



District 17

District Council Meeting

District Council Meeting #1 – 2026-2027

Minutes

Saturday 19 September 2026

DRAFT



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1. Call to Order

District Director, Maree Pickens, called the meeting to order at 1.01pm.

She welcomed all delegates and thanked attendees for their commitment to the District.

2. District Mission

Program Quality Director, Desmond Miranda, read the District Mission.



3. Inspirational

Guru Gupta, Club President, Technology Toastmasters, offered the Inspiration.

He shared the value that Toastmasters has given him, encouraging members not to focus on the cost of membership. Rather than asking how much it costs, he suggested asking how much value it gives.

4. Review of the Meeting Agenda

District Director, Maree Pickens, presented the Agenda as distributed to delegates via email and posted on the District 17 website.

As there were no objections, the Agenda was adopted.

The District Director advised that the officials for this meeting were:

- Timer – Karen Passamani
- Chat Monitor – Tom Bielski, DTM
- Credentials Committee Chair – Gavin Hyslop, DTM
- Parliamentarian – Gavin Hyslop, DTM
- Administration Manager – Melanie Jackson

5. Voting Procedures & Test Vote

District Parliamentarian, Gavin Hyslop, explained the voting procedures for this meeting, including the use of the Votapex voting platform (district17.on.votapex.com).

A test vote was conducted and a large number of delegates participated. Some technical issues were identified and were resolved during the meeting.

6. Credential Committee Report

District Director, Maree Pickens, welcomed Credentials Committee Chair, Gavin Hyslop, DTM, to present the Credentials Committee Report.

He advised that there are 63 eligible clubs in the District, and that each club receives two votes, represented by the Club President and/or Vice President Education. To achieve a quorum, one-third of the club representative votes, based on two votes per club, must be present, being 42.

Eligible Clubs	63
Club Representative Votes (2 per club)	126
Quorum Required (one-third)	42
Club Representative Votes Present	60
District Executive Committee Members Represented	17
Total Ballots Available	77
Simple Majority (if all ballots cast)	39

He noted that District Executive Committee members do not count towards a quorum, and that the outcome of any vote is determined based on the majority of votes cast.



As such, a quorum was achieved.

District Director, Maree Pickens, called for any questions on the Credentials Report. No questions were raised.

There being no objection, the Credentials Report was adopted.

CREDENTIALS REPORT ADOPTED

7. Apologies

District Administration Manager, Melanie Jackson, announced that 30 apologies had been received, and that the list had been uploaded to the chat:

- Carolina Allen – Club President, Multicultural Mandurah Toastmasters
- Paul Arnold – Club VP Education, Maylands Toastmasters Club
- Aaron Ashcroft – Club VP Education, Banksia Speakers Toastmasters Club
- Toni Brownlee – Club President and Club VP Education, Mandurah Toastmasters
- Valeriy Bychkov – Club President, Applecross Toastmasters
- Alicia Cable – Club VP Education, Canning Vale Toastmasters
- Jose Cedeno – Club VP Education, Habla Hispanic Bilingual Toastmasters
- Samantha Craig – Area Director S31
- Frank Crisafio – Southern Division Director
- Patricia D'Cruze, DTM – Club President, West End Toastmasters Club
- Isaiah Eringo – Area Director S34; Club President, Jetty Toastmasters
- Sue Fallon, DTM – Club President, Talkabout Club
- Charles Fisher, DTM – Club VP Education, Belmont Toastmasters Club, Como Communicators and Highgate Toastmasters Club
- Morrie Goodz, DTM – Club President, Blackwood Valley Toastmasters and Donnybrook Gourmet Toastmasters
- Vanessa Hay – Club President, Rockingham Toastmasters
- Michael Horner – Club President, Fremantle Gourmet Toastmasters Club
- Saujanya Krishna – Club President, Speak Easy Ellenbrook Toastmasters Club
- Monica Malaga, DTM – Club President, Habla Hispanic Bilingual Toastmasters
- Mihaela Popa – Club VP Education, Carpathian Toastmasters
- Mark Richards – District Webmaster
- Robyn Richards – District Contest and Awards Chair
- Olaf Schubert, DTM – Club VP Education, Multicultural Mandurah Toastmasters
- Oxana Shustikova – Club VP Education, Central Communicators Toastmasters Club
- Ben Sims – Club VP Education, Currambine Toastmasters
- Neville Smith – Club President, Heritage Towns Toastmasters Club
- Danielle Stevenson – Club VP Education, West End Toastmasters Club
- Mairia Te Are – District Public Relations Manager; Club President, Harrisdale Piara Waters Toastmasters Club
- Tashi Deki (Tina) – Club VP Education, Technology Toastmasters
- Sofia Vikstroem – Club President, City of Fremantle Toastmasters
- Milvert (Yunxuan) Zou – Club President, UWA College Row Toastmasters Club

