



COMMITTEE WORK ORIENTATION BOOKLET

Mission Statement of the Theosophical Society

*To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and
realisation of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual Self-transformation
and the Unity of all Life.*

Contents

Introduction Letter from the National President.....	3
COMMITTEE WORK.....	5
DUTIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESIDENT	6
DUTIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECRETARY	8
DUTIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TREASURER	8
DUTIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ALL OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS	9
TIPS FOR COMMITTEE MEETINGS	10
RULES, REGULATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS.....	18
THE STRUCTURE OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.....	21
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY (The TS)	21
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA (The TS in Australia).....	21
LODGES/BRANCHES	22
Appendix 1 CODE OF CONDUCT (Section Rules 8.14 To 8.19).....	25
Appendix 2 T. S. SOLIDARITY AND IDEALS	30
Appendix 3 SELECTED SIMILAR AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS	34

The Three Objects of The Theosophical Society

1. *To form* a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
 2. *To encourage* the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.
 3. *To investigate* unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in the Human Being.
-

Introduction Letter from the National President



Stephen McDonald

Greetings from the National Section (Headquarters, Sydney office) and congratulations on your election as an officer or member of your committee for the current year. During this time, you have an opportunity to make a special contribution to the work of our Society.

This orientation booklet is designed to assist you to serve your Lodge/Branch during the next twelve months, either as a committee officer or member.

As is well known, the Theosophical Society has its three Objects. It has two long-standing and well publicized resolutions which have been approved by the General Council: *Freedom of Thought* and *Freedom of the Society*, which are enclosed; as well as the Council's latest 2019 resolution on *The Freedom and Responsibility of Lodges and Branches*. These resolutions apply to the Society at all levels because all lodges and branches are linked through their Rules with the TS in Australia, and therefore also with the Theosophical Society internationally. The internal interconnections within the TS are made more explicit in further in this document.

If you have questions or concerns about any aspect of Lodge/Branch work, please do not hesitate to contact me or one of the dedicated staff at the National Headquarters. ***We are here to serve you and your committee.***

The following is a very brief overview of staff job descriptions at the Australian Section of the Theosophical Society (Sydney Office)

National President Stephen McDonald (pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au):

Visits/tours by national and international lecturers, submissions and editing of *Theosophy in Australia* magazine, enquiries and registrations and organising annual School of Theosophy, Lodge/Branch policy development, permission for members to visit Adyar, mediation and conflict resolution in TS Centers, see [Section Rule 23](#)

National Secretary (currently vacant) (natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au):

TS properties, insurance, Maple-Brown Abbott investments, copyright issues, registration of the TS seal, Rules, routine administration, annual accounts, payment of invoices, overseeing the work of the Section's bookkeeper, room allocations at national Conventions, see [Section Rule 32](#).

Education Coordinator Simon O'Rourke (education@theosophicalsociety.org.au):

All questions about the Section's educational courses and resources, help with Lodge/Branch programming if required, borrowing DVDs, National Members' lending library, questions regarding Theosophical teachings, overseeing the

Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives. Overseeing the Section's website and website development. See [Section Rule 23.7](#).

Membership Secretary Richard Larkin (membership@theosophicalsociety.org.au):

Matters pertaining to TS membership and Lodge/Branch membership reports.

Librarian, Convention Secretary Jennifer Hissey

(catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au):

Campbell Theosophical Research Library, requests concerning Section's Archives, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), registrations and payments for the National Convention.

Webmaster Gil Murdoch (web@theosophicalsociety.org.au):

Programmed Lodges/Branch programmed updates, updating the Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals, other updates as and when required.

The Theosophical Society is unique, being a modern custodian of the Ageless Wisdom Tradition. Election as an officer or member of a TS committee is a special opportunity to give service for a period of time, to rise to the challenge, and to be inspired by what our Society stands for and inspiration can become the fuel of creative energy, harmony and synergy in a TS center. I do wish you a fruitful period ahead. And don't forget support is available from the National Headquarters whenever you and your committee require it.

With warm regards,

Stephen McDonald

COMMITTEE WORK

We are a world-wide spiritual organization and our committees throughout the world are made up of VOLUNTEERS. They do service to humanity through the Theosophical Society, freely giving their time, labor and often sacrificing their personal finances. They are the glue that holds the Lodge/Branch or Group together. We stand on the shoulders of many others, some of whom we remember but most of whom are unknown, though not unknown to the inner founders of the Society and to karma.

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York on November 17th, 1875, by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky and Henry Steel Olcott and others, and was incorporated under the laws of British India on April 3rd, 1905, with its Headquarters at Adyar, Madras (Chennai), India (hereinafter referred to as 'The Theosophical Society' or 'the Society'). The name of the national body is *The Theosophical Society in Australia*, also referred to as 'the National Society' and sometimes known as the Australian Section of The Theosophical Society. The Theosophical Society in Australia is a Component Section of The Theosophical Society. The Theosophical Society in Australia was an unincorporated association and a Resolution for incorporation was passed at its Convention Business meeting in 2022.

Incorporated bodies such as the National Society and a number of established Lodges/Branches are **Public Not-For-Profit Companies, limited by guarantee**, administered under Australian Legislation, including the Corporations Act and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012 (Cth) (the ACNC Act, see <https://www.acnc.gov.au/> for more information). Unincorporated Associations are also governed by the ACNC.

For the sake of the Society and the financial and legal well-being of its members, it is important that all of our Committee members diligently adhere to the legal requirements and obligations of their organization, and that we support each other in doing so. A company Director or employee has the power to bind the company in a contract with a third-party, so be sure of the integrity and intelligence of the member before nominating them to a committee.

The Rules of the Theosophical Society, sometimes known as Section Rules, are found in its current Constitution. Incorporated associations must have a governing document called a 'constitution' or 'rules', or articles of association, that sets out the roadmap for how the association will operate. It's a legal requirement that an organisation and its members follow the rules of the organisation.

Our committees are groups of people entrusted with the safe keeping of another's property. In the case of a Lodge/Branch Committee which holds and is responsible for financial assets and buildings, this property to be kept safe includes the assets painstakingly accumulated, generously donated and bequeathed, and carefully conserved over many years, and in some cases for more than a century. It also includes what is perhaps more important, our intellectual and societal property: namely, the identity, reputation, message and purpose of the TS. That too is to be kept safe and undiluted. Section **Rule 4** points out that the Society's purpose is the pursuit and dissemination of the *Divine Wisdom* known as *Theosophy*.

The National Secretary is here to offer assistance, particularly in dealing with our legal, moral and ethical obligations as Committee members governing a legal entity.

A few Items to note:

- Members of the Society cannot be members of a Lodge/Branch committee unless they have had twenty-four months membership immediately prior to nomination, **Section Rule 7.7 (a) (b)**. This allows time for a member to become gently acquainted with theosophical principles and the ethos of the Society.
- Nothing done in the name of the Society or under its auspices should be to the detriment of its Objects or reputation, **Section Rule 8.14, Code of Conduct, see [Appendix 1](#)**.
- Any change to the Rules of a Lodge/Branch must be approved at an Annual General Meeting of the Lodge/Branch, **Section Rule 7.2**. To be valid, those changes must first be approved by the national Executive Committee, and then they must be approved by the General Council (at Adyar), which is the international governing body. So THOSE RULES ARE TACITLY AND IMPLICITLY RECOGNISED BY THE COMMUNITY. Conforming to them helps safeguard us from dominance by strong-willed or opinionated individuals. They also protect the Society from being taken over by those with agendas and interests that may be antagonistic to the principles and ethics of the Society.

