

Communication Address

Dear Brethren,

This past year has been full of change. There is not one Brother here who has not felt the effects of the changes that have swept through our Jurisdiction.

Some Brothers have openly expressed to me their dissatisfaction with how some changes have come about. I can understand this, not only as a Brother, but as a Human Being.

However, *thoughtful* change is something that needs to happen in order for progress to take place. In many respects, whether I agree or disagree with *how* these changes have come about, I am full of hope that we will all look back this time next year and see strong evidence of the improvements to our Order that have characterised the GM-Elect's vision for our future.

In this respect, I would like to congratulate RWBro. Jensen PAGM in his election to become our Grand Master for the Masonic Year 2018/2019 and wish him and the Officers comprising what will be his Administration, every success in leading our Order for the next twelve months.

Too often Brethren, we only hear the negative aspects of things in the Press, Radio and Television. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the opposite – the good things that have taken place in our Order so that we can have a balanced perspective.

1. I mentioned the fact that we have Elected a new Grand Master and the process of his Election was something that we implemented with thoughtful application to ensure that full democratic processes were applied and that the Regulations governing the Election were promulgated and debated to make the process an example of Masonic Leadership in Australia and New Zealand.
2. We have had very robust discussion and debate regarding the sale of Masonic Homes. This has been important because it is an example of Brotherhood in action. We are clothed in our Human Nature and Human Nature will always express contrary viewpoints. We have made available opportunities for these contrary viewpoints to be discussed openly. As we progress through the Degrees of Freemasonry, we begin to understand with greater clarity that our Ritual encourages us to transform our behaviour to be open and understanding and tolerant of people and opinions which are contrary to ours. The words are easy to say. The actions are not as easy to deliver but I believe that there are ample examples of where this has taken place and been demonstrated in (at times) very stressful circumstances.
3. For the second time in our 133 year history of the Grand Lodge of SA and NT we have had a challenge to Grand Mastership. In this instance, it has been unique in so far as it has been a three-way Election process. The way that each of the Candidates has behaved has been a hallmark of their personal integrity and their commitment to us as Freemasons. On behalf of us all, I would like to congratulate RWBros. Merrill and Booker for the opportunities that they have given us to consider their visions.

4. The Heads of Recognised Orders - MW Grand Master Kitching and RW Bro. Vesotsky of Grand Mark, together with ME 1st Grand Principal Burns and ME Companion Ivor Willmott Deputy 1st Grand Principal of Grand Royal Arch Chapter have met with DGM Merrill and myself on a number of occasions to discuss the qualities and attributes that these senior representatives believe that a Grand Secretary would need at this time in our History. On my return from Europe, I will invite the Grand Master-Elect to meet with us and discuss our findings. For me, it has been a very progressive step in demonstrating active participation with each other for the benefit of our respective Orders.

5. I have been fortunate that DGM Merrill and I have had the support of our wives – Heather and Jenny. Together, we agreed that we would design functions to bring together the partners of Freemasons in a variety of social settings so that we could better enjoy the warm affection that characterise the best that Freemasonry has to offer. I anticipate that this involvement of partners, family and friends will be something that will continue well into the future.

Further, I would like to express my deep gratitude to RWBro. Merrill DGM. When I came to appoint him to the role 18 months ago, we didn't know each other very well at all. Over time, I have come to understand his deep integrity, compassion, understanding and strong character. I feel that I have become a better man and Freemason because of his influence in my life.

6. We have made significant advances in joining together with two other very important Orders – the Order of the Eastern Star and the Rainbow Girls. I would like to acknowledge the contribution that Mrs. Lorraine Rayner has brought to her leadership role in these Orders. We are a family of Masonic Orders.

7. Another very significant step forward was announced in August 2017 that I would like to explain for the sake of clarity. After a series of meetings with senior Roman Catholic Clergy over the past 2 years, the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference announced that no Roman Catholic practicing Freemasonry in Australia will suffer either liturgical or Ecclesiastical penalty because of his Membership of our Order. This is an historical step forward and opens possibilities for Members of other Faiths who may feel marginalised by their Church or Temple or Synagogue to investigate opening channels of direct communication with Senior Clergy of their faith to build bridges of understanding rather than walls of separation.

8. Lastly, I would like to express my thanks to each Brother sitting in our Assembly this evening. With my hand over my heart, I understand that this last year may not have been easy for you. It may have been a time of confusion, of not knowing what you should do, a time of wondering what it means for you to be a Freemason. I understand all these things for reasons that some may not possibly imagine. I cherish your courage. I treasure your resilience and I have faith that you and I will continue to honour each other as – *Brothers*.

May each of us continue to feel the presence of our God, in our lives. MW Bro Stephen Michalak

Grand Master
Sat 14th October 2017