

# ***Engage!***

## **Welcome**

Welcome to the first edition of *Engage!*, a fortnightly e-newsletter aimed at keeping our Masonic family informed about events and issues relating to Freemasonry in Victoria. I encourage you to read, share and make use of this regular communication. We look forward to engaging you in matters that relate to our Craft as we enter a new phase of planning, development and membership growth.

Members are openly invited to contribute articles to future editions. You will receive the *Freemasonry Victoria* magazine on a quarterly basis as normal.

Yours fraternally  
Vaughan Werner, Grand Master

## **We're not done yet**

After attending a recent Open Night, a young man penned me a letter. Curious about Freemasonry, he thought an Open Night would serve to answer some of his questions. Why is Freemasonry referred to as a secret society? What do the symbols in the Lodge room mean? Why is it that Freemasonry attracts leaders in the community? After attending the evening and being taken on a journey through the history and symbolism of Freemasonry, his intrigue heightened. However, during supper, interest was replaced with doubt after overhearing several Freemasons discuss the demise of the Craft, "Freemasonry" they said, "is dying."

Surprisingly, the young man submitted an application, but not without formally expressing his disappointment at the defeatist and negative attitudes evident during supper.

"One of the reasons I wish to join is that so many of the principles and traditions that I value are in decline in today's world and that is exactly why I want to join – to be with other like-minded people who still hold dear those values. I think Freemasons should not be so defeatist and instead actively seek to recruit other like-minded people in the community. Perhaps with a positive attitude, new life could be breathed into the oldest fraternal society in the world."

The comments of this young man reiterate to us that Freemasonry *does* appeal to generation X and Y. What Freemasonry has to offer a man of the modern world is becoming increasingly relevant, and that is demonstrated by the average age of our new applicants. The average age of candidates applying to Grand Lodge is 34 and throughout the state it's 43. Young men are turning to our organisation seeking the same thing that makes us unique – our foundations are laid in values. Our core business is principles. As men search for greater meaning in their lives, more and more arrive at the front door of Freemasonry, and we must welcome them with an open hand of friendship.

Our product has stood the test of time, and as our community weathers the storm of social change, as individuals become even more isolated from their community, as global conflict becomes endemic, Freemasonry remains solid. Our foundations are strong. Our principles do not waiver. This is what attracts and will continue to attract men to our fraternity. It is true that

some Lodges are at the stage of handing in their warrant, but others are thriving. Freemasonry is not dying.

As an organisation, we are entering a new era where we must embrace technology, react to change quickly, stay relevant to current and future generations and build our profile within the community. Come along for the journey and encourage others to join with you.

Lena

### **Membership Overview**

In June, Freemasons Victoria initiated 34 members: 7 in Northern, 6 in Western, 4 in Loddon, 4 in Central, 3 in Bayside, 2 in South East Mornington, 2 in Monash Gully, 2 in Gippsland East, 1 in Maroondah, 1 in North East, 1 in Bellarine Otway and 1 in Goulburn. Grand Lodge approved 13 applications via enquiries that originated from the website and referred these to Lodges in Central, Maroondah, Bayside, SE Mornington, Northern and Western based on candidate criteria and District Coordinators' recommendations.

For the previous six months, the top Lodges for new initiates were: Middle Park, Golden Fleece and Bendigo City (each with 5 initiates) and Tradition, Baxter and Williamstown (each with 4 initiates).

Our present member mortality rate is sadly 540 members per year. In addition, members are resigning at the rate of 960 per year. Therefore, we need to attract 1,500 new members every year just to remain at our current membership level. With 33 percent of our membership being over 80-years-old, we can't change our natural attrition rate, but what we can change is the number of Freemasons losing interest, becoming disenfranchised or resigning due to disharmony in their Lodge. To combat what we've come to know as 'cringe factors', ensure you do your bit to embrace new ideas, change and progress. Most importantly, it is up to each Freemason to foster a harmonious and collegiate environment in their Lodge. Even if we reduce our resignations by one quarter, we'll be well on our way to achieving our membership target which is: **by 2013 membership decline will have ceased and the age profile of our membership will have become younger.**

**Your membership recruitment target:** recruit one new member for every 10 members in your Lodge. The Lodge with the highest recruitment percentage by 30 June 2011 (number of new members divided by total membership) will win an LCD television screen and DVD for their Lodge plus a \$40 Myer gift voucher for every member.

### **Calendar of Events**

Grand Lodge sent communication to all Lodge Secretaries and District Co-ordinators on 25 June asking for submissions of major events for inclusion in the August-December Calendar of Events. So far, only two submissions have been received. If you would like your events to be considered for inclusion, please submit them to Lena Condos at [condos@freemasonsvic.net.au](mailto:condos@freemasonsvic.net.au) using the suggested format. The six-monthly Calendar of Events will be used to promote our Craft to the public, engage prospective members and reinvigorate the current membership. The calendar will feature events organised at a Lodge, District and statewide level. If not this year, start thinking about which events you may submit for the January to June 2011 period.