For office bearers of Public companies, limited by guarantee, or of unincorporated associations, check the ACNC website—

<https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/factsheets#S>

and the Induction and Welcome Pack—

<https://www.acnc.gov.au/tools/factsheets/small-charities-library-induction-and-welcome-pack>

Note, we are all International members of the Theosophical Society, and Australian members are all National members of the Australian Section. *Please consult the Rules or Articles of your own Lodge/Branch or Group pattern rules for any additional responsibilities.*

DUTIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRESIDENT

- Provide overall leadership, lead and support the committee and members by example and by attention to detail, and ensure compliance with legal requirements. Know the rules. Note that the President has *one* vote, and a casting or additional vote can only be cast if there a provision for this stated in the Lodge/Branch rules
- Reporting: oversee ACNC reporting/other local state or territory requirements
Annual Treasurer's reports/audit reports for the AGM
Annual Lodge/Branch report for the National President
- Chair meetings, ensuring meetings follow the agenda, are not unnecessarily prolonged, and that all committee members have had reasonable opportunity to express their views

- Prevent conflict, by intervening early and asking members to speak one at a time, observing courtesy and kindness towards each other. In severe conflict, ask the members to *speak only to the Chair* for all or that portion of the meeting.
- Oversee preparations of Board agenda and minutes. Ensure motions or resolutions are strictly and accurately recorded in the meeting, and are read out prior to voting.
- Review the draft minutes of the last committee meeting recorded by the minute secretary in conjunction with the Lodge/Branch Secretary, and ensure a draft of the minutes are distributed to the committee members soon after the meeting. Ratify the minutes with corrections at the next committee meeting and if approved by the committee, sign and date the minutes in accordance with the requirements of the rules and the Corporations Act. Under the Act, electronic and/or paper documents must be signed, dated, and stored in a tamper proof location within one month of the committee meeting
- *Note* recommendations from the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) concerning Board Minutes: <https://www.aicd.com.au/content/dam/aicd/pdf/tools-resources/director-tools/board/board-minutes-director-tools.pdf>
- A few brief additional notes mentioned by Ian Longish from the Governance Institute during his talk 2 July 2023, concerning minutes:
 - Ian suggested that it was not necessary to mention names in the minutes except for the attendance record, or on request (such as a record of abstention from voting, or wanting a record of voting against the motion).
 - Discussions could be briefly summarised to state the important points without mentioning names, to avoid the problem of people being misquoted or insufficiently quoted, and to make the discussion more impersonal.
 - Importantly, the motions in their correct wording need to be part of the agenda when possible, in order to give people time for their consideration. Ian mentioned that he would normally leave out 'any other business' from the agenda to avoid last minute motions. He noted it is not necessary to have a seconder for motions or to put a name against the mover. It was only necessary that it be shown that they were passed or not passed.
- See especially [ASX Corporate Governance Council](#) and Council's [Corporate Governance Principles and Recommendations \(4th Edition\)](#)
- Liaise with the Secretary concerning the monthly members report of membership changes. Ensure new members are welcomed and encouraged. Make contact if possible with members who have been long absent, or are at risk of lapsing. Determine, if possible, the reasons for member lapsings and resignations
- Director ID. For people nominating as a Director or Committee member for the first time, see the requirements for Director ID at:— <https://www.abrs.gov.au/director-identification-number/who-needs-apply-and-when>
- AGM. Ensure timely notifications of the AGM and timely notice of nominations for

elections to executive positions. Gently encourage members who show an interest in Theosophical work to participate on the executive committee through the nomination process. Only encourage people who appear to be self-reliant and have a caring and responsible attitude to committee work.

- Convention Business Meeting. Work with the Secretary to see that members are informed of any agenda items or motions, and if necessary arrange delegates or proxies for the Convention business meeting
- Maintain good communication with the State Representative/National Council Representative. Ensure the State Representative has a good understanding of any submissions to be presented on behalf of the members to the National Council.
- Working or sub-committees within the Lodge. Encourage non-Executive members, with both an interest in Theosophy and suitable ability, to participate on sub-committees. Note that sub-committee decisions should be treated as recommendations to the Executive. Avoid giving blank discretionary powers to a sub-committee since the Executive Directors are legally responsible for all decisions.
- Co-signatory for bank account. Ensure signatories are approved and changed promptly when office-bearers are changed
- Organise Lodge Newsletters/Magazines. It is generally recommended that committee meetings be treated as confidential, but with agreement obtained on salient points which may be shared with members through a Lodge/Branch newsletter.
- Personal selfcare

DUTIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SECRETARY

- Ensure good governance of the Incorporated Company (Lodge, Branch)
- Support the elected President, and be aware of the rules governing meetings
- Overall responsibility for Agenda, minutes, membership (**Section Rule 10.1**) and other incorporated compliance. Ensure the Minutes are brief, accurate and useful. Take special care with the wording of Motions or Resolutions at committee meeting to support the integrity of the vote. Ensure the Agenda, new Motions, and Minutes are sent in a timely manner in accordance with the Lodge/Branch or Group rules, ACNC and Corporations Act
- Co- authorize certificate of compliance (ACNC and any other according local)
- Co- signatory for bank account
- Personal selfcare

DUTIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TREASURER

- Overall responsibility and oversight for the finances of the organization. Prepare Budgets in cooperation with the President and Secretary
- Recommend the Annual Audited Financial report to membership at the AGM

- Investigate, recommend, and help to appoint independent auditors, to be subject to approval by members
- Co-authorize certificate of Compliance (ACNC if required)
- Co-authorize payment of bills on behalf of the organization
- Personal selfcare

DUTIES OR RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ALL OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Regularly attend Committee meetings, regularly contribute towards the success of events, and be willing to support the work of the Lodge/Branch or Group beyond the level of an ordinary lodge/branch or group member
- Provide *Time* commitment, including preparation for, and punctually attending committee meetings. Take the time to become informed. Give your apologies before each meeting if unable to attend as a courtesy to others, and as far in advance as possible. Meetings cannot proceed without a quorum. Read the minutes and agenda before the meeting
- Be diligent if you volunteer for tasks
- Attend the AGM (Annual General Meeting) and Special and Extraordinary Meetings to ensure a quorum is reached, to support the members, and to contribute to the proceedings
- Attain knowledge of the requirements of Lodge/Branch governance, including especially awareness of the Rules of the local and national bodies
- Review and approve budget annually, and be aware of the management of expenditure
- Foster a positive working relationship with other Board Members and Lodge/Branch staff, or group organisers
- Acknowledge your service to Theosophy /Humanity

TIPS FOR COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Create a Calendar of Events for the Coming Financial Year.

For *new Presidents and Secretaries* it may be helpful to read the old minutes to get a 'feel' for the position. *Read the Motions or Resolutions from the past financial year and **create a calendar of events*** for yourself, such as:

- when is the AGM due, when should the letter calling for nominations be sent, when should the President's report and Treasurers report be ready (and auditors report, if necessary), and when should these and notice of AGM be sent to members;
- when are the annual sub-committee reports, if any, due;
- when is the Budget due;
- when is the monthly Members report due;
- when is the Lodge/Branch Convention Business Meeting due, and by what date should the form indicating the results be sent to the National Section to be valid (see Section Rule 16.2 in which voting results must be received at least two weeks before the meeting);
- when are the committee meetings and additional meetings such as a think tank meeting;
- when should the magazine or newsletter be published and distributed, and by what date should the programmes be ready, etc.

Meetings Chairperson, normally the President (see your Lodge/Branch Rules or Articles)

A moment of quiet, one or two minutes, before a meeting commences serves to remind us of our service to humanity.

- Formal procedures for committee meetings are available online, use the points that are useful for your committee. An example is found in the following guide—
<https://managers.usc.edu/files/2015/05/Basic-Guide-to-Conducting-Effective-Meetings.pdf>
- *Guidelines for Conduct*: The Section's *Guidelines* can assist to remind us of our behaviour. Refer to the National and Lodge/Branch and Group rules. See [Appendix 1](#)
- *Rules and Policies*: *Have a copy of the Lodge/Branch rules and policies, and National Section Rules and policies, on hand for reference during the meeting.* Ensure these are made available to new Committee members preferably by the first meeting after elections
- *Meeting Rules*: State the rules governing speaking in a meeting. Decide whether the meeting is to be casual or formal. If formal, ask people to indicate to the chair that they wish to speak. If necessary, ask that people raise their hands before speaking. Allow members to speak to Motions one at a time, to state their support or objection to the motion and their reasons, and move around the table. Avoid one to one

discussions across the table unless they are constructive and short. Be firm if necessary

- *Be transparent and inclusive.* Avoid privately soliciting the support of committee members with a similar mindset. The best decisions are collective decisions that take into account different points of view
- Be mindful of the *nature of the TS*, and what should be appropriate behaviour in a committee meeting; therefore, be again aware of the Section's Guidelines for Conduct
- *Open the meeting*, make sure that *apologies are recorded*, as well as members who are present, then proceed through the agenda
- *Guide the meeting.* Make sure everyone has an opportunity to speak and that the meeting is not dominated by personalities, especially those who wish to have the last comment following other people's comments
- *Keep track of the time*, and ensure there is *reasonable time to discuss motions*, especially motions set late on the agenda when people may be tired
- *Lead by example, be courteous*, ensure that the meeting is as *harmonious* as possible
- *Timely Notice of Motions.* Give as much *advance notice* as possible. Avoid raising Motions in meetings without due notice. Give people the time to evaluate and research, to question and possibly to compromise. However, be prepared to defer decisions in the interest of *impartiality, harmony* and further discussion
- *Impartiality of The Chair in Motions.* Be as impartial as possible in the presentation of motions, do not move or second motions unless necessary – this should preferably be committee members other than the chair unless necessary
- *Steer members so that they work smoothly and purposefully as a team.* Ensure that the committee members make collective decisions, rather than decisions based only on the views of one or two people; and especially on important items on which each committee member should be permitted to express a view before a decision is taken
- *Consensus.* Ideally, endeavor to obtain a consensus before motions are passed
- *Properly record Motions.* Ensure that the minute secretary has time to write down motions and summary notes. Pause the discussion if necessary
- *Read out Motions prior to voting.* Ensure motions or resolutions are strictly and accurately recorded, and read out prior to voting. Changes to wording subsequent to voting may invalidate those resolutions and in worse cases bring charges of tampering
- *Record the result of the vote.* All formal motions for decisions of note should be put to a 'for' and 'against' vote, with any abstentions recorded and a subsequent declaration by the chairperson of whether or not a motion is carried. Avoid pressuring people to change their vote
- *Specify action points*, and the responsible person(s) or group for each action point
- *Privacy.* Be aware of privacy issues as the minutes may be viewed by members. For example, if discussing sensitive issues such as a person's health and welfare,

particularly staff and members, it may be prudent to avoid naming the person in the minutes