She then called for any apologies from the floor. No further apologies were received.

The apologies were accepted.



8. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

District Director, Maree Pickens, advised that the Minutes of the previous District Council Meeting held on 16 May 2026 had been made available on the District 17 website for review and shared via email.

She called for any corrections to the Minutes. No corrections were raised.

There being no corrections, the Minutes were approved as distributed.

APPROVED AS DISTRIBUTED

9. Business Requiring Adoption

9.1 Enabling Participation of Remote District Leaders in District 17

Club Growth Director, Souzy Theophilopoulos, introduced the motion on enabling participation of Remote District Leaders in District 17. The motion was endorsed by the District Executive Committee at its meeting held on 5 September 2026.

By way of background, she explained that in the 2020-2021 Toastmasters year the Board approved several changes to the Governing Documents which created a new category of Remote District Leader. Although these changes were made during the COVID period, they remain part of the current Governing Documents.

Under the District Administrative Bylaws, Article VII (b)(2)(d), the District Council must enable Members of the District to be eligible to become Remote District Leaders by a vote of the District Council. A remote Member may then be elected or appointed to a District Leader position.

While District 17 has clubs with remote Members, it has been identified that the District has not voted on the issue of Remote District Leaders since the changes to the Governing Documents. As a result, District 17 does not currently allow Remote District Leaders, meaning that remote Members cannot serve as District Leaders even where they would be able to fulfil the role.

The requirements relating to Remote District Leaders apply to all members of the District Executive Committee, comprising the District Director, Program Quality Director, Club Growth Director, Public Relations Manager, Administration Manager, Finance Manager, Division Directors, Area Directors and Immediate Past District Director.

The following definitions apply under the Governing Documents:

- Remote – domiciled outside of the District, or living outside of the District.
- Fully Remote District Leader – a Remote District Leader who will not attend onsite events.
- Partially Remote District Leader – a Remote District Leader who will attend onsite events.

A decision to allow Fully or Partially Remote District Leaders must be made prior to 1 November of the program year in which the elections or appointments will occur. The purpose of this motion is for the District to take a clear position on whether it allows Remote District Leaders, so that remote Members know whether they can take on District Leader roles.

District Director, Maree Pickens, then presented the motion: "That District 17 enable Members to serve as Remote District Leaders, both Fully Remote and Partially Remote."

Moved: Program Quality Director, Desmond Miranda

Seconded: District Finance Manager, Kalavathy Govindarajoo

The vote was conducted via Votapex. For: 46 Against: 2. Total votes cast: 48 (majority required: 25).

ADOPTED



9.2 Appointed Officers Report

District Director, Maree Pickens, submitted the list of Appointed Officers, as distributed to delegates via email and posted on the District 17 website, for confirmation. The motion was endorsed by the District Executive Committee at its meeting held on 5 September 2026. (See Tabled Report)

District Director, Maree Pickens, then presented the motion: “That the list of Appointed Officers for 2026-2027 be confirmed.”

Moved: Club Growth Director, Souzy Theophilopoulos

Seconded: Area Director N22, Jill Kadota

The vote was conducted via Votapex. For: 49 Against: 0. Total votes cast: 49 (majority required: 25).