### **Sharing the Good News & Success Stories**

Looking to the future, Freemasons Victoria would like to present to its membership cases of exemplary Lodge practice. We would like to share successful initiatives that have served to positively promote Freemasonry and recruit new members. At the end of each year, we plan to produce a publication called *Towards The Future* containing the case studies of the best examples of Lodge practice. This will help educate our membership about what factors comprise an outstanding Lodge.

Similarly, we would like to inform our membership and the wider community about good news stories which assist in creating a positive public profile for Freemasonry. Stories may be suitable for our magazine, our e-newsletter, our Facebook site, website, local media or statewide media, but if we don't know about your good news, we can't help you share it. For example, you may have formed a strategic alliance with children's cancer charity and you are about to make a cheque presentation at a significant public event...Grand Lodge can help spin you some publicity. Or, you may be holding a significant event like Heartbeat Galen's public forum on Freemasonry and *The Lost Symbol*. Again, we can assist with promotional activities and resources to optimise recruitment opportunities. Maybe your Lodge has recently initiated a large number of young men? Let us know about these types of successes as chances are we can help you pitch a story to the local paper, or at the very least, include an article in our magazine.

In addition to Robert Reid who is now focusing solely on writing the *Freemasons Victoria* magazine (on a part-time basis), Mark Richardson will soon be joining the Grand Lodge team as the new Publicity & Communications Co-ordinator. He will be proactively seeking PR opportunities to improve Freemasonry's public image and attract new members.

If you have any good news or success stories to share, please email details to [condos@freemasonsvic.net.au](mailto:condos@freemasonsvic.net.au).

### **Empowerment Kits**

Those who attended the membership launch on 16 April 2010 received a sample 'empowerment kit' – a package of resources produced by Grand Lodge for the purpose of empowering members to: a) openly and confidently speak to others about Freemasonry and b) assist Lodges to recruit new members.

On 2 August, District Co-ordinators will receive one empowerment kit for every Lodge in their jurisdiction. Each kit contains:

- 30 X *What is Freemasonry?* brochure
- 30 X *Freemasonry in the Community* brochure
- 30 X *History of Freemasonry* brochure
- 4 X *What's the Secret?* brochure
- 4 X *Frequently Asked Questions* brochure
- 4 X 10 point membership plan
- 4 X *What Next? Becoming a Freemason* brochure (new)
- 50 X prompt card
- 5 X application forms
- 2 X Further Reading flyer
- 1 X Membership Strategy DVD
- An information sheet on how to use each of these resources

Please use and distribute these resources throughout your Lodge. If you have any questions on how to apply these materials, please contact Lena Condos on (03) 9411 0117.

### **Building Overview**

At Barkley Street in Ballarat, Freemasons Victoria is proposing to create a vibrant and modernised building that shall house all Masonic requirements with the intended outcome to be an exemplary development which combines quality design with the ability to attract external clients. The existing building will be extended by nearly three quarters of the original size to accommodate the aforementioned.

The upgraded facility will meet demands for commercial clients and incorporate quality amenities.

The project has been granted a conditional planning permit and we are awaiting the final construction costing so we can seek building approval.

We have engaged Paige Construction to deliver the project by January 2011.

At Electra Street in Williamstown, we have commenced the redevelopment of the existing Lodge and supper room areas and the historic façade. The development will also incorporate the expansion of the building to house a new multi-purpose open space. The project has been granted a planning permit and we are awaiting the building permit, but have commenced site establishment. Bowden Corp will be completing the works by February 2011.

### **Young Member Profile**

*Brad Miller, Warrnambool*

#### ***What is your line of work?***

I am the Director of a real estate firm.

#### ***How did you find out about Freemasonry?***

I thought that I had stumbled across something secret and I was curious about, what I thought at the time was, this secret organisation of men who knew the 'plan behind the plan'. I thought it was very exclusive and that you would need some kind of special ability to be involved so I dismissed the idea, but it stayed in my mind.

One day while at work, I was having a discussion with a client and I mentioned the Freemasons and asked if he knew anything about it. After pause he looked at me on the angle and asked, "What do you know about it?" It turns out that Don had been in the Lodge for over 30 years and was a very active member.

#### ***Why did you decide to join?***

Curiosity played a big part, being apart of something bigger that is worldwide, with a long history.

***What do your friends or family say about you being a Freemason?***

I have experienced mixed opinions; my wife is proud of me, my kids ask me if I am going to Lodge if I am still in a suit after 7pm and my father asks me lots of questions about it. Maybe I can get him into it!

***How do you introduce Freemasonry to people during conversation?***

I wear cufflinks or a pin regularly and they ask me about it out of their own curiosity. A few joke about it but have genuine interest in knowing what it is really about.