- *Note Board Minutes are legal documents.* Again note recommendations from the Australian Institute of Company Directors concerning Board Minutes: <https://www.aicd.com.au/content/dam/aicd/pdf/tools-resources/director-tools/board/board-minutes-director-tools.pdf>
- *Think Tanks and Planning Meetings.* Much time in meetings is spent on business, finance and maintenance matters. If necessary, consider organising a ‘**think tank**’ or ‘brain storming’ meeting once a year. This would be a meeting *not* to discuss issues dealt with in an ordinary meeting. Ask, could we do things better, how can we better promote the objects of the Society, what other educational and social events could we organize. Think and record ideas, no matter how seemingly impractical, *without filtering and self-editing*, such as ‘we have done that before’. Stimulate the free-flow of ideas. Organise a lunch and make it a relaxed, social and friendly meeting to help committee members to work together. Review those ideas at later meetings or in sub-committees

Tips for Other Officers and Committee Members

- *Be mindful of the nature of the TS*, that we encourage the study and exploration of Divine Wisdom, therefore what constitutes appropriate theosophical behaviour in a committee meeting
- Be aware of the Section’s *Guidelines for Conduct*
- *Respect the democratic process*, regardless of outcomes, unless affected by law
- *Demonstrate respect to the elected Chair, and each other*
- Do not talk over each other, and primarily speak to the chair
- *Listen* to other points of view
- Be willing to make comments for or against a point, with *kindness and consideration*
- *Be brief and to the point.* Do not make comments too lengthy – be mindful that other people may also have something to say on a particular item
- *Prepare in advance* for particular items, especially if advance material has been sent out

Conflict Resolution

Despite its First Object, and our inspiring ideals, the TS is not immune to conflict. If there seems to be an impasse concerning a serious issue which cannot be resolved at a regular committee meeting, it is recommended that the committee takes some time to address the issue concerned in a special, separate meeting arranged for this purpose. A trusted neutral party should be invited to facilitate this meeting - possibly even a senior Lodge/Branch member who is not currently a committee member. If preferred, then either the National President or the National Secretary may be invited to observe or mediate. However the issues must be resolved in accordance with international, local and national rules, noting the General Councils' Resolution concerning Freedom of Lodges within the Theosophical Society (see the section on *Resolutions* in this document). The National body should be seen as impartial in all disputes and as a matter of principle would only be willing to intervene directly where parties were unwilling to abide by the National rules.

Lodges/Branches are naturally expected to adhere to all relevant Rules and the spirit of the Theosophical Society in their various activities. The Australian Section has a Code of Conduct, also provided in this booklet, which has been incorporated into its Rules as from March 2019. See [Appendix 1](#)

Three steps towards conflict resolution

The following three steps, which require input from all committee members present, have proven useful in Lodge/Branch committee conflict situations:

1. Identify the core concerns (e.g., the concerns of two opposing viewpoints)
2. Identify together a set of possible solutions for those core concerns, and
3. Identify together a way forward for the committee concerned, with the committee collectively prioritizing the possible solutions raised under point 2. The solution may also require appropriate apologies if necessary; an apology can go a long way.

It is best if Lodge/Branch problems can be resolved by the elected Lodge/Branch committee.

If this is not possible, a formal invitation would need to be extended from the Lodge/Branch committee to the National President requesting assistance from the National Headquarters.

Normally, the National Headquarters, the national Executive Committee and the National Council of the Australian Section do not interfere in the running of Lodges/Branches. See [Appendix 2](#) for why this is so. They perform a support role which includes actions such as answering queries as well as the provision of promotional and educational material, a national magazine, educational material,, a speaker programme, Annual Conventions and other events at the two National Centers.

However, the National Council, national Executive Committee and/or National Headquarters may either act or intervene in the following instances:

- If any officers, members of Lodges/Branches or National Members actively work against a Lodge/Branch, the Theosophical Society nationally or internationally, the Society's three Objects or any of the three General Council Resolutions mentioned above

- If any officers, members of Lodges/Branches or National Members are in serious or sustained breach of the Code of Conduct, the three General Council resolutions, Lodge/Branch Rules, the Section Rules or Australian Law
- If there is action required in relation to an agreement between the Section and a Lodge/Branch occupying a property owned by The Australian Section Theosophical Trust, or
- Upon the request of one or more officers or committee members of a Lodge/Branch or Certified Group, in accordance with our rules if further enquiry is considered necessary.

We mention these instances, which have been invoked only rarely, so that members may rest assured that our Society is willing to provide, through its work and activities, a great spiritual opportunity and a safe environment to share Theosophical inquiry with reasonable and like-minded people. Our name symbolizes the Wisdom of the Gods. Let us honour that by putting aside small or petty differences and work together in harmony, not the harmony of willing slaves, but harmony flowing from generosity, compassion and wisdom.

Policies and Regulations

What is a Policies document?

A Policies document is simply a record of motions or decisions.

Changes to National Rules and Lodge Rules are passed by Resolutions involving Lodges/Branches at the national level and Lodge/Branch members at a local level. Decisions by the National Council are compiled into a National Policies document. There is also National and Lodge/Branch Executives responsible for the day to day running of the respective organisations. Their non-housekeeping or ad-hoc decisions are regulations that need to be recorded in a convenient place in addition to their place in the various Minutes.

In summary, at a National level, we have a Constitution or National Rules,
 below that, we have the decisions of the National Council in their Policies document,
 and below that, we have the minor decisions or policies of the National Executive.

Advantages of a Policies document at a Lodge/Branch level.

Each year, new members join the various committees, and much valuable time is spent returning to explanations and discussions of past decisions, or explaining the rationale behind some local conventions. Sometimes decisions have been forgotten and new discussions arise, again wasting time. It is healthy to review past decisions but it is unhealthy to ignore or to forget them, as they are still binding until rescinded or expired.

What goes into a Policies document?

Lodge Policies may include all ad hoc or non-housekeeping decisions, grouped by subject. *The motion, and background material, and the date of the decision*, are all useful additions. For example, the Executive of a Lodge/Branch with building premises may choose to have only vegetarian food prepared and served on the premises. This may then be included into the policies document, along with the date of the decision. Other items which may be useful:

- Sub-committee names, functions, composition (eg President, Secretary, and three other members), responsibilities or duties, meeting times, reporting, and spending powers/limits
- Education policy such as how much of the lecture programme would involve TS members, whether there is encouragement of talks by new members with short talks or panels, whether the audience at events may be allowed to practice psychic exercises and so on
- Guidelines for staff and volunteers, equipment use, meal and travel allowances etc
- Members and attendance policy for meetings

Tips for Programme organisers

Organising programmes can be fun for Lodges/Branches and Groups. A few points:

- Keep in mind that all programmes need to subscribe to our purpose, a Society concerned with Theosophy or Divine Wisdom, and the Three Objects stated elsewhere in this document
- The purpose of a single Lecture, talk or presentation is to give an overview of a topic or subject
- The purpose of a study or discussion group is to investigate a subject more deeply and thoroughly, with greater attention to detail
- Members meetings restricted to members only have an important role. Most of our activities are open to the general public. But just as individuals need time alone, and families need some quality time together to engage meaningfully, it is necessary that all those who have made a commitment to the TS in their hearts have some regular quality time together to share and to bond in meaningful relationships, and to strengthen our own nucleus of universal brotherhood. Often members feel refreshed from these meetings, ready to engage in our more public activities
- Try to provide some variety so that our members feel that there is something of interest for each. If one talk is very complex, make the next a little lighter, and so on
- **Our members are our greatest resource.** An example spreadsheet is provided for organizing presenters. Be aware of who has presented and how often. Many organisers complain that members do not want to give talks and turn to outside speakers as an easy option. Yet it is important that our members do not feel ignored, no-one is asking them to speak, or conversely that they feel harassed, they are constantly being asked.
- **Presenters Spreadsheet.** Mark on the spreadsheet if a member is willing to give presentations and *list the number of presentations given each period*, such as each quarter. If a member does not want to give a presentation, *mark the quarter in which they were asked*. With that on the record ask again a year later. Some members may refuse because they are nervous. Offer to give them a spot for a short talk with others, or to speak on a panel. Make sure the panel facilitator is more experienced so that the speakers feel supported. Some refuse because they have other commitments, work or grandchildren for example. However, if gently asked at infrequent intervals, many will often say that they are ready to give a presentation, though they may have been asked and refused a dozen times previously.

