



FREEMASONS

What is
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Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest and largest fraternal societies. It provides a code of living in today's society based on moral and ethical standards.

Freemasonry is an organisation of men who strive to live by the fundamental principles of integrity, goodwill and charity. It is a not for profit organisation that is heavily involved in supporting charity and community service.

Freemasonry is a society that unifies men of high ideals, regardless of colour, creed or worldly status.



What is the history of Freemasonry?

The precise origins of Freemasonry have been lost in time, however, its traditions date back to the Middle Ages and to the stonemasons who built the cathedrals and castles of Europe. To construct them, it was necessary for men to have considerable knowledge of geometry, arithmetic and engineering. These highly skilled masons formed themselves into lodges to protect the skills and secrets of their trade and to pass on their knowledge to worthy apprentices. Importantly, these men were not bondsmen, hence the word 'free' in the title 'Freemason'.



By the 17th Century, when the building of castles and cathedrals diminished, Masonry began to lose its 'operative' aspects and worthy men who were not craftsmen were also accepted into its membership. It was from this time that Masons were known as 'free and accepted' Masons, as they continue to be known to this day.

The first Grand Lodge was established in England in 1717 and thereafter Freemasonry spread rapidly throughout the world. Freemasonry has been practiced in Australia since the early 19th Century and it is thought that the first Freemason to set foot on Australian soil was Sir Joseph Banks, the botanist on Cook's voyages of discovery.



Who are the Freemasons and why?

Freemasons are ordinary men in the community, 18 years and over, of all religions and backgrounds, who share a concern for human values, moral standards, respect for the laws of society and the rights of individuals. There are approximately five million Freemasons worldwide and 60,000 in Australia and New Zealand.



There may be many reasons why a man will choose to be a Freemason. It is an organisation that promotes self development, family and community values. It provides men with an opportunity for public service and hands-on involvement in charitable and community issues, as well as the chance to socialise with men from all walks of life (without religious or political barriers).

Is Freemasonry a “secret society”?

No. This is a misconception. There is nothing ‘secret’ about Freemasonry. The policy until recently was for members to be rather discreet about the organisation, their community work and even their membership. But times have changed.

Medieval stonemasons developed secret signs and passwords to protect the highly prized technical know-



how of their trade. Developed long before our modern day modes of communication, these secret signs and passwords were later used by Freemasons to identify one another and to establish their degree of level of attainment in Freemasonry.

The so-called ‘secrets’ of modern Freemasonry are used solely as a ceremonial means of demonstrating that one is a Freemason when in lodge meetings. The real point of a Freemason promising not to reveal them is basically a dramatic way of testing the good character of those who join – to become a Freemason requires a person to continually observe, with total sincerity, the high ideals of integrity, goodwill and confidentiality.

Is Freemasonry a religion?

No. Again, this is a misconception. Freemasonry is made up of men who come from many different religions and there is nothing whatsoever in being a Freemason that conflicts with a member’s religious beliefs and practices. Freemasonry does not have any theological doctrines, offers no sacraments and does not claim to lead to salvation. It is not a substitute for religion, nor a forum for religious discussion.

To be a Freemason you must, however, have a belief in a ‘Supreme Being’. Traditionally, there is a Bible (or Bibles) in all lodge rooms. Provisions are made for the presence of the appropriate Holy Books, according to the beliefs of members. This is because Freemasonry is truly a non-sectarian organisation.

Is it true that Freemasonry is anti-Semitic or anti-Catholic?

No. This is not true. Freemasonry promotes unity and tolerance amongst all men, and does not discriminate against any religion. The principles and practices of Freemasonry are compatible with all compassionate religions that teach respect for the deity and tolerance towards one's fellow man. If anything Freemasonry complements the philosophies of these faiths. There are many practising Catholics and Jews who are Freemasons.

Why can't women become Freemasons?

Freemasonry is a fraternal organisation with practices and an identity firmly entrenched in tradition and history. The original Constitutions (by Anderson) were published in 1723 and are fundamentally what Freemasons all over the world are united by and adhere to. To change these Constitutions to allow women to become members would require lodges throughout the world to agree to the change. As cultures are so diverse and vary so dramatically in terms of social structure and



gender relations, making this fundamental change to the Constitutions would be extremely difficult. There are orders with Masonic characteristics, such as 'The Order of the Eastern Star' and 'The Order of the Amaranth', consisting of both men and women.

Family and family values are an important part of a Freemason's life and women and families are frequently invited to take part in Masonic social activities.

How is the organisation structured?

Individual Freemasons come together in a local lodge. The Grand Lodge is the central representative, organisational and administrative body within a jurisdiction.



The name titles that Freemasons use to address each other have their origins in history. For example, just as mayors are referred to as 'Your Worship', the leader of a lodge is called 'Worshipful Master' - meaning greatly respected. The Grand Lodge is led by a 'Grand Master', who represents and oversees Freemasonry within his jurisdiction. He is referred to as 'The Most Worshipful Grand Master'.

What do Freemasons do at Lodge meetings?



Lodge meetings are held regularly (often monthly) and like any organisation there is a business element with minutes, accounts and plans for forthcoming events and charity activities to be addressed and discussed among members. Lodge meetings are also ceremonial and involve a series of formalised and symbolic presentations (similar to short plays) that use drama to highlight the codes of conduct by which a Freemason strives to live. Freemasons have a traditional mode of dress, which is worn during the meetings. The final part of the lodge meeting usually involves members sharing an enjoyable meal together.

Apart from these meetings, most lodges organise regular social activities for families and friends, such as dinners, theatre parties, sports days and picnics.

Are there any compulsory levies to pay?

As with all organisations, annual fees are expected of members but are reasonably priced. These fees may vary from lodge to lodge depending on the style which a lodge chooses to adopt.

Where can I obtain further information about Freemasonry?

We suggest that you visit the website or phone the Grand Lodge in your area. If you know a Freemason already, speak to him about your interest in Freemasonry. Most large libraries have numerous books on Freemasonry. Most Grand Lodges also have a reference library which offers access to information on Freemasonry from all over the world.

The contact detail of all Grand Lodges in Australia and New Zealand are on the back of this brochure.



How can I become a Freemason?

The basic qualifications for becoming a Freemason are that your decision to join is made without improper inducement by others, nor for personal gain or reasons of idle curiosity; that you believe in a 'Supreme Being' and that you are a law-abiding person.

There are two ways you can go about becoming a Freemason

- The traditional way is to approach a Freemason known to you and express your desire to join. This Freemason would then become your 'nominator'.
- If you are not already acquainted with a Freemason you are welcome to contact the membership coordinator at the Masonic Grand Lodge, and he will direct you. All you have to do is ask.

What kind of charitable works are Freemasons involved in?



Charity is a basic principle of Freemasonry, and members have been involved in charitable activities in this country for almost as long as European settlement. There are a number of established Masonic charities actively involved in the community for the care of young people, orphans, the sick, the aged and those affected by tragedy and natural disaster.



For too long Freemasons have been reluctant to speak up and tell the community about the financial assistance they give to the disadvantaged. In any one year Freemasons across Australia and New Zealand give generously and significantly to charities and not for profit organisations.



Money is raised at local, regional and/or state level, through initiatives at Freemasons' meetings, dinners and other social events which can be attended by the broader community by invitation. Trusts and other Masonic institutions administered by the Grand Lodges distribute grants according to the purpose for which they were established. These include funds of benevolence, youth support, disaster relief, scholarships and various philanthropic activities.



For further information please contact:

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QUEENSLAND

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