

The United Grand Lodge of Queensland



BOARD OF GENERAL PURPOSES

LODGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

Enthusiasm & Commitment = Enjoyment & Progress

LODGE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

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Preamble

Lodges across the state vary widely: some are enthusiastic, vibrant organisations, and are seen as an integral and important part of their communities.

Some are suffering from ageing membership, lack of candidates, and a feeling of helplessness to change their dynamics and revive.

Many fall somewhere between the extremes.

The Board endorses this booklet as providing many different ways for Freemasons to feel better about their efforts and for lodges to improve their success in obtaining and keeping new members to carry the lodge into the future.

This booklet does not contain all that will help, simply because neither the Board, nor its Education Committee has a corner on wisdom. The thoughts and initiatives necessary to improve any lodge are infinite in variety; as varied and broad as the unique minds of all brethren.

The essential input every brother can bring to lodge operations is to

THINK!

Think about:

- How you would like to be treated as a new lodge/family member,
- What you would want to be taught,
- How you would like to be valued,
- The relevance of your lodge in the lives of its members, and as a force in your community,
- Your lodge suppers and social programme,
- Mentoring and Masonic Education,
- Ritual and ceremonial standards,
- The 'challenge of change' to meet the future.

Nothing is ever achieved without thought and planning.

Further, and more importantly, no amount of thought and planning will achieve anything without action. So, the essentials are:

- Think
- Plan
- Act

This booklet has much in it which may be adopted and which may help. But, without the thought and efforts of lodge brethren, it will just be another book on the Secretary's shelf.

Thought and Action are the keys to progress!

1.1 Lodge Administration

UGLQ already publishes a Lodge Administration Manual. Two copies have been supplied to each lodge and any interested brother can purchase his own copy from the Grand Secretariat.

The manual is comprehensive in its coverage of a wide range of regular and occasional procedures for running a lodge, and it is highly recommended that all lodge members be required to have read it. It is a recommended inclusion in any educational course you develop, as the practical matters it contains are essential foundation blocks for an efficiently run lodge.

As with most organisations, the nuts and bolts of what to do and how to do it should be more or less invisible. But, be assured, that there is much going on behind the scenes in a well run lodge - a bit like the swan, gliding serenely across the lake: it is paddling hard below the surface!

The visible face of lodge administration is what is raised and discussed in regular lodge meetings. Here, a frequent complaint is that the business part of the meeting is boring and tedious. Therefore, it is suggested that:

- Minutes for confirmation be summarised, and pre-circulated with the meeting notice paper
- Correspondence, both inward and outward, be listed, important items be summarised, and pre-circulated with the meeting
- The treasurer's report and accounts be summarised and pre-circulated
- The almoner's report be pre-prepared and pre-circulated
- The social committee (and others, if applicable) be pre-prepared and pre-circulated

This plan has several big advantages:

- Boring business sessions at lodge are minimised
- All brethren, not just those at the meeting, are kept in the loop as to what's going on
- Anything requiring debate and decision is known beforehand and brethren thus have time to consider, discuss, and reflect on what their view on any issue may be, and to prepare a case for that point of view for the debate
- The process of pre-formulation makes for intrinsic efficiency and prevents ill-disciplined waffling.

The down side is that the secretary, the treasurer, and committee heads will have a little more to do on top of already onerous duties. A good lodge newsletter will facilitate the process suggested.

Brethren, if sensible, will always have a weather eye on costs. It is suggested that one way of making considerable savings is for postages to be done in bulk, and that lodge mailouts be done bi-monthly rather than monthly. In a bulk mailout the notice papers for two months are prepared at the same time and printed on both sides of one sheet of paper. The lodge newsletter should go out with the notices. If this stratagem is adopted, it will probably not be possible for the treasurer's report and the almoner's report to be included, nor for the correspondence summary to be prepared. All these need to be done reasonably close before every meeting so that they are fresh and current when they are given to the members. Lodge secretaries should be very keen to investigate the use of e-mail for this purpose, but size of a comprehensive newsletter (especially if it contains photographs) may be troublesome. At all events, savings should always be effected if possible. It will be up to individual lodges to plan their own efficiencies in this regard.

If a web site is developed, this can prove to be very cost effective as the limitations of e-mail will not apply to posting items on the lodge activities page. There may arise some matters of confidentiality, and these need to be thought through, as your private business needs to be handled with discretion.