Example spreadsheet. Use formulas to derive totals.

First Name	Last Name	TS Member	Willing to Present	TOTAL 2020 to Present	TOTAL 2019 to Present	2020q1	2019q4	2019q3	2019q2	2019q1
Abdul	Amir	Bris & India	Y	1	1	1			1	
Allan	Michaels	Y	Y	0	1			1		
Arthur	Mann	N	Y	1	0	1				
Barry	Parsons	Melb	Y	0	2		1	1		
Ben	West	Y	Y	1	2	1			1	1
Carole	Marresh	Y	Y	1	2	1		1		1
Celia	Newte	BL & Sunshine	N	0	0.5				0.5	
Chandra	Bhat	N	Y	0	1			1		
Christine	Au	Y	Y	0	0					

RULES, REGULATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

International Rules

The Theosophical Society worldwide consists of Sections (with 7 or more Lodges), Regional Associations (less than 7 Lodges) and Presidential Agencies (where a Presidential Representative is appointed in special circumstances by the International President). Some isolated lodges may also be attached directly to the International Headquarters.

Federations

Certain Sections have combined to form Federations which can help promote interaction and foster brotherhood within Sections in certain areas around the world. Federations are not, however, part of the structure of the TS according to the International Rules.

The Australian Section is part of the Indo-Pacific Federation. The Indo-Pacific Federation holds meetings every three years in different countries. Some important Resolutions passed by the General Council.

Freedom of Thought

As the Theosophical Society has spread far and wide over the world, and as members of all religions have become members of it without surrendering the special dogmas, teachings and beliefs of their respective faiths, it is thought desirable to emphasize the fact that there is no doctrine, no opinion, by whomsoever taught or held, that is in any way binding on any member of the Society, none of which any member is not free to accept or reject. Approval of its three Objects is the sole condition of membership. No teacher, or writer, from H.P. Blavatsky onwards, has any authority to impose his or her teachings or opinions on members. Every member has an equal right to follow any school of thought, but has no right to force the choice on any other. Neither a candidate for any office nor any voter can be rendered ineligible to stand or to vote, because of any opinion held, or because of membership in any school of thought. Opinions or beliefs neither bestow privileges nor inflict penalties.

The Members of the General Council earnestly request every member of the Theosophical Society to maintain, defend and act upon these fundamental principles of the Society, and also fearlessly to exercise the right of liberty of thought and of expression thereof, within the limits of courtesy and consideration for others.

Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (1924)

Freedom of the Society

The Theosophical Society, while cooperating with all other bodies whose aims and activities make such cooperation possible, is and must remain an organization entirely independent of them, not committed to any objects save its own, and intent on developing its own work on the broadest and most inclusive lines, so as to move towards its own goal as indicated in and by the pursuit of those objects and that Divine Wisdom which in the abstract is implicit in the title, 'The Theosophical Society'.

Since Universal Brotherhood and the Wisdom are undefined and unlimited, and since there

is complete freedom for each and every member of the Society in thought and action, the Society seeks ever to maintain its own distinctive and unique character by remaining free of affiliation or identification with any other organization.

Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (1949)

Mission Statement of the Theosophical Society

To serve humanity by cultivating an ever-deepening understanding and realization of the Ageless Wisdom, spiritual Self-transformation and the Unity of all Life.

Resolution passed by the General Council (2018)

The Freedom and Responsibility of Lodges and Branches

The freedom of Lodges and Branches is defined by the scope of the Society's Objects as well as its essential mandate to make Theosophy known as a practical living Wisdom, which can uplift human consciousness to a realisation of the Oneness of life. Therefore, although the Society has no official creed of its own and upholds freedom of thought, and while it is acceptable to invite some outside speakers who can contribute to the exploration of the Ageless Wisdom, it is not appropriate for our platform to be used by such speakers to actively promote other organisations or belief systems. Each Lodge and Branch was chartered by the International President to be a representative of the Society in its area. Its work and programme should reflect the character, altruistic ethos and spirit of the Theosophical Society.

Resolution passed by the General Council (2019)

Background Explanation – 2019 Resolution of the General Council on The Freedom and Responsibility of Lodges and Branches

The Theosophical Society was formed to show the world that Theosophy exists and to help people ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal truths. This therefore determines the Society's essential work which is also broadly reflected in its three Objects, Mission Statement, Freedom of the Society resolution and Freedom of Thought resolution. However, the General Council considers it important to articulate further the scope of the Theosophical Society.

Theosophy can be regarded as the spiritual heritage of humanity, its principles lying at the heart of the great religions of the world. While Theosophy is not defined officially in the TS, it constitutes a distinct lineage, the Divine or Ageless Wisdom, which dates back to antiquity. It embraces literature, teachings and individual perspectives on the subject since the inception of the Theosophical Society, but its antecedents also include its expressions in Eastern and Western cultures such as ancient India, China and Egypt, the Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions of ancient Greece and Europe, and the great mystics throughout history. Therefore, Theosophy is not specific to any one era or civilisation.

Theosophy implies a regenerated state of consciousness, its study and application being the way to that. The most fundamental principle underlying authentic expressions of

[Return to Contents](#)

Theosophy is the essential Unity of all life, which is revealed in the interconnectedness of life forms at all levels, the cyclicity of life's processes and humanity's search for wholeness. The non-dogmatic study of Theosophy leads to a spirit of open-mindedness and altruism, and the purposeful unfoldment of those qualities which can lead a human being to Self-realisation.

As Theosophy is predicated on unity, the Theosophical Society also exists to help foster equality and balance in the world by helping to counteract discriminatory attitudes such as those which contribute to racial and gender inequality, as well as religious sectarianism, fundamentalism, and excessive materialism in all its forms including 'spiritual' materialism. It provides a platform through which we can enquire into our deepest nature and unfold ever greater awareness, leading to a life of self-responsibility and depth. Psychic practices of all kinds, which are an extension of the more superficial personal nature, may be studied from time to time as one aspect of the broad field of Theosophical enquiry, but they are neither generally taught, nor encouraged.

Rules:

International: <https://www.ts-adyar.org/content/international-rules>

National: <https://theosophicalsociety.org.au/resources/rules-of-the-theosophical-society-in-australia-248baf7d-a628-44e9-a849-4d8d4e492a0f>

Ask the Lodge/Branch Secretary for copies of your Lodge/Branch/Group rules

THE STRUCTURE OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Structure at the international level

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY (The TS)

The Three Objects of The Theosophical Society

1. **To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.**
2. **To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science.**
3. **To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in the Human Being.**

Founded in New York 17 November 1875 by H.P. Blavatsky (Corresponding Secretary), H.S. Olcott (President), W.Q. Judge and others. Since 1882 its International Headquarters has been located in Adyar, Chennai (formerly Madras), 600 020, India, where it was incorporated in 1905. It has branches in about 70 countries. Most of the branches are organized in 26 National Societies and Sections.

Main periodical: *The Theosophist*.

Publishing House: The Theosophical Publishing House.

Officers: President: Mr. Tim Boyd
 Vice-President: Dr. Deepa Padhi
 International Secretary: Ms. Maija Artama
 International Treasurer: Ms. Nancy Secrest

Governing Body: The **General Council**, comprising the above officers and General Secretaries or National Presidents of Sections, plus 5-12 Additional Members.

Structure at the national level

THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA (The TS in Australia)

Founded and chartered on 1 January 1895 as The Australasian Section with New Zealand.

It is a National Society (or Section) of The Theosophical Society. It is an incorporated association, and in 2022 at the Convention Business Meeting a resolution was passed that the National body would be incorporated as a not-for-profit public company limited by guarantee.

Headquarters: Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street, Surry Hills NSW 2010. Nine Lodges/Branches in all six States and the A.C.T.

Seven certified Groups in three States.

Main periodical: *Theosophy in Australia* magazine.

Associated Organizations:

The Australian Section Theosophical Trust:

A trust company which holds and administers the property of The TS in Australia.

The Theosophical Foundation Pty. Ltd:

A company which holds investments on behalf of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust and The Blavatsky Lodge of the Theosophical Society.

These organisations were established in support of the National body when it was an incorporated association.

Governing Body: The **National Council**, which consists of the ex officio officers, plus six State Representatives elected by the members, each of whom serves a two-year term of office, with a maximum of 3 terms. The National Council normally meets twice a year.

Current State Representatives:

NSW/ACT: Gerard Brennan

Qld: Barry Bowden

SA & NT: Gaynor Fraser

Vic & Tas: Edward Sinclair

WA: John Davey

Executive Committee of the National Council

The Executive Committee consists of:

ex officio officers National President, Stephen McDonald, National Secretary, Gayle Thomas, National Treasurer, Beatrice Malka, plus the following other appointed members: Denise Frost, Edward Sinclair, Cassandra Au and Berry Dunston. Normally meets bi-monthly.