ADOPTED

9.3 District Budget 2026-2027

District Director, Maree Pickens, presented the District Budget for 2026-2027, as distributed to delegates via email and posted on the District 17 website. (See Tabled Report)

She advised that the budget had also been submitted to the Toastmasters International Finance Team, as required, for pre-approval before being presented to the District Council. The Finance Team accepted the budget on 17 September with no changes. The District is seeking, and expects to receive, approval from the Finance Team for the lodging budget, which exceeds policy.

Ashley Witherington, Club VP Education, Perth Rainbow Toastmasters, asked two questions: first, regarding the cost of living, the increase in membership dues and the application of GST, and whether any support was available from the District; and second, regarding clubs closing down as a result of the increase in dues and members leaving.

District Director, Maree Pickens, acknowledged the hardship for members who will struggle to pay the increased dues as a result of the Toastmasters International fee increase and the subsequent application of GST for Australian members. She advised that the District is unable to subsidise members' dues, but that the District has budgeted to support struggling clubs with membership building campaigns. Any clubs that feel they are at risk should raise this with their Area Director, who will discuss options with their Division Director, who can then approach the District Trio with a proposal for support.

She explained that Toastmasters International is required to charge GST, that this is a government requirement, and that those funds are not received by the District.

She noted that the District Budget must be submitted to Toastmasters International by 30 September.

District Director, Maree Pickens, then presented the motion: “That the District Budget for 2026-2027 be adopted.”

Moved: District Finance Manager, Kalavathy Govindarajoo

Seconded: Program Quality Director, Desmond Miranda

The vote was conducted via Votapex. For: 56 Against: 0. Total votes cast: 56 (majority required: 29).

ADOPTED

9.4 Triple Crown Criteria Adjustment

District Parliamentarian, Gavin Hyslop, introduced the motion on the Triple Crown criteria adjustment. The motion was endorsed by the District Executive Committee at its meeting held on 5 September 2026.

The background circulated with the motion was read to the meeting. With the introduction of Pathways and the changes from the previous Toastmasters educational program, some members in District 17 believed that



the changes made it easier to achieve a Triple Crown Award, and subsequently devalued the achievements of prior Triple Crown Award recipients.

The motion adopted at that time was: “That the criteria for receiving a Triple Crown Award in District 17 be redefined to include any three educational awards, at least one of which must be either Level 4, Level 5, the Pathways Mentor Program Award, or the Distinguished Toastmaster Award. This new eligibility criteria to be adopted from the 1st July 2022.”

That motion was presented to the District Council Meeting held on 14 May 2022 and was carried 36 to 8. However, as the meeting did not have a quorum, the minutes of the meeting including the motion were circulated for ratification and were ratified 54 to 6.

Since the adoption of that motion, Toastmasters International has made changes to the educational achievement requirements for the various Levels within Pathways, including requirements relating to meeting roles and educational presentations. Those changes appear to make the District 17 specific requirement unnecessary, and removing it would allow the District to have a consistent approach with the rest of the Districts within Toastmasters International.

Immediate Past District Director, Tom Bielski, asked a clarifying question. Gavin Hyslop explained that the additional criterion imposed by District 17 was that one level must be a Level 4, Level 5 or DTM, whereas the Toastmasters International criteria for awarding a Triple Crown require only the achievement of three levels.

District Director, Maree Pickens, then presented the motion: “That the District’s Triple Crown criteria be amended to align with Toastmasters International.”

Moved: Area Director N22, Jill Kadota

Seconded: District Parliamentarian, Gavin Hyslop

The vote was conducted via Votapex. For: 50 Against: 0. Total votes cast: 50 (majority required: 26).

ADOPTED

9.5 Eligibility for D17 Outstanding Toastmaster of the Year Award

District Director, Maree Pickens, introduced the motion on the eligibility criteria for the D17 Outstanding Toastmaster of the Year Award. The motion was endorsed by the District Executive Committee at its meeting held on 5 September 2026.

