



A Desire To Be At Our Very Best

From The Grand Master

Our Change Management process at Freemasons Victoria is well underway.

After 15 months, we are at the half-way mark, and it's appropriate to look back ... and to look forward to the next 15 months.

This brief document acts as a 'Fact Check', as we look to further empower lodges and members across Victoria.



Timeline to date

- **July 2020.** The Ethics Centre commissioned to prepare an extensive report on Culture and Governance.
- **December 2020.** Report delivered. The Board voted to 'dis-establish' and vested its powers and responsibilities with the Grand Master. A temporary Masonic Governing Council was formed to provide advice.
- **January 2021.** Professor Stephen Duns was contracted as Project Manager to assist the Change Management Steering Committee.
- **February 2021.** As part of an extensive consultation process with members across Victoria, Zoom and in-person workshops were held. All members had an opportunity to have their say.
- **March 2021.** At the first available Quarterly Communication, the Grand Registrar confirmed his earlier advice relating to the Constitutional-ity of the changes being undertaken.
- **May 2021.** Another Forum was held to hear members' opinions. Appointments to a number of sub-committees

were made, after advertisements were published for expressions of interest.

- **June-July 2021.** Ongoing consultation, with reports and videos published for the information of members.
- **August 2021.** Detailed information on the proposed vote for the Interim Governance Proposal (2022) circulated.
- **September 2021.** Vote open to all members across Victoria for the Interim Governance Proposal. Vote carried.

Looking forward

- **October 2021.** Expressions of Interest opened for nominees to the Masonic Council, and the Commercial Council.
- **November 2021.** Details to be announced of a Victoria wide vote by members on the Council appointments.
- **December 2021.** Quarterly Communication. Details of vote result to be announced.
- **January 2022.** New interim governance arrangements to commence.
- **Throughout 2022.** Wide-

ranging discussions are to take place on possible permanent changes to the Constitution. Every member will have the opportunity to be seen and heard.

- **By December 2022.** Vote to be finalised on Constitutional Changes, to come into effect from January 2023.

Why the changes?

- Changes are being made, in accordance with the Ethics Centre recommendations, to ensure Freemasons Victoria is the best possible organisation it can be for the future.

Improving culture and behaviour is a major priority. So too is managing our assets based on best possible advice.

Facts ... for the record

- **The Board.** In December 2020, all but one member of the Board of General Purposes voted to disestablish. The other member abstained.
- **Delegation.** The powers and responsibilities of the Board were vested in the Grand Master on a temporary 'caretaker' basis only.
- **Authority.** The decision has the backing of the Grand Registrar, our chief legal officer. He frequently consults with past Grand Registrars, past Grand Secretaries and other lawyers.
- **Consultation.** All members across Victoria have had multiple opportunities to express their viewpoints at Forums and Workshops, as well as by vote.
- **Vote.** A clear majority of those who voted approved of the interim proposals.



Change: Review

For the sake of clarity

■ **Fact Check.** During the lead-up to the 15 September vote, quite a number of claims were made, some in a quite irregular way. The points on this page attempt to address those issues.

■ **The Board.** At the December 2020 Board of General Purposes meeting, every member had the opportunity to have their say, and to cast their vote to 'dis-establish'.

■ **The Decision.** Board members made their decision after the Ethics Centre Report gave a 1 out of 10 mark for efficacy. The Report identified "disharmony, distrust, blame and allegations of poor behaviour" in the past.

■ **Caretaker Status.** The Grand Master accepted the vesting of powers and responsibilities on a temporary basis only. The member vote of 15 September to establish a Masonic Council, and Commercial Council, takes over from this arrangement for 2022.

■ **All Viewpoints.** The Workshops in January-February, the Forum in May, the three Zoom meetings in August-September, and calls for written submissions provided opportunities for all viewpoints to be heard and considered.

■ **Irregular Communications.** Our organisation has established protocols that do not permit the unauthorised circulation of messages and videos directly to members. All communications must be

sent via the Grand Secretary's office, as is our standing policy.

■ **Monitoring.** Adherence to our rules is monitored by the Communications Volunteer Action Team. Where it is believed there may be breaches, these matters are referred to the Grand Secretary's office. Options include 'show cause' letters, mediation, counselling and/or referral to the Complaints Committee.

■ **Complaints.** The Complaints Committee is run independently by eminent members with Police, legal and other senior backgrounds. The Grand Master and Deputy Grand Master stay at arm's length from the running and determination of the Complaints Committee. A Complaints Review Committee is also in place. Determinations of the Committees are published on the FV website.

■ **Improper Publicity.** Some disciplinary action was instituted concerning communications distributed outside established protocols. In several instances, email addresses improperly accessed from the FV database were used. Anonymous emails were circulated, unsolicited, to members.

■ **Values.** The Change Management Steering Committee, at all times, has sought to be inclusive of many views. The traditional structure of individual Lodges, and empowering them to do more has been paramount.

■ **The Vote.** The 15 September vote was contracted to an external third-party firm that specialises in the conduct of ethical electronic voting. There was provision for those members without computers, to vote by regular phone call.

■ **Councillors.** Some external unpaid Councillors are being sought in the Interim Governance Model to broaden our knowledge base.

■ **Trustee Company.** Fears were sown about the trustee company, Freemasons Victoria Holdings Ltd. This is simply an existing company (formerly Grand Lodge Holding Ltd) with a new name. It has, and continues to act as trustee for Masonic assets.

■ **COVID effect.** Some regular meeting arrangements have had to be altered because of COVID restrictions. The 15 September Quarterly Communication had to be converted to a Business Meeting to conform to prevailing restrictions. Quarterly Communications held in November and December.

■ **Positive future.** The outcomes for 2022 and beyond are encouraging. The Interim Governance arrangements are on schedule, and due to come into effect from early in the New Year.

■ **Next Steps.** Throughout 2022, there will be wide discussion about more permanent Constitutional change. Everyone can have their say. A vote is timed for late 2022, as promised.