Planning, an essential part of lodge administration, is the unseen foundation for many lodge endeavours. It is dealt with in other sections of this booklet when appropriate. Suffice it to say that the vital components of lodge planning include:

- A vision for change OR recognition of a need
- Enthusiastic and general desire to go in a certain direction
- Selection of appropriate members to form the planning team
- An implementation time-table
- **ACTION**
- Periodical progress assessments
- The flexibility to alter course as deemed desirable.

1.2 Lodge Newsletter

As with many other facets of lodge operations, one experiences many different styles and qualities. In fact, most lodges have no newsletter.

With the advent of computers, digital cameras, colour printers, user-friendly computer programmes, and cheap duplicating services, it has never been easier to do your own info sheets or newsletters.

It is suggested that there are good reasons for every lodge to have some sort of newsletter. The most difficult obstacle, perhaps, is finding a writer/editor/publisher. On the other hand, you might find in your lodge two, or even several, brethren who want to be involved, as there are plenty of frustrated writers and news hounds out there!

Your editor must have several Masonic talents, and should own, or have access to, some equipment.

Masonic & personal abilities and qualities:

- He should be very active, both in his own lodge and in visiting
- He should be well known and liked , both in his own lodge, and in the general locality
- He ought to keep up with Grand Lodge activities
- He must be able to write English to an acceptable standard
- He ought to have a wide and eclectic interest in what's going on, both in Masonry, and in the wider world
- He ought to have a good sense of humour
- He ought to like meeting and getting to know people
- He should be a competent photographer
- He should have a basic knowledge of necessary computer programs
- He should be active and interested in all lodge committees
- He ought to understand and appreciate Masonry as a way of life, and as a social and philosophical organisation

Hardware:

- He should own a reasonable quality digital camera
- He should have a good quality computer/word processor, with internet access, and with appropriate software installed
- He should have (or have access to) a good quality printer, preferably colour, and/or a good B&W or colour photocopier.

The style of newsletter to be produced should receive careful consideration. It is easy to be too ambitious to begin with, and this may result in your publisher being overwhelmed. It is therefore suggested that a modest start is probably the most sensible. "Learn to walk before you run". The format will not need much thought initially, but as your needs and desires (and skills!) develop, consideration should be given to such matters as size, format, layout, and especially to content. Your writer/editor will need skill at various layout and formatting techniques such as photo insertion, use of columns, template headings, sizing and font changes, text boxes, block-line anchors, watermarking, and the like. By and large, all these can be learnt by experimentation and trial & error.

The sorts of contents for informing and entertaining your members may be found in the following list:

- Worshipful Master's notes
- Education column – Lodge Mentor
- Grand Lodge report
- Almoner's notes
- Ritual work review - DC
- Candidates' column – new prospects, progressing brethren, open night and workshop reports
- Biographical snap-shots of brethren
- Humour
- Community news involving the lodge or individual members
- Temple notes
- Masonic poetry
- Discussion group report
- Social report
- Forthcoming events including work programme, social notes, visiting schedule, workshops and discussion group, sister/adopted lodge stewarding or visits, installation visits, and the like
- Masonic or civil awards to brethren or their families (e.g. Australia Day honours, Grand Rank conferral, kids scholastic or sport awards)
- "The Lodge Ladies" column
- Charity progress, and proposed projects
- Discussion on any proposed initiatives or changes.

Production and Distribution

1. Decide upon format
2. Collect the information and material
3. Assemble photographs, plans, graphs and statistics
4. Prioritise stories and articles, and rough out the layout
5. Prepare a 'front page' template (i.e. design a header, and decide what subscript it should have)
[Many computer programs have a "Newsletter Wizard" to help with all the layout and design preliminaries]
6. Write and edit content
7. Print a draft. It is at this stage that financial alternatives should be considered. It can be quite expensive (in home computer/printer consumables) if large print runs are attempted. Also, few will have the ability to easily print both sides of a page, or to print A3 (for folding into a 4 page A4 size document), so the cost should be carefully computed and compared with what may be offered in your local commercial print shop. Usually, they can print much more easily and cheaply than you can, and all you have to do is write your fair copy to CD-ROM and deliver it to the printer. Always take your draft/fair copy in hard copy form with you, so that you can give adequate instructions to the printer. You may well run into problems if you want colour in your production if you go to a serious commercial printer. It is therefore suggested that you stick to the local 'Olde Printe Shoppe', where they will use the same technology as you have at home, but are better equipped and more efficient than you are, and can therefore do the job better, quicker, and cheaper than you can.