Structure at the local level of the Theosophical Society in Australia

LODGES/BRANCHES

Officers

Lodge/Branch Committees Lodge/Branch Rules

Certified Groups (known as Official Study Centres in the International Rules)

Coordinator, Committee

Certified Group Rules the Interrelationship between the Theosophical Society,

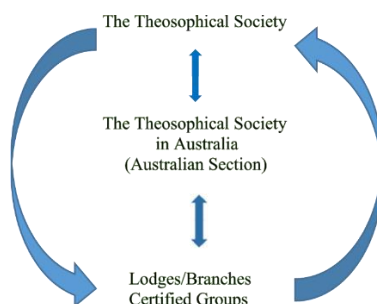
Lodges, Branches and Groups:

We are 9 Lodges/Branches and 7 Certified Groups.

Types of Membership: Member of a Lodge/Branch or 'national member'. All members of the TS in Australia are *national members*, however in some parts of the world today and also in the early years of the Society, HPB and others used the term *unattached member*, not having

membership with a Lodge/Branch. A Certified Group may contain both Lodge/Branch members from other Lodges/Branches and national or unattached members, as it is hoped that the group will develop over time within the community and become warranted as a fully chartered Lodge/Branch.

ONE SOCIETY: The Interrelationship between The Theosophical Society, The Theosophical Society in Australia and its TS Centers



While Lodges/Branches have a certain freedom in their dissemination of Theosophy, and their own unique character, they also represent the Society in their area and have administrative responsibilities. This paper provides a brief overview of the interrelationships within the TS and a few of these administrative matters.

The Theosophical Society in Australia is a Section of the Theosophical Society with International Headquarters at Adyar, India. The Theosophical Society is a world-wide body with Sections in many countries around the world, which are all united through their Rules as well as the pursuit of the Society's Three Objects—and, more recently, its Mission Statement.

The Australian Section is a *Chartered* component of the Theosophical Society. Our Charter or Warrant is located at the National Headquarters. Every Lodge or Branch has a similar Warrant and this represents its authority to act on behalf of The Theosophical Society. This fact is reflected in several ways. The National President, who is elected by Australian Members in Good Standing, is an ex officio voting member of the General Council, the international governing body of The Theosophical Society.

Any changes to International Rules need to be approved by the General Council. The Australian Section's Rules, and any amendments to them, need to be approved by the International President. In addition, Lodge/Branch, Section and International Rules must be kept compatible.

National Rules must comply with the International Rules, Lodge/Branch Rules and Rules of Certified Groups must comply with the National Rules.

In addition to its Lodge/Branches, the Australian Section has a number of Certified Groups. These groups may use the name and seal of the TS, although they are not fully fledged Lodges/Branches.

Due to our strong interconnections, Lodge/Branch Rules, and any amendments to them, need to be approved by the national Executive Committee. Any changes to the Rules of the Australian Section need to be voted on and approved by a majority of Lodges/Branches at

their Annual Convention Meetings, prior to the submission of the updated Rules to the International President. The number of votes allocated to each Lodge/Branch is based on its number of members and a Lodge/Branch may qualify to have more than one vote at the Annual Convention Business Meeting (ACBM). All of its votes on Notices of Motion must be cast either for or against each item, based on a majority vote in each case. Also, at the annual Lodge/Branch Convention Meeting the minutes of the last ACBM, the National President's Report, the National Treasurer's Report and the Section's accounts need to be voted on for the next ACBM.

The Theosophical Society has a number of significant Resolutions which have been passed by the General Council, notably: 'Freedom of Thought' (1924), 'Freedom of the Society' (1949), and 'The Freedom and Responsibility of Lodges and Branches' (2019).

We are The Theosophical Society, whose activities are enshrined in its Three Objects, and subject to these are the principles embodied in these Resolutions. These are all common to the Society at the international, national and local levels and are included in this booklet.

It is from the interconnectedness of the Rules and Objects and the legal Warrants mentioned above that Lodges/Branches have the right to use the name and seal of the Society. But such a right also carries with it certain obligations. As we are a Society based on the promotion of Brotherhood (in both the gender neutral sense involving a common spiritual heritage and without divisive material distinctions) nothing done in the name of the TS should be to the detriment of that ideal, to our Objects or to our name. In fact, it would be seen as working against the Society and its Objects. Therefore, there is an expectation that all Sections and Lodges/Branches using the name and seal of the Society, and especially their elected Committees, act so as to actively promote brotherhood and not denigrate or diminish the work and character of The Theosophical Society in any way.

Appendix 1

CODE OF CONDUCT (SECTION RULES 8.14 TO 8.19)

IMPORTANT: For the current Code of Conduct, please refer to the current Rules of the Theosophical Society In Australia at:

[Rules of The Theosophical Society In Australia](#)

A Code of Conduct can guard against misconduct and opportunistic behaviour, encourage us to remember our ethical responsibilities, while fostering positive long term changes to an organisation's culture.

THE COMPANY CODE OF CONDUCT

8.14 INTRODUCTION

All members, employees and committee members of the Company (“the Society”) are expected to abide by the Rules and Code of Conduct of the Society. This document provides the code of conduct of members, employees and committee members and requires the standards of ethical behaviour that reflect the ideal of Universal Brotherhood of the Society. The Society’s expectations of ethical behaviour have *three underpinning principles*:

- (a) **Universal Brotherhood and Service;**
- (b) **Courtesy, Consideration and Cooperation;** and
- (c) **Diligence**

This Code of Conduct outlines the meaning of these principles. The Code of Conduct applies to all members, employees and or committee members regardless of:

- (a) The type of membership;
- (b) The type of employment;
- (c) Position on any committee.

8.15 UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

The underpinning principles are defined as follows:

Universal Brotherhood and Service

- (a) Each member of the Society is requested to remember at all times the ideal of the Universal Brotherhood as expressed in the First Object of the Society and to reflect this in his/her behaviour in all:

- (i) Interactions with members and non-members;
 - (ii) Committee meetings;
 - (iii) Dealings with employees.
- (b) Each members of the Society is requested to become familiar with the three Objects, the General Council Resolutions on Freedom of Thought, and Freedom of the Society.

8.16 COURTESY, CONSIDERATION AND COOPERATION

- (a) *Treat members, employees and committee members of the Society with respect and courtesy, having regard for the dignity of the people with whom you interact.*
- (b) Do not engage in bullying or other forms of discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment.
- (c) All members, employees and committee members are requested to conduct their duties in the most professional and cooperative manner possible in accordance with the relevant Lodge/Branch/Group Rules, the National and International Rules of the Theosophical Society and Australian laws.

8.17 DILIGENCE

- (a) Keep in mind the best interests of the Society rather than personal interests when decisions are made regarding the Society.
- (b) Ensure all decisions are transparent and in keeping with confidentiality requirements.
- (c) Act with honesty, integrity and transparency in all dealings with other members, employees and committee members.

8.18 CONSEQUENCES

Breaching the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action ranging from a warning through to suspension or termination of membership, and/or employment.

8.19 CODE OF CONDUCT IN ACTION

(a) Respect and courtesy

Other members, employees and/or committee members are entitled to receive personal respect and courtesy and to maintain their dignity in their interaction with you.

(b) Behaving honestly

As a Society member, employee or committee member you are required to act honestly while involved in activities of the Society at all times.

(c) Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is where your financial or other interests or those of an associate are, or may reasonably be seen to be, in opposition to your interests as a member, employee and/or committee member of the Society. An associate is taken to be a spouse, parent, child, more distant relative or business associate. A conflict of interest may come in many forms and must be managed at the earliest possible opportunity. For example, becoming involved in decision making where you, a family member or a friend has a financial or personal interest in the outcome, such as making a decision about the recipient of business from the Society, is a conflict of interest. In this and other cases, you must disclose a conflict of interest or possible potential conflict of interest immediately and in writing to your Executive Committee and take whatever action they decide is necessary to avoid a conflict of interest. If you are unsure whether a situation is a potential conflict of interest, seek advice from the National President.

(d) Accepting gifts, benefits or favours

You should not accept gifts, benefits or favours where these may influence, or may reasonably be seen to influence, your decision making. For example, accepting gifts from a contractor would normally be perceived as inappropriate regardless of the cost of the gift.

(e) Preventing nepotism and patronage

It is unacceptable to favour your relatives (nepotism) or people you know (patronage) in your decision making and provision of service. For example, if your relatives or friends are the subject in a committee or work matter for which you are a responsible decision maker you must ensure that you are not improperly involved.

(f) No discrimination

In line with the Society's First Object discrimination, directly or indirectly, in your treatment of individuals or groups on the grounds of age, gender, race, disability, sexuality, marital status, pregnancy, or any other ground covered by equal opportunity or other antidiscrimination legislation is unlawful, as is sexual harassment and will not be tolerated.

