between Ministry Partners of NVBC should be dealt with in accordance with the relevant NVBC Safe Church Policies and Procedures, which include the principles in Matthew 18:15-17.

7.6 Discipline. Should a matter occur which appears to require the exercise of discipline, the Elders shall arrange for an investigation. The person must be informed of the details of the matter in writing and given 14 days to respond. At the meeting of Elders held to review the matter, the Ministry Partner will be given the opportunity to speak and/or be represented by a support person. The Elders will make their decision after prayerful and faithful efforts have been made to bring the Ministry Partner to repentance and amendment as set out in Galatians 6: 1.

7.6.1 Relevant NVBC Safe Church Policies and Procedures should be consulted.

8. CHURCH LEADERSHIP

8.1 Role. The role of a Church Leadership member is to promote and do all things necessary to implement the Church Vision and Mission Statement, and to transact the routine business of the Church.

8.1.1 The Church Leadership shall include:

- The Elders
- The Senior Pastor
- The Pastors
- The Church Board
- Other members as determined from time to time by the Ministry Partners of NVBC or the Church Leadership.

8.1.2. The Eldership shall consist of the Elders and Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor is a voting member of the Eldership.

8.1.3 The Eldership are accountable for the leadership of the church. The Eldership will appoint a chairperson who is an Elder.

8.1.4 Elders and Board members are designated as Officers of the church.

8.1.5 A paid member of staff (pastoral or non-pastoral) cannot be elected to the position of Elder, or Board member (Officers of the church).

8.1.6 An immediate family member of a paid member of staff cannot be an Elder, or a Board member. This ensures there are no explicit structural conflicts of interest in reporting relationships.

8.1.7 Spouses cannot serve concurrently across, or on, the Elders and/or the Board.

8.1.8 The authorised signatory for the church, also known as the Church Secretary, shall be the Chairperson of the Church Board, or other person designated by the Church Board and recorded in the minutes of the Church Board Meeting.

8.1.9 The term of office for Elders and Church Board members is three years. (There is no term limit for the Senior Pastor in the Eldership).

8.2 Conduct. All members of the Church Leadership and the Ministry Team Leaders will be subject to the Code of Conduct (see NVBC Safe Church Policies and Procedures).

9. ELDERS - ROLE

9.1 The Elders will provide the Senior Pastor, Pastors and Staff, and Church Board with the appropriate levels of:

- delegation
- resourcing
- support and care processes

9.2 The Senior Pastor is accountable to the Elders.

9.3 The Senior Pastor, Pastors and Staff, and Church Board are accountable to the Elders for the exercise of the delegations, resources, support and care processes. They shall demonstrate this by the provision of reports, briefings and presentations on a regular basis throughout the year.

9.4 There should be a minimum of three Elders in the Eldership. The Senior Pastor would be in addition to the minimum of three Elders.

10. CHURCH BOARD - ROLE

10.1 The Church Board is responsible for the pragmatic matters associated with the Vision, Mission, Values and day to day administration.

10.2 The Board is responsible for the stewardship and management of the church's assets, including compliance with all financial and legislative requirements, including taxation; contractual arrangements on behalf of NVBC; employment contracts; and matters of governance, including Safe Churches compliance.

10.3 There should be a minimum of three Board members on the Board, to ensure the Officer positions of Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Treasurer can be held by separate individuals.

11. PASTORS and STAFF - ROLE

- 11.1** The Pastors are responsible to lead the development and implementation of the Vision, Mission and Values, particularly within the ministry area to which they are called.
- 11.2** The non-Pastoral staff, including administration staff, support the Pastors in their roles as the Pastors fulfill the ministry area to which they are called.