***Do you find rehearsing lines for ceremonies off-putting or time consuming?***

Not at all, I love it and I learn from it. If it wasn't for the ceremony and tradition of Freemasonry, I would have just joined a local club that didn't require any of my time.

***What would you like to tell other young people considering joining?***

It is a journey that is probably different for each man, but for me, it goes like this: curiosity starts you off, acceptance by others gets you in, education and learning keeps you interested, knowledge gives you confidence in all areas of your life and then you stay for the friendship.

***What benefits do you derive from Freemasonry?***

No direct benefits as far as being a member goes, which I believe will need to change before membership increases in leaps and bounds. The benefits are more in belonging to the fraternity and being a part of something that has been a part of history for so long and will be here long after I am gone. If I can leave even a small, good impact on Freemasonry, it will help to keep it alive for members in years to come.

**GIRTH: Get Involved, Reach Top Health**

Feeling a bit sluggish? Do you want to get back in shape? Do you want to reduce your waistline?

In partnership with Adelaide University, the Freemasons Foundation Centre for Men's Health is about to launch its **GIRTH program: Get Involved, Reach Top Health**.

GIRTH is a **free** lifestyle program designed to help men lose weight and gain health. Three out of five men in Australia are overweight and in poor health. GIRTH is looking for men (Freemasons or not) to participate in the pilot program which runs for 10 weeks with minimal commitment but maximum gain to your health.

Information sessions are being held in these locations and times:

<b>Coordinator</b>	<b>Suburb</b>	<b>Address of Venue</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Don Matthews	Sandringham	23 Abbott Street	Wednesday 18 August	7:30pm
Geoff Cook	Ferntree Gully	111 Station Street	Wednesday 25 August	7:30pm
Ken Drew	East Melbourne	300 Albert Street	Monday 23 August	7:30pm
Bob Spittle	Oak Park	21 Station Street	Friday 20 August	7:30pm
Andrew Klein	Ringwood	24 Warrandyte Road	Saturday 28 August	1:00pm
Merv Dyer	Preston	382 Bell Street	Sunday 22 August	10:00am
Rodger Marsden	Belmont	25 Regent Street	Wednesday 1 September	7:30pm

You and your Lodge are encouraged to support this pilot program through participation. Contact Merv Dyer for more information: [menshealth@freemasonsvic.net.au](mailto:menshealth@freemasonsvic.net.au).

### **Tips To Promote Your Lodge**

Grand Lodge is presently working on a guide that will help Lodges promote themselves and recruit new members. It will contain sample press releases, promotional flyers, newspaper ads plus a host of useful strategies Lodges can employ to attract new members.

If you are currently planning a recruitment campaign, contact Lena Condos for assistance at [condos@freemasonsvic.net.au](mailto:condos@freemasonsvic.net.au).

### **Online Merchandise Shopping**

Soon you will be able to purchase Freemasons Victoria merchandise via our online e-store secured by the National Australia Bank. Items such as weatherproof jackets, coffee mugs, golf gloves, umbrellas plus the full range of current Masonic products, all featuring the square and compass logo, will be available to members at the click of a button. Delivery is to your door within ten working days.

### **Back on the 'Chain Gang'**

To take effect from 1 November 2010, Installations throughout the state will be conducted by 'approved teams'.

Born out of the latest Strategic Plan, this initiative is designed to ensure the excellence of ceremonial work.

Current Grand Lodge ceremonial teams and Grand Lodge ceremonial teams of the immediate past three years are automatically approved teams. All other teams must apply on the prescribed form available from the Grand Secretariat and attend an Installation rehearsal.

Detailed information will shortly be published on the Intranet and be available from District Coordinators. Email [lambe@freemasonsvic.net.au](mailto:lambe@freemasonsvic.net.au) for further information.

### **Keeping your communications current**

There are still some signs and notices floating around containing the old Freemasons Victoria telephone number. Please ensure that this number is used: (03) 9411 0111 or toll-free 1800 068 416.

### **Staying connected**

Out of our 13,500 members throughout Victoria, only 1,300 of you have email addresses registered with us – the 1,300 receiving this e-newsletter. Please consider forwarding *Engage!* to your fellow Lodge members, reminding them to register their email address with Grand Lodge by contacting Tony Morris: [morris@freemasonsvic.net.au](mailto:morris@freemasonsvic.net.au)

### **Lodge Secretary Log-in**

Are you a Lodge Secretary having trouble uploading your Lodge Report via the intranet? Please contact Lena Condos at [condos@freemasonsvic.net.au](mailto:condos@freemasonsvic.net.au) to receive assistance.

**Editorial Submissions**

If you have articles for inclusion in *Engage!*, please email them to Lena Condos at [condos@freemasonsvic.net.au](mailto:condos@freemasonsvic.net.au) for consideration.