(g) Bullying/harassment

Members, employees and/or committee members must not bully or otherwise harass other members, employees and/or committee members or

members of the public. Behaviours that characterise bullying may include victimisation and unwelcome, offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening behaviour directed at another person or a group of people. Bullying may lead to the person or group of people subjected to the behaviour feeling victimised, offended, demeaned, humiliated, intimidated, or suffering detriment or disadvantage.

(h) Confidentiality, use of information and public comment

The National Headquarters does not divulge personal information about TS members without their consent. Be scrupulous in using information gained through your membership, employment and/or committee membership, that is, for the purpose for which it was gathered. You should comply with any applicable directions and guidelines on the use of information. The privacy of individuals must be maintained and personal information must only be released in accordance with privacy requirements as allowed by law.

(i) Reporting of misconduct, corruption or illegal activity

The community expects the Society to have a high standard of integrity and be free from misconduct, corruption or other illegal activity. Everyone has a role in ensuring that the Society's members, employees and/or committee members are held accountable for inappropriate conduct where it results in detriment to the Society or another person. If you do make a report of misconduct, you must have a reasonable belief that the reported conduct is a breach of the Society's Rules or Code of Conduct or is illegal, or both. You must not knowingly make a false disclosure. Prior to making a report you may wish to seek advice. Advice may be obtained from the National President.

(j) Grievance Procedure

A complaint by a member of a Lodge/Branch concerning a perceived breach of the Code of Conduct, and which pertains to that Branch shall be made in writing to the committee of the Lodge/Branch concerned with a view to a resolution. It is preferable that such complaints be resolved within a Lodge/Branch. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the complainant or the Lodge/Branch committee may forward the complaint to the National President, or the National Vice-President if the matter concerns the National President. If a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, or if the complainant believes that the committee concerned may not deal adequately with the matter, the complaint may be directed instead to the State Representative or else the National President. A complaint by a Lodge/Branch committee concerning a perceived breach of the Code of Conduct by a member may be made in writing to the National President, or the National Vice-President if the matter concerns the National President, with a view to a resolution. A complaint by a national member concerning a perceived breach of the Code of Conduct may be made in writing to the National President, or the National Vice-President if the matter concerns

the National President, with a view to a resolution. All formal complaints shall include reasons and specific examples of the breach of the Code of Conduct and shall not exceed 1000 words in length. In all cases the recipient of the complaint shall have the opportunity to provide a detailed written response within three weeks of receiving a copy of the complaint. Additional information may be requested from either party, and/or a meeting in person, separately or together, if required. The decision of the Executive Committee, or the National Council, or any national working committee formed for the purpose of dealing with complaints, shall be final and binding on both parties, and shall not be subject to any review or challenge except as provided in Section Rule 9(5)(b) regarding the right of appeal in cases of termination of membership.

APPENDIX 2

T. S. SOLIDARITY AND IDEALS

HENRY STEEL OLCOTT
From The Theosophist, November 1894

The time seems to have come for me to say a word or two about the constitution and ideals of the Theosophical Society, so that they may be made perfectly plain to the thousands of new colleagues who have entered our membership within the past five years. The American public, out of whose bosom the Society evolved, is entitled to the first word on this subject from their compatriot; whose love for India and absorption in the Society's life have never quenched his patriotic feeling for the land of his forefathers.

After the lapse of nineteen years, the small group of friends who casually met in the drawing-room of H P Blavatsky, in Irving Place, New York City, has expanded into a Society with nearly four hundred chartered Branches in the four quarters of the globe; known of all men; discussed, complimented, reviled, and misrepresented in almost all languages; denounced usually, but sometimes praised, in the pulpit and the press; satirized in literature, and grossly lampooned on the stage. In short, an important factor in modern thought and the inspiring cause of some high ideals. Like every other great movement, it has its centres of intensest activity which have developed amidst favouring environments, and as, in other cases, the evolutionary forces tend to shift its swirl from place to place as these conditions change. Thus, for instance, India was the first centre where the thought-engendering power accumulated, and our movement overspread the Great Peninsula from North to South, from East to West, before it flowed westward. What was done at New York was but the making of the nucleus, the bare launching of the idea. When the founders sailed away to Bombay, in December 1878, they left little more than the name of the Society behind them; all else was chaotic and unmanifested. The breath of life entered its infant body in India. From the great, inexhaustible store of spiritual power garnered up there by the Ancient Sages, it came into this movement and made it the beneficent potentiality it has become. It must be centuries before any other country can take its place. A Theosophical Society with its base outside India would be an anomaly; that is why we went there.

The first of the outflowing ebb went from India to America in 1885-6. Ceylon came into line six years earlier, but I count Ceylon as but an extension of India. After America came Europe. Then our movement reached Burma, Japan, and Australasia. Last of all, it has got to South Africa, South America, and the West Indies.

What is the secret of this immense development, this self-sowing of Branches in all lands ? It is the Constitution and proclaimed ideals of the Society; it is the elastic tie that binds the parts together: and the platform which gives standing-room to all men of all creeds and races. The simplicity of our aims attracts all good, broad-minded, philanthropic people alike. They are equally acceptable to all of that class. Untainted by sectarianism, divested of all dogmatic offensiveness, they repel none who examine them impartially. While identified with no one creed, they affirm the necessity and grandeur of the religious aspiration, and so bid for the sympathy of every religious-minded person. The Society is the open opponent of religious nihilism and materialistic unbelief. It has fought them from the first and won

[Return to Contents](#)

many victories among the best educated class. The Indian press testifies to its having stopped the tendency towards materialism which was so strong among the college graduates before our advent. This fact is incontestable, the proofs are overwhelming. And another fact is, that a drawing together in mutual good-will has begun between the Hindu, Buddhist, Parsi, and Mussulman Fellows of the Theosophical Society; their behaviour towards each other at the Annual Conventions and in the local Branches shows that. It is a different India from what it was prior to 1879, and the late tour of Mrs. Besant lightened up the sky with prophetic brightness.

Some wholly superficial critics say that Theosophy suits only the most cultured class, that they alone can understand its terminology. No greater mistake could be made; the humblest labourer and the average child of seven years can be taught its basic ideas within an hour. Nay, I have often proved to adult audiences in Ceylon that any ordinary child in the school I might be examining or giving the prizes to could, without preparatory coaching, be got to answer on the spur of the moment my questions, so as to show that the idea of Karma is innate. I will undertake to do the same with any child of average cleverness in America or Europe. He will not know the meaning of the word, but instinct will tell him the idea it embodies. It all depends on the way the questions are put to him. And I may add that the value of our public lectures and our writings on Theosophy follows the same rule. If we fail with an audience, it is because we do too much "tall talking", make our meaning too obscure, indulge in too stilted language, confuse the ideas of our hearers, choose subjects too deep for a mixed public, and send our listeners away no wiser than they were before we began. They came for spiritual nourishment and got dry bran without sauce. This is because we do not think clearly ourselves, do not master our subjects properly, and being actually unfit to teach, and knowing it, wander about through jungles of words to hide our incompetency. What we most need is the use of common sense in discussing our Theosophy, plain, clear exposition in plain language of our fundamental ideas. No one need try to persuade me that it cannot be done, for I know the contrary.

One reason for our too general confusion of ideas is that we are prone to regard Theosophy as a sort of far-away sunrise that we must try to clutch, instead of seeing that it is a lamp to light our feet about the house and in our daily walks. It is worth nothing if it is but word-spinning, it is priceless if it is the best rule and ideal of life. We want religion to live by, day by day, not merely to die by at the last gasp. And Theosophy is the divine soul of religion, the one key to all bibles, the riddle-reader of all mysteries, the consoler of the heart-weary, the benign comforter in sorrow, the alleviator of social miseries. You can preach its lesson before any audience in the world, being careful to avoid all sectarian phrases, and each hearer will say that is his religion. It is the one Pentecostal voice that all can understand. Preaching only simple Theosophy, I have been claimed as a Mussulman by the followers of Islam, as a Hindu by Vaishnavas and Shaivites, as a Buddhist by the two sections of Buddhism, been asked to draft a Parsi catechism, and at Edinburgh given God-speed by the leading local clergyman, for expressing the identical views that he was giving out from his pulpit every Sunday! So I know, what many others only suspect, that Theosophy is the informing life of all religions throughout the world. The one thing absolutely necessary, then, is to cast out as a loathsome thing every idea, every teaching which tends to sectarianise the Theosophical Society. We want no new sect, no new church, no infallible

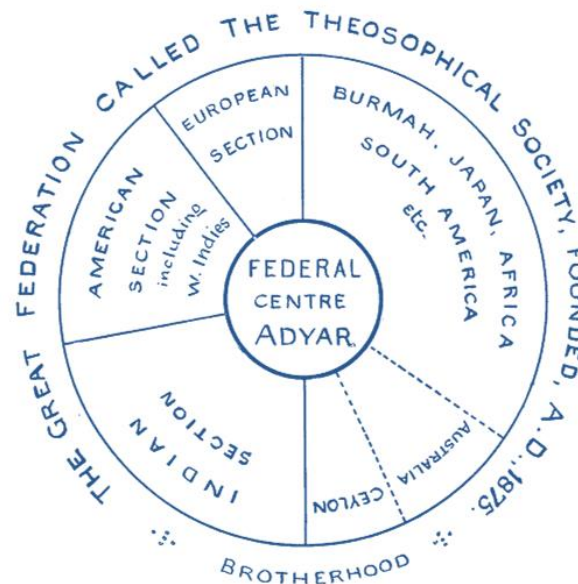
leader, no attack upon the private intellectual rights of our members. Of course, this is reiteration, but all the same necessary; it ought to replace a "Scripture text" on the wall of every Theosophist's house.

