



Freemasons Victoria
288 Victoria Parade,
East Melbourne VIC 3002
16 March 2020

Brethren,

The health and wellbeing of our membership is of paramount importance. We are in uncharted territory and a high proportion of our membership demographic is within the highest risk group for the contracting of COVID-19.

Our government has recognised the severity of this pandemic and taken steps to halt all non-essential activities and meetings that have in excess of 500 attendees. This situation is unfolding rapidly, with further announcements from Federal and State Governments coming so quickly that this letter is likely to be somewhat behind the latest developments.

To protect our members, their families and community, **all Masonic meetings have been cancelled, effective immediately**; this includes the use of Masonic Facilities for any Masonic purposes. It is recommended that all social and other events are cancelled; note that any event will not be covered under our insurance policies. If any Brethren choose to ignore this advice, they do so at their own risk. At present, this cancellation of events will be in effect until 31 May, 2020 inclusive but may be extended if the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak do not improve. Government and medical recommendations will be adopted and if circumstances change, we will be in contact with our members and Lodges.

All Lodges have dispensation from the Grand Master to conduct business electronically, including all Lodge voting and the reading of applications for membership. For those Lodges due to conduct an Installation during this time, all Officers are to continue in office until future notice.

The Quarterly Communication will be replaced with a business meeting that will be live streamed only. Live streaming will be available, but not to streaming centres. Brethren can view the live stream at home or view the recording at a later date.

In addition, it is necessary to drastically change plans pertaining to the Grand Installation. All events have been cancelled and the installation of the new Grand Master and Deputy Grand Master is expected to be managed via an abbreviated process. More details will be made available as they are finalised. That includes all events as advertised, and refunds for tickets will be provided so far as it is in the power of Freemasons Victoria to provide or arrange.

It may turn out that, in time, some measures taken will be seen to be an overreaction, but we cannot know this now. Mindful of our responsibilities, our legal and moral duty of care to members and staff, and the potentially severe consequences of contagion, we are erring on the side of caution.



During this time, we will be focusing our efforts on our almoners. We ask that every Lodge appoint additional almoners and that every member, but particularly those in the higher risk demographics, are contacted at least fortnightly (weekly if in the higher risk cohort) to ensure that they have access to support if needed. We need to recognise that our membership is aging and that many are in the primary demographic who could be affected by this virus and that by taking such steps, we are working in the true sense of brotherly love, relief and support.

We have instructed our staff to work remotely and given the magnitude of this event, we request that you only contact the office for health and related support. We will be in frequent communication with our membership but request patience in contacting our office; their focus will be on the health and wellbeing of our members, families and impacted communities.

Freemasons Victoria has approved the credit of member contributions (capitation) fees for three months. Invoices will be adjusted and issued to Lodge secretaries reflecting this Board decision. The finance committee is reviewing the implications on our finances and subsequent recommendations will be made to the Board of General Purposes.

Updates will be made via our communications mechanisms, including Engage, Freemasons News, Grand Secretary's Bulletins and via social media. For those with access, we encourage them to access Freemasons Victoria Facebook page that will include updates as they are made available. We also ask all members to update their Masonic details at www.fmv.org.au and include current email addresses.

Brethren, these are troubled times and we look forward to the reinstatement of our meetings and events as soon as possible.

We thank you for your support and patience.

Fraternally,

Bro. Keith Murray
Grand Master

Bro. Richard Elkington
Grand Master Elect

Bro. Justin Stark
President of the Board of General Purposes

Bro. Myles King
President of the Board of General Purposes Designate