8. As one of the great strengths of a newsletter is that it is intended to reach all members – not just those who attend meetings – it is obviously essential to devise a method of distribution which will be cost effective. The use of e-mail should be investigated. There will be no problem for those with broadband, but there are often megabyte limits for those on dial-up modems, and this, and mail box size at the ISP end, will clog up at sizes over 4 – 5 Mb. This must be taken into account when decisions about distribution are made. It is probable that a good newsletter will go out (say) 4 – 6 times per annum. It may be a bit ambitious, and a heavy burden on your editor, to do it monthly.

Distribution by post (snail mail) will be an alternative if you circulate meeting summonses by that method. In newsletter months, merely pop them in with the notices.

1.3 Ritual and Ceremonial

Nothing defines the quality of a lodge more than the standard able to be achieved when doing degree work for a candidate. Every candidate deserves the compliment of a beautiful ceremony. And, there is no greater disdain with which to treat him than to be shoddy in the work.

There are strong advantages in doing the work well:

- All officers will feel worthy personal pride
- Your visitors will both enjoy the spectacle and will take away the example of excellence
- Having been part of a ceremony where hard work resulted in success, you officers will all go away with a feeling of team spirit
- You are showing a fine example to your candidate, and also to every junior brother present

Being good at ritual involves a number of skills:

Learning

The skill and perseverance to learn the actual words. All learning is more or less a rote process. It involves going over, and over, and over, the charge, always aloud, and always with concentration, until the charge becomes second nature. You will know it as well as you remember many other things such as phone numbers, addresses, etc. If difficulty in remembering the words, phrases, and order remains, it means you have not gone over the charge enough times. Frequent and regular repetition is the key!

Delivery

Once a charge has been learnt, the reality of giving it to a candidate arrives. If, during the memorising stage, the lecturer has tried to imagine actually delivering it to a candidate in a lodge room, he will have gone a long way towards overcoming one of the great obstacles to smooth delivery – nerves. It is quite natural to suffer some anxiety when performing before an audience, hence the advice to imagine that situation during learning.

All will agree that words and phrases are intended to convey meaning. For that to be reflected in delivery, it is essential that the lecturer understands what he is saying. If he does not, it will be nearly impossible for him to convey the message of the charge adequately. Therefore, in both the learning and delivery phases, understanding is essential.

Floor work

Every lodge is slightly different in the way perambulations and floor manoeuvres are carried out. Idiosyncrasies abound, but they lend novelty, and get rid of boredom, and should not be condemned.

Notwithstanding, the Grand Director of Ceremonies and the Grand Superintendent of Workings put enormous thought, time, and effort into developing ‘best practice’, and into teaching active Grand Officers to do things accordingly. There is no doubt that PMs who have served active Grand Office usually excel at floor work, and provide a fine example to lodge brethren. Incidentally, the Grand Director will never object to brethren attending Grand Hall to observe the training of Grand Officer teams. He will also be pleased to answer queries, and advise on correct methodology.

The Grand Superintendent of Workings, with selected AGSWs holds regular training days in lodge floor work. It is highly recommended that lodge DCs and deacons regularly attend these occasions. As all AGSWs attend these sessions, they will know what is

current best practice. Your lodge AGSW will therefore be able to help your lodge team if, but only if, you ask him. This source of help is perhaps the most under used resource in all Freemasonry.

There follows a list of movements and stratagems which will lift the standard of your lodge ceremonial work and ritual rendition:

- Understand what you are learning and delivering when doing charges
- Overcome stage fright by imagining the lodge room audience while learning the work
- While delivering a charge, be sure to pronounce words correctly
- Practise getting the rhythm and cadence right
- Always enunciate words clearly
- Practise voice volume and pitch modulation to aid audibility
- Learn perambulations meticulously
- Learn to step in time with the music – your organist needs to be very practised so as to play appropriate marches
- Practise **always** stepping off, forward, backward, up and down, leading with the **left** foot.
- Practise static and marching turns
- Learn how to hold and carry wands properly
- Practise correct coping of wands
- Pay attention to posture when working on the lodge floor
- Practise correct procedure for charity collections and ballots, especially at the SW's pedestal
- Practise collecting collars correctly
- Develop adequate confidence in conducting and prompting candidates
- Practise concentrating – a wandering mind makes mistakes
- Learn prompt passages very accurately – word-perfect is the only standard
- For wardens: learn the openings and closings absolutely perfectly
- For all brethren: learn when to salute, and be perfect in all signs, and in proving yourselves FCs or MMs
- For Directors of Ceremonies:
 - Learn correct procedure with the VSL
 - Always carry your baton correctly
 - When perambulating, be perfect; your example will set the tone for the lodge
 - Teach all brethren the correct procedure for being raised and seated by the S.. of F...
 - Employ diplomacy and tact in teaching brethren correct methods
 - Learn proper handling of the presentation cushion during degree workings, and the correct way of handling the collars for investitures

Finally, never forget that good ritual and ceremonial work has three huge virtues:

- It gives you lodge members a justifiable sense of pride, satisfaction, and team spirit
- It serves as a fine example, to members and visitors alike
- It is a great compliment to your candidate.

1.4 Lodge Mentor

Selection, Duties, Preparation

Preamble

It is the Grand Master's desire that all Freemasons should pursue a 'daily advancement in Masonic knowledge'. The President of the Board of General Purposes has requested the Board's Education Committee to examine ways in which a Masonic Education programme can be provided for the use of all UGLQ lodges.

The Committee has considered the matter, and has concluded that by far the best way for any lodge to develop a system is to find or train a sufficiently competent, knowledgeable, enthusiastic and willing brother to be Lodge Mentor. Without such an officer, it is very doubtful whether any continuing education programme can succeed.

This booklet discussed the major aspects of Mentoring with a view to helping lodges pursue the goal of making Masonic Education a reality.

Beginning

The first pre-requisite is recognition of many truths:

- That Masonic Education is an essential ingredient in lodge health and progress
- There is a huge body of Masonic knowledge
- That every pursuit is enhanced and enriched by knowledge
- Nothing worthwhile is learnt without effort
- That enthusiasm levels will vary widely
- That lodge members generally (unanimity will never exist) must favour establishment of a structured syllabus/curriculum
- That, among much else, education is a key element in lodge renewal
- No programme will work without structure, consistency, and co-ordination
- That resources are virtually limitless, and therefore, that a thoughtful and wise selection process will go into syllabus development
- That a 'strike-rate' (i.e. participation by new members) of about 50% only will be achievable. (If you get more, please tell the Education Committee your secret!)

- Appoint a willing, enthusiastic and experienced brother as Lodge Mentor
- Develop or adopt a comprehensive Orientation Kit programme
- Develop or adopt a Lodge Officers' Manual
- Start a Lodge library of books, papers and 5-minute talks
- Develop regular workshop/discussion group sessions
- Institute a regular short-talk program on subjects of Masonic or member interest for your festive boards
- Procure feed-back from all your new men, so as to be flexible in your study course
- Always combine workshop/study/discussion group sessions with a social element (e.g. BBQ or sausage sizzle); the more formality/control you adopt, the lower will be the chances of success.

A suggested methodology

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Masonic Knowledge

This falls into a number of categories:

- Administration:
 - Grand Lodge, and its Boards and Committees
 - Daughter lodges and how they function
- International and interstate recognition
- World wide Masonry, and contrasting systems and practices
- Ritual and Ceremonial:
 - Differences and similarities around the world
 - Scottish and Irish workings under UGLQ
 - U.S. workings, systems, and practices
 - European workings, systems, and practices
 - Training of Grand Officers & daughter lodge officers
 - Specific practices in any given daughter lodge
- Origins of Freemasonry
- History and Development of Freemasonry
- Emblems, symbolism and allegories, domestic and foreign
- The influence of: The Old Testament
Christianity
- Masonry's place in society, and its intellectual and social background

Resources

General:

- Study groups and circles
- Lodges of Research
- The Grand Lodge Library
- Municipal and public libraries
- The Internet
- Published Masonic books and literature
- Private lodge programmes

Particular:

- Orientation Kit programme, including reading lists of books and papers
- Grand Lodge of South Australia & Northern Territory: *Masonic Education Course* (Leading to their Diploma)
- UGLQ: Various pamphlets
 - Masonic Leadership booklets