Hypocrisy is another thing for us to purge ourselves of; there is too much of it, far too much among us. The sooner we are honest to ourselves the sooner we will be so to our neighbours. We must realize that the Theosophical ideal of the perfect man is practically unattainable in one life, just as the Christ-idea of perfection is. Once realizing this, we become modest in self-estimate and therefore less inflated and didactic in our speech and writings. Nothing is more disagreeable than to see a colleague, who probably has not advanced ten steps on the way up the Himalayan slope towards the level of perfection where the great Adepts stand and wait, going about with an air of mystery, Burleighian nods, and polysyllabic words implying that he is our pilot-bird and we should follow him. This is humbug, and, if not the result of auto-suggestion, rank hypocrisy. We have had enough of it, and more than enough. Let us all agree that perhaps none of us is now fit for spiritual leadership, since not one of us has reached the ideal. Judge not, that ye be not judged, is a good rule to observe, in this Society especially; for the assumption of perfection or quasi-perfection, here and there, has deceived us into believing that the ideal can be reached, and that whoever does not show that he has reached it, is fair game for the critic and the (moral) torturer.

Those who fancy that a vegetable diet, or daily prayers, or celibacy, or neglect of family duties, or lip-professions of loyalty to the Masters, are signs of inward holiness and spiritual advancement, ought to read what the Gita, the Dhammapada, the Avesta, the Koran and the Bible say on the subject. One who in spiritual pride reproaches another for doing none of these things is himself the slave of personal vanity, hence spiritually hemiplegic. Let us keep, cling to, defend, glory in the ideal as such; let nothing tempt us to debase it or belittle it; but let us have the manly honesty to admit that we do not embody it, that we are yet picking the shells on the beach of the unfathomed and uncrossed great ocean of wisdom; and that we, though celibates, vegetarians, "faithists", psychics, spiritual peacocks, or what not, are not fit to condemn our neighbour for being a husband, an affectionate father, a useful public servant, an honest politician, or a meat-eater. Perhaps his Karma has not yet fructified to the stage of spiritual evolution. Or who knows but that he may be a Muni, "even though he leads the domestic life". We can't tell. One of the curses of our times is superficial criticism. How true the saying of Ruskin that "any fool can criticize!"

One thing that will help our good resolutions is to throw more of our strength into the Theosophical Society, instead of giving it all to our personalities. By *forgetting ourselves* in building up the Society, we shall become better people in every respect. We shall be helpers of mankind a thousandfold more than by the other plan. When I say the Society I do not mean a Branch or a Section--that is to say, a small fragment or a large piece of it. I mean the *Society as a whole*--a great federation, a large entity, which embraces us all and represents the totality of our intelligence, our good-will, our sacrifices, our unselfish work, our altruism; a fasces composed of many small rods that might be separately broken, but which, bound together, is unbreakable. The activity at the Headquarters of any given Section is apt to blind the eyes of new members and make them fancy that the Section is the chief thing, and the

Federation but a distant mirage. From the office windows of Madison Avenue or Avenue Road, Adyar seems very far away, and the fact of its being the actual centre of the whole movement is sometimes apt to be forgotten. This is not due to ill-will, but to the complete autonomy which has been conceded to the Sections. Perhaps the real state of the case may be best shown at a glance by the foregoing simple diagram [as it was in 1894, the Australasian Section forming in 1895 and from that the Australian Section in 1896]:



The plan shows three fully-formed Sections, the Indian, American, and European; the sizes of the segments indicating the respective *numerical strength in Branches*. The dotted lines show Ceylon and Australasia as inchoate Sections, and the broad field remains to be covered hereafter with sectional organizations. The periphery of the whole is the Theosophical Society, which contains all Sections and territories and binds them together with its protecting rim. The heart, or evolutionary centre, is Adyar, or whatever other place may have the Executive Staff in residence; just as Washington is the heart of our American Union, London that of the British Empire, Paris that of France, and every other capital of any nation that of that particular government. The boast of all Americans is that *the Federal Government lies like eiderdown upon the States in times of tranquillity, yet proves as strong as tempered steel at a great national crisis*. So in the lesser degree is the federal constitution of the Theosophical Society, and in that sense have I ever tried to administer its business. We have passed through the recent crisis with ease and safety because of our Constitution, and it is due to that that we are to-day stronger and more united than ever before. Behind us is a wrack of storm clouds, before us the sun of peace shines. I call upon every loyal member of the Society to do what he can to strengthen its solidarity. To do which he need not desert his household and flit away to some Headquarters; *in doing the work that lies nearest to hand and creating a new centre of Theosophical activity about himself, he is furthering the cause* which our Society represents probably better than if he went, uninvited, to join a staff where he might be but a supernumerary.

H. S. OLCOTT, P. T. S.

(President Theosophical Society)

Appendix 3

SELECTED SIMILAR AND OTHER ORGANISATIONS

Selected similar and other organisations which are independent of the Theosophical Society. (This does not include discontinued organizations)

Anthroposophical Society

Founded in 1913 by Rudolf Steiner who was the General Secretary of the German Section of The TS until that time. Steiner took most members of the German Section with him to the new Society.

Now established in many countries, including Switzerland, Germany and Australia. He is best known in the field of education for inspiring the establishment of Steiner Schools in a number of countries, including Australia, and for inspiring the Biodynamic agricultural movement and its methods of organic farming.

Arcane School, see The Lucis Trust

Bailey, Alice, see The Lucis Trust

Blavatsky Trust

Established in 1974 in England as a public trust and charity by Geoffrey Farthing, Christmas Humphries, etc. to promote theosophy.

Co-Freemasonry, The Order of International

The Ordre Maconnique Mixte International Le Droit Humain was started in 1893 in Paris, where the Headquarters are still located. It admits both men and women. Known as Le Droit Humain or The Order of International Co-Freemasonry.

The Order of Universal Co-Freemasonry in Great Britain and the British Dependencies was founded by Annie Besant and officers of the Supreme Council of the French Maçonnerie Mixte (known today as The International Order of Freemasonry for Men and Women, Le Droit Humain) on September 26, 1902, with the consecration of Lodge Human Duty No. 6 in London. Besant remained head of the Order until her death in 1933. The English working, influenced by the Theosophy of its leading members, restored certain Masonic practices not required in the French working, notably that its members hold a belief in God or a Supreme Being. The permission received from France to reinstate this in the English workings is known as the "Annie Besant Concord", and in 1904 a new English ritual was printed, which firmly established this requirement as central to the work. The revised ritual was called the "Dharma Ritual", also known as the "Besant-Leadbeater" and more recently as the "Lauderdale" working. The Dharma Ritual also attempted to restore prominence to esoteric and mystical aspects that its Theosophically-minded authors felt were the heart of Freemasonry, so that it became foremostly a spiritual organisation; Co-Freemasonry of this Order was therefore sometimes called "Occult Freemasonry". Leadbeater, author of a number of important Masonic books, served of the presiding officer of the Sydney Lodge #404 and various lodges and chapters of the York and Scottish Rites, the Royal Arch and

Scottish Rite.

The Eastern Order of International Co-Freemasonry was founded in 2002 in Adyar, India as a split-off of Le Droit Humain. with then international President of the TS, Radha Burnier, as its supreme head. It is directly descended from the Masonic Lodges founded as a result of Annie Besant's pioneering work for Co-Masonry. It has fraternal relations with other independent Orders also derived from Annie Besant's work, such as the Grand Lodge of Freemasonry for Men and Women in Great Britain. The term "Eastern" in its name, as noted elsewhere, refers not to geography but to the symbolic East, the place of the rising Light. It became an independent Co-Masonic Order dedicated to preserving the traditional ideals of Masonry restored by Annie Besant and to carrying on the work of Masonry as a spiritual discipline or form of Yoga: the Way of the Craftsman. See <http://comasonic.net/> . There is only one Eastern Federation lodge in Australia, located in Perth, under the jurisdiction of the New Zealand administration. It has both TS and non-TS members, and it is administratively, constitutionally and legally separate from the TS.