District Director, Maree Pickens, explained that many past winners of the Toastmaster of the Year Award continue to give year in, year out, and as a result they rank highly when the award is being determined in subsequent years.

She noted that Toastmasters International only awards the World Champion of Public Speaking once, and that the intention is to bring the Toastmaster of the Year Award into alignment with that approach.

She added that the change is intended to recognise a wider range of members, and particularly those who are giving early in their Toastmasters journey.

District Director, Maree Pickens, then presented the motion: “That the eligibility criteria for the award for the Annual District 17 Toastmaster of the Year be amended to exclude any previous winner of this award from being eligible for this award in subsequent years.”

Moved: District Administration Manager, Melanie Jackson

Seconded: Area Director N22, Jill Kadota

Immediate Past District Director, Tom Bielski, proposed that the motion be amended to read: “That the District 17 Outstanding Toastmaster of the Year Award be awarded to an individual member only once in their lifetime.”

Moved: District Finance Manager, Kalavathy Govindarajoo



Seconded: Program Quality Director, Desmond Miranda

The vote on the amendment was conducted via Votapex. For: 49 Against: 2. Total votes cast: 51 (majority required: 26).

AMENDMENT CARRIED

District Director, Maree Pickens, then presented the motion as amended: “That the District 17 Outstanding Toastmaster of the Year Award be awarded to an individual member only once in their lifetime.”

Moved: Club VP Education, Perth Rainbow Toastmasters, Ashley Witherington

Seconded: Northern Division Director, Jo Parker

The vote was conducted via Votapex. For: 46 Against: 6. Total votes cast: 52 (majority required: 27).

ADOPTED

10. Additional Reports

10.1 Profit & Loss Report

District Finance Manager, Kalavathy Govindarajoo, advised that the Toastmasters International Finance Team had not been able to provide the information required to produce the Profit and Loss Statement for the year ended 30 June 2026 in time for today’s meeting.

The information was received today, so preparation of the reports can now proceed. She advised that the report should be available within a week and would be circulated to the District Council. (See Tabled Report)

ACCEPTED

10.2 Audit Committee Report

Immediate Past District Director, Tom Bielski, regretted to inform the Council that the end of year audit report will be finalised only once the Profit and Loss Statement has been produced.

He advised that the audit report will be circulated to the District Council when it is finalised.

ACCEPTED

10.3 District Success Plan 2026-2027

District Director, Maree Pickens, spoke to the District Success Plan for 2026-2027, which can now be finalised as the budget has been approved. The plan will provide the roadmap that guides District 17’s priorities, resources and actions for the year ahead, with a clear focus on supporting clubs, enhancing the member experience, developing leaders and creating sustainable growth across the District.

She emphasised that the District Success Plan is not just a document. It is our shared commitment to turning the District Mission into meaningful results. By working together and aligning our efforts, we can ensure that every decision we make helps our clubs and members thrive.

The District Success Plan will be completed shortly and distributed to delegates via email and posted on the District 17 website. (See Tabled Report)

She noted that the District Success Plan must be submitted to Toastmasters International by 30 September.

ACCEPTED

10.4 District Director Report

District Director, Maree Pickens, spoke to her tabled report. (See Tabled Report)



She asked delegates to introduce one new activity to bring the magic back and make the meeting experience exceptional — for example, reading the Club Mission at a meeting, or proposing a toast.

ACCEPTED

10.5 Program Quality Director Report

Program Quality Director, Desmond Miranda, spoke to his tabled report. (See Tabled Report)

He reported that all clubs have trained a minimum of four members. The current focus is on Club Success Plans, with 21 clubs still to submit theirs. The focus for the year will be on enhancing the quality of club meetings.

District Director, Maree Pickens, added that a Club Success Plan must be submitted in order for a club to be eligible for the Distinguished Club Program.

ACCEPTED

10.6 Club Growth Director Report

Club Growth Director, Souzy Theophilopoulos, spoke to her tabled report. (See Tabled Report)

She reported 98% participation in the World Cup program. The District will host a Corporate Club Open House, Speak Connect Lead, and she asked delegates to support the event. New clubs are in the pipeline and demonstration meetings are being organised.

