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ACS removes board members as tensions ease



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The Australian Computer Society has removed two members of its board-like governing body after a meeting of its National Congress considered a series of extraordinary motions to spill its entire management committee.

ACS president Dr Ian Oppenmann is retained in the leadership role and has been given the opportunity to reconstitute the board and bring to an end the open warfare between different factions over the future direction of the association.

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The special meeting of the ACS Congress on Monday voted to remove the community boards vice-president Craig Horne and national congressional representative Maria Markham from the management committee. Both Dr Horne and Ms Markham are from the Victorian branch of the society.



ACS headquarters – The future still uncertain for the organisation. Photo: Holli/Shutterstock.com

The special meeting of the national congress was held following a meeting two weeks ago that supported a vote of no confidence in the ACS Management Committee, which acts like a board of directors to the professional association.

The congress on Monday voted on motions to remove each of the 11 member management committee separately, requiring a two-thirds majority of the 25-member ACS Congress to remove a members.

While Dr Oppermann easily retained his position, the votes on the committee membership of two other former ACS presidents are understood to have been affirmed by the narrowest of margins. Brisbane-based former President Dr Nick Tate is understood to have survived the spill motion after one voter is understood to have changed sides, while immediate past-president Yohan Ramasundara survived when two congress members abstained from voting.

The future of the association remains far from certain. While Dr Oppermann remains as president, it is not clear whether the votes to remove the committee members will be enough to return stability to the riven organisation.

Another meeting of the National Congress is expected to be held in early December to fill four vacancies on the management committee that arise on January 1 2021. Dr Horne had been due to finish his term, along with Dr Michael Blumenstein and Arnold Wong. A replace must also be found for Western Australian committee member George Coldham, who resigned recently in the midst of the society ructures.

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There are also two vacancies that NSW and Victorian will fill directly.

Whether these potential changes would give Dr Oppermann enough clear air to bring relative calm to the ACS is not clear. It may be that the committee members removed earlier this week are simply reappointed, as with the other officers whose terms are set to expire.

The turmoil at the ACS stems from fighting over the future direction of the association, specifically over the botched plan to change the corporate structure of the organisation that was championed by former president Mr Ramasundara and former CEO Andrew Johnson. The effort ended up in the Federal Court with an adverse ruling.

Meanwhile the society's recently appointed interim chief executive Rupert Grayston said the ACS executive team was working on ways to make the society's operations more transparent and to introduce "stronger controls on ACS decision-making and expenditure."

"With recent growth and increased complexity, it is timely for ACS to update its policies and processes for approval of contracts and expenditure, and for demonstrating that these are not compromised by personal interests," Mr Grayston said in a blog post.

"We are also proposing additional internal audit actions in response to Congress requests. This may delay the release of the audit report for our 2019-20 financial statements and we are considering options for our AGM which is due in late November," he said.

Do you know more? Contact James Riley via [Email \(mailto:james@innovationaus.com\)](mailto:james@innovationaus.com) or [Signal \(https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.thoughtcrime.securesms&hl=en_AU\)](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.thoughtcrime.securesms&hl=en_AU).

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