Some lodges later amicably split to form lodges solely for Women, still using the Besant rituals. The Order Of Women Freemasons was founded in 1908 as The Honourable Fraternity of Antient Masonry which split off from Le Droit Humain. The order was initially mixed, but in the 1920's decided to become a women-only organisation which was only made official in 1935. In 1958 the name was changed to "The Honourable Fraternity of Antient Masonry, the order of women Freemasons" to avoid confusion with another women-only order with a similar name.

It should be noted that there have been other Jurisdictions formed in Europe since the 18th century admitting both men and women, often with the term Grand Orient in their name, particularly in France and Italy.

Eastern Order of International Co-Freemasonry, see entry under Co-Freemasonry

Edmonton Theosophical Society

Was a Lodge of The Theosophical Society in Canada but left it in 1995 or 96 to become an independent Society.

Has published reprints of a number of rare theosophical publications.

Periodical: *Fohat* (since 1997).

Esoteric School of Theosophy, The (ES or EST)

First organized as the 'Esoteric Section of The Theosophical Society' in 1888 with H.P. Blavatsky as its Outer head, the inner head being one of the inner founders of the TS. In 1889 the name was changed to 'The Eastern School of Theosophy'. Later, it became 'The Esoteric School of Theosophy'.

The ES is administratively, constitutionally and legally separate from the TS, but membership of the ES is open only to persons who have been active members of the TS for at least two years, who remain as TS members in Good Standing and are willing to abide by the rules of the school, principally practical theosophy, including vegetarianism and a temperate lifestyle. Its purpose is to help and encourage its members to live Theosophy.

European School Of Theosophy

The European School of Theosophy was launched in England in October 1982 by Geoffrey Farthing, Ianthe Hoskins and Adam Warcup and it was under the direction of Ingrid Eberhard-Evans for many years. Its activities are characterised by a five day programme of intensive, guided study with study material readily available. The School is autonomous and is not part of any organization, Theosophical or otherwise.

See <https://www.facebook.com/europeanschooloftheosophy/>

Halcyon, see The Temple of the People

Krishnamurti Australia Inc.

Branches in mainland States. Periodical: *Krishnamurti Australia Bulletin*.

Krishnamurti Foundation (Trust)

This Foundation was established in 1968 to help Krishnamurti to carry out his work, including organizing travel, meetings, as well as publishing his talks and the *Krishnamurti Foundation Trust Bulletin*.

There are Krishnamurti schools in India, UK and USA.

Liberal Catholic Church, The {LCC}

Established in London in 1916 by Bishop J.I. Wedgewood from the British province of the Old Catholic Church of Holland. C.W. Leadbeater was ordained a priest and then Bishop in 1916. Both men were responsible for the liturgy originally based on Catholic rituals. Wedgewood was the first head or Presiding Bishop, followed by C. W. Leadbeater. Later, under the Most Rev. Graham Wale, the title was changed to Archbishop Primate of The Liberal Catholic Church.

Established in several countries, including Australia, England, USA and Holland. It has both TS and non-TS members, and it is administratively, constitutionally and legally separate from the TS.

Lucis Trust

Alice and Foster Bailey founded the Lucis Trust in 1922. They were previously active at a senior level of the American Section of the TS. Alice Bailey has produced more than two dozen books. In Great Britain it exists under the title "Lucis Trust Ltd.", in Switzerland as "Lucis Trust Association", and in the Netherlands as the "Lucis Trust Stichting".

Associated organizations: the Arcane School, a school for esoteric training, Triangles, Lucis Press, Lucis Publishing Company, World Goodwill. Main Periodical: *The Beacon*.

Manor Foundation Ltd

The Manor is a large building on Sydney harbor. It was leased in 1922 and purchased in 1925. Initially it was held under a trust deed, but in 1951 the trusteeship was transformed into The Manor Foundation Ltd, a member based non-profit organisation. All control is vested in the Outer Head of the Esoteric School of Theosophy. Until 2021, the Outer Head appointed his/her residential representative (the Resident Head). This position was abolished and a three member Management Committee was established in 2021, at present

[Return to Contents](#)

consisting of the Outer Head, Corresponding Secretary for Australia and Foundation Treasurer. They report to the Foundation Executive Committee which has a number of Directors. Though all involved are members of the Theosophical Society, it is administratively, constitutionally and legally separate from the TS. See also the Esoteric School of Theosophy.

Pasadena. see The Theosophical Society (Pasadena) Point Loma Publications, Inc

Established 1971 by Iverson L Harris, W Emmett Small, L Gordon Plummer and others. Published *The Eclectic Theosophist* 1971-95. Still publishing important theosophical material.

Point Loma Society, see The Theosophical Society (Pasadena)

Round Table, formally known as The International Order of the Knights of the Round Table

Founded in 1908 by G. Herbert Whyte under the inspiration of Annie Besant and CW Leadbeater. Its aim is to revive ideals of chivalry among young people.

Steiner, Rudolf, see Anthroposophical Society

Temple of the People, The, (Halcyon)

Established in 1898 in New York, the group moved to California in 1903 and formed a community called Halcyon. It is an unincorporated community of about 125 acres (50 ha) in San Luis Obispo County, California, just south of Arroyo Grande. It was founded in 1903 as a Theosophical intentional community and is the home and headquarters of The Temple of the People (not to be confused with Jim Jones and the Peoples Temple). Periodical: *The Temple Artisan*.

Theosophical Fellowship

Established in 1994 by Ananda Tara Shan (1946-2002) Centre at Daylesford, Victoria.

Theosophical Order of Service, TOS

Formed by Annie Besant in 1908. Although independent of the TS, it provides an opportunity for members and non-members of the TS to participate in activities which promote the first object of the TS through practical and humanitarian action in a theosophical spirit. Provides a forum for airing of views of public interest. It is administratively, constitutionally and legally separate from the TS.

Its motto is: "*A union of those who love in the service of all that suffers.*" It produces a number of periodicals reporting on its activities.

Theosophical Society in Canada

Established in 1919. Was a Section of the TS until it became an independent Society in January 1992. Has headquarters in Ontario, Canada. Periodical: *The Canadian Theosophist* (since 1920).

Theosophical Society, Pasadena, California,

In 1895 The Theosophical Society in America, with WQ Judge as leader, seceded from the Adyar-based Theosophical Society. After his death in 1896, Katherine Tingley became the

leader. From 1897-1929 the Society was called the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society. In 1900 the Society established its headquarters at a theosophical community at Point Loma in California, which continued until 1942 under Tingley and her successor, Gottfried de Purucker. In 1942 the headquarters moved to Covina and later in 1945 to Pasadena, California. Max Heindel was vice president during 1904 and 1905. Leaders of The Theosophical Society Pasadena have included Gottfried de Purucker, 1929–42; Arthur L. Conger, 1945-51; James A. Long (1951-1971); Grace Knoche (1971-2006); and Randell Grubb (since 2006). In Australia, its activities can be found at <http://theosophydownunder.org> .

The objectives of The Theosophical Society Pasadena as stated in its constitution are:

- to diffuse among men a knowledge of the laws inherent in the universe;
- to promulgate the knowledge of the essential unity of all that is, and to demonstrate that this unity is fundamental in nature;
- to form an active brotherhood among men;
- to study ancient and modern religion, science, and philosophy;
- to investigate the powers innate in man.

When the James A. Long was elected president of the Theosophical Society Pasadena, some Theosophical Societies left it to form the Theosophical Society Point Loma-Covina, the present day Theosophical Society Point Loma – Blavatskyhouse The Hague. It has the Dutch Section of The Theosophical Society, is based at the Blavatsky House in The Hague, the Netherlands. It has the German Section of The Theosophical Society Point Loma - Blavatskyhouse, which is based in Berlin.

Publisher: Theosophical University Press, which has published a number of theosophical books. Main periodical: *Sunrise* (Published in English, German and Dutch)

United Lodge of Theosophists,

This group was formed in 1909 in Los Angeles by Robert Crosbie and others. He had worked with Judge and had spent several years at Point Loma. Objects similar to those of the TS.

Established in a number of countries, including USA, India, UK, Canada, Sweden, France and Belgium (Previously also Australia).

USA Publisher: The Theosophy Company, Los Angeles, California. Periodical: *Theosophy* (since 1912). India Publisher: Theosophy Company (India) Pty. Ltd., Mumbai, India. Periodical: *The Theosophical Movement* (since 1930). (The Theosophy Company has published facsimile reprints of many original editions of the books of HP Blavatsky and W.Q. Judge)

Universal Theosophy Fellowship, Inc.

Established 1969. Objects similar to those of the TS. Publisher: Universal Theosophy Fellowship, Inc., Santa Barbara, California. (Previously: Concord Grove Press)

Periodical: *Vidya* (from 1989. Previously *Hermes*, 1975-1989.)

World Goodwill, see Arcane School

Notes