ACCEPTED

10.7 District Public Relations Manager Report

District Public Relations Manager, Mairia Te Are, was an apology. District Director, Maree Pickens, presented the report on her behalf. (See Tabled Report)

She reported that momentum is building in the public relations space, with a focus on making sure people feel part of a community. The Thank You Toastmasters campaign is based on one run in the United Kingdom with great success, and the District is creating a similar initiative with banners at external events and a social media campaign. The District will hold its first International Women's Day event in March 2027.

Special thanks were extended to former Public Relations Manager, Angela Booker, for supporting the role.

ACCEPTED

10.8 District Finance Manager Report

District Finance Manager, Kalavathy Govindarajoo, reminded delegates to put together a proposal before committing to any expense. Once an expense has been incurred, the pre-approval should be attached to the receipts and submitted for reimbursement.

District Director, Maree Pickens, added that while the budget has been set, proposals will be considered and funds may be reallocated based on the request.

ACCEPTED

10.9 Immediate Past District Director Report

Immediate Past District Director, Tom Bielski, reported that 13 District 17 members attended the International Convention in Vancouver, a record for the District.

He noted his proposed appointment as District Leadership Committee Chair, and encouraged delegates to be leaders within the District. He emphasised that a member can be a leader in the District without holding an elected or appointed District Leader role, and therefore remain eligible to compete.

ACCEPTED



10.10 Division Director Reports

10.10 a) Central Division Director Report

Central Division Director, Mariana Paliu, gave a summary of her tabled report, noting two leads to charter new clubs. (See Tabled Report)

ACCEPTED

10.10 b) Northern Division Director Report

Northern Division Director, Jo Parker, gave a summary of her tabled report, noting four clubs at risk that are being provided with support, ten stable clubs and seven growing clubs. Two new clubs are in the pipeline: Edith Cowan University, and a Rising Leaders club for 18 to 25 year olds. Any member interested in seeing how a demonstration meeting for a new club is run is encouraged to attend, or to bring along a young person who might be interested in joining. (See Tabled Report)

ACCEPTED

10.10 c) Southern Division Director Report

District Director, Maree Pickens, advised that Southern Division Director, Frank Crisafio, was an apology and that no verbal report was given. (See Tabled Report)

She advised that Southern Division are hosting the annual Quiz Night at Bentley Community Centre on 14 November, and asked all clubs to get a table together, donate two bottles of wine and contribute a new item as a prize.

ACCEPTED

10.11 Area Director Reports

See Tabled Reports.

Area Director C1, Divyanshu Narula, shared that a new club has committed to a demonstration meeting early next year.

Area Director C3, Agata Dharma, advised that the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce WA has been offered a community hub at Manning Community Centre and has been engaged to take over the tenancy. The meeting area can accommodate 45 people and the lease agreement is being finalised. It will become the new home of Kaya Toastmasters Club. Discussions are open to District 17 and to any other club in the area sharing the space.

District Director, Maree Pickens, highlighted that the District finds it difficult to source affordable venues, and noted the possibility of affordable venue hire at this location. She added that the adjacent community centre has a hall with a capacity of more than 250, well supported by amenities.

ACCEPTED

11. New Business

No new items of business were submitted.

12. Announcement

The following dates were announced:

- Rising Leaders Demonstration Meeting – Sunday 4 October 2026, 3:00pm–5:00pm, Bayview Community Centre, Claremont (in person)



-
- Speak Connect Lead – Tuesday 13 October 2026, 5:30pm–8:30pm, Parmelia Hilton, Perth CBD (in person)
 - Quiz Night – Saturday 14 November 2026, 6:00pm–10:00pm, Bentley Community Centre (in person)
 - District Council Meeting – Saturday 15 May 2027, 1:00pm–4:00pm (online)
 - District Conference – Friday 21 to Sunday 23 May 2027 (in person)

13. Adjournment of District Council Meeting

District Director, Maree Pickens, adjourned the meeting at 3.25pm.