12. APPOINTING A PASTOR

- 12.1 Election.** A Pastor shall be elected upon a 75% majority of votes submitted at an Extraordinary or Church Business Meeting of which written notice shall be given at least two weeks before such meeting, and also notice shall be given at all church services during the preceding 15 days, the purpose of such meeting having been specified. The quorum on this occasion is to be 40% of the Ministry Partners of NVBC. The Senior Pastor will be accredited with an Australian Baptist Association.
- 12.2 Removal.** A Pastor shall be removed by a simple majority of votes submitted at an Extraordinary or Church Business Meeting of which written notice shall be given at least two weeks before such meeting, and also notice shall be given at all church services during the preceding 15 days, the purpose of such meeting having been specified. The quorum on this occasion is to be 40% of the Ministry Partners of NVBC.
- 12.3 Procedure When Calling a Pastor.** All recommendations in connection with the Pastorate, including from the Association, shall be submitted in writing for discussion firstly to a Search Panel (see NVBC Safe Church Policies and Procedures). Should more than one name be submitted, discussion shall continue within the Search Panel until agreement is reached regarding the approach to one person. The Search panel shall then communicate privately with this nominee to ascertain whether they would be willing to allow their name to be placed before the Church. Only one name shall be before the Church at any one time. In the event of an adverse vote, or a call to the Pastorate not being accepted, the above procedure shall be repeated until successful.
- 12.4 Short Term Vacancies (Pastors).** The Elders may authorise recruitment to cover a short-term vacancy (up to 12 months) of one or more Pastors. Such recruitment must comply with the NVBC Safe Church Policies and Procedures.

13. APPOINTING OTHER EMPLOYEES

- 13.1 The Elders and Board together may resolve to employ or terminate other paid staff, in order to function effectively. The Elders and Board shall determine the employment requirements for any such employees including the inputs from Pastors and/or Ministry Team leaders.
- 13.2 All persons paid wages, salaries, stipends or other employment related benefits by the Church, are employees of the Church. All employee contractual matters are governed confidentially by the Board.

14. CHURCH LEADERSHIP MEMBERS – ELDERS AND BOARD

- 14.1.1 The Church will appoint men and women to this role based upon:
- a) Their love for God, the Church and all people (Matt 22:37-39, Matt 28:19-20)
 - b) Their recognition that Jesus is the head of the Church (Col 1:18)
 - c) Their spiritual giftedness (Rom 12:6-8)
 - d) Their willingness to serve in a spirit of love (Rom 12:11)
 - e) Their being people of good standing, full of the Spirit & of wisdom (Acts 6:3)
 - f) Their Character (1 Tim 3:2-13, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4, James 1:1 as appropriate)
 - g) Their Competency (1 Tim 3:2, 1 Tim 3:13 as appropriate)
 - h) Their Chemistry (1 Tim 3:1-12 as appropriate)
 - i) Their Commitment (1 Tim 1:12)
- 14.1.2 Any Ministry Partner of NVBC shall be eligible for office, provided they have been regularly attending, in the case of the Church Board for at least six months, in the case of Elder for at least two years.
- 14.2 Election.** Nominations for the office shall be invited from Ministry Partners of NVBC. All nominations are to be submitted in writing, signed by both parties, for discussion firstly in the relevant Leadership team (Board or Eldership) and subsequently to the Elders. Ministry Partners of NVBC will be provided, either via electronic or hard copy means, of the names for voting no later than the Sunday preceding the Extraordinary or Church Business Meetings. A candidate is deemed successfully elected by obtaining a simple majority of votes for their candidacy at the meeting.
- 14.3 Tenure.** The consecutive tenure of an Elder or Church Board member is to be 2 x 3-year terms (six years). Re-election could then occur after a one-year break. This is to facilitate renewal of both the individual and the relevant Church Leadership team. In the event of exceptional circumstances (as determined by a vote of the Elders and Church Board), an Elder or Church Board member may serve an additional 1-year term directly following their 2 x 3-year terms. This additional year will require voting by the Ministry Partners.

14.4 Removal. A Church Leadership team member shall be removed by a simple majority of votes submitted at an Extraordinary or Church Business Meeting of which written notice shall be given at least two weeks before such meeting, and also notice shall be given at all church services during the preceding 15 days, the purpose of such meeting having been specified. The quorum on this occasion is to be 40% of the Ministry Partners of NVBC.

14.5 Vacancies. The Elders or Church Board, respectively, shall have power at any time, and from time to time, to appoint a new Elder or Church Board Member to fill any casual vacancy.

14.5.1 Any Elder or Church Board Member so appointed shall hold office only until the next following Annual General Meeting and shall then be eligible for election.

14.6 Rotation & Election of Elders and Church Board.

At every Annual General Meeting those Elders and Church Board Members who have completed a three (3) year term shall resign.

14.7 Eldership, Pastors and Staff, and Church Board Meetings

14.7.1 The quorum for all Eldership or Church Board meetings at which decisions are to be made will not be less than 66% of the membership of that group e.g., 2 out of 3, 3 out of 4, 4 out of 5 or 6 etc.

14.7.2 At the first Eldership meeting and the first Church Board Meeting following each Annual General Meeting, the Eldership and Church Board by simple majority shall elect the Chairperson and determine the period for which such Chairperson is to hold office.

14.7.3 The Eldership and Church Board shall elect by simple majority one of their number as Deputy Chairperson and determine the period for which such Deputy Chairperson is to hold office.

14.7.4 The Pastors and Staff Team will be led and chaired by the Senior Pastor.

14.7.5 The Senior Pastor cannot hold any position on the Eldership or Church Board (e.g. Chairperson, Treasurer).

14.7.6 Eldership, Pastors and Staff, and Church Board will meet as defined, from time to time, in the NVBC Charter.

15. ADVICE/CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- 15.1 Advice.** The Elders and Church Board may consult with anyone who they feel will add value to their decisions.
- 15.2 Conflict of Interest.** Whenever there is a conflict of interest, or a perceived conflict of interest, due to implicit fiscal, governance, employer/employee or familial factors, in regard to a discussion/decision, the conflict must be declared.
The remaining team members shall determine whether the conflict shall result in that person; a) absenting themselves from the meeting, b) participating in discussion only or c) full participation in the decision.

16. AUTHORITY

- 16.1** An appropriate schedule of delegation will be established by the Elders, Senior Pastor and Board to ensure decision making authorities are determined throughout the church to assist the efficient fulfilment of the Vision.

17. BY LAWS & POLICIES.

- 17.1** The Elders and Church Board have power to make By Laws and Policies concerning Ministry Partnership and any other matter which the Elders and Church Board believes suitable for including in such By Laws or Policies.

18. CHURCH ORGANISATIONS

18.1 Church Organisations and Ministries

The leaders of all NVBC Church Organisations and Ministries shall be accountable to the Church Leadership.

18.2 Ministry Team Leaders.

18.2.1 Vacancies. All vacant ministry team leader roles will be advised to the relevant Church Leadership team who will then nominate the process to be used in filling the vacancy. The appointment of a leader may be challenged. Such challenges will be dealt with under the NVBC Safe Church Policies and Procedures.

19. CHURCH BUSINESS MEETINGS - CONVENING

19.1 Regular Meetings. At least two Church Business Meetings should be held each year one of which will be the Annual General Meeting. Extraordinary meetings may be convened as required by a majority of the Church Leadership, or a request signed by 25% of the Ministry Partners of NVBC.

19.2 Notice of Meetings. Written notice shall be given at least two weeks before such meeting, and also notice shall be given at all church services during the preceding 15 days.

19.3 Chairperson. The Chairperson of the Church Board shall preside as Chairperson at every Church Business Meeting. If the Chairperson is not present the Deputy Chairperson will chair the meeting. If neither of these are present or are unwilling to act for all or part of the meeting, the Ministry Partners present shall elect one of their number to be Chairperson of the meeting (or part of it).

19.4 Quorum. In matters connected with the acquirement, mortgaging or disposal of real property the voting age shall be 18 years or above as prescribed by the "*Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust Act 1984*".

19.4.1 The Quorum will consist of the total number of Ministry Partners of NVBC in attendance at meetings on the nominated meeting day. If a Quorum is not present within 15 minutes of the time appointed for a meeting, then the meeting shall be held 14 days later. Notice of such adjourned meeting shall be given by verbal announcement at all church services during the preceding 8 days. Such meeting shall be competent to transact the adjourned business notwithstanding the absence of a Quorum.

19.4.2 The Quorum for a Church Business Meeting will be 25% of the Ministry Partners of NVBC.

19.4.3 In the case of electing/removing a pastor, or church officer, amending the constitution and the acquirement, mortgaging or disposal of real property, the Quorum for a Church Business Meeting will be 40% of the Ministry Partners of NVBC.

20. BUSINESS PROCEDURE at CHURCH MEETINGS

- 20.1 Minutes.** Minutes shall be kept of every Church Meeting, and the minutes of the previous Meeting shall be read and accepted as the first order of business.
- 20.2 Agenda.** An agenda of the meeting shall be posted with any Notice of a Church Meeting, and such agenda shall specify as accurately as possible the text of any proposed motions or resolutions at the particular Church Meeting.
- 20.3 Resolutions.** At any meeting, before a decision can be made or voted upon, a resolution to the effect of that decision must be proposed in exact words by a Ministry Partner, and that resolution seconded by another Ministry Partner, and voted upon. The result of that vote will then be recorded in the minutes of that meeting.
- 20.4 Questions.** All questions affecting the management of the Church shall preferably be submitted first to the Church Leadership before presentation to the Church.
- 20.5 Voting.** The vote of the Church shall be taken ordinarily on the voices or by a show of hands of Ministry Partners of NVBC plus the counting of authorised proxy votes (signed by the voting Ministry Partner of NVBC and also signed by the proxy Ministry Partner of NVBC).
However, all voting relative to the election of Pastor or Church Leadership Member shall be by secret ballot, also on such other occasions as the Church Leadership may consider advisable.

Decisions will be made by a simple majority, a vote exceeding 50% is required to pass a resolution.

In the case of electing a pastor, or amending the constitution, a 75% majority is required to pass a resolution (see 12.1).

21. GENERAL

- 21.1 Trustees.** The Trustee of all Church property is the Baptist Union Property Trust.
- 21.2 Insurance.** Appropriate insurance for all risks associated with the Church buildings, Church property and the ministries of the Church, both on and off the Church property, shall be maintained by the Church Board.

22. FINANCES

22.1 General. The Ministry of the Church shall be supported, and any ordinary expenses met by voluntary contributions and other commercial or non-commercial activities as decided by the Church Leadership.

The assets and income of the church shall be applied solely in the deliverance of its charitable purpose and the advancement of religion. No portion shall be distributed directly or indirectly to the members except as bona fide reimbursement of expenses incurred on behalf of the church.

All Payments, whether Cheque or Electronic, will be authorised by two signatories appointed by the Board.

22.2 Auditors. External auditors shall be appointed by the Church Leadership for the following year. The financial books of the Church shall be audited at least once a year for presentation to a Church Business Meeting.

22.3 Dissolution. In the event of the Church being dissolved, all property, assets and monies which remain after such dissolution and the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities shall be vested in the Baptist Union of NSW.

23. ALTERATION OF CONSTITUTION

23.1 No alteration shall be made to the Constitution except by a 75% majority of votes submitted at an Extraordinary or Church Business Meeting convened for the purpose. The quorum on this occasion is to be 40% of the Ministry Partners of NVBC. The Quorum will consist of the total number of Ministry Partners of NVBC in attendance at meetings on the nominated meeting day.

23.2 Any proposed alteration or addition shall be given in writing as a Resolution to the Church Leadership and will be made available to all Ministry Partners of NVBC not less than 15 days before the date of such meeting.

23.3 The Church Leadership shall ensure any proposed change does not compromise affiliation requirements for the Association of Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT.

23.4 The Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Charities (ACNC) and the Association of Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT will be notified whenever alterations to the constitution occur, and the current operating constitution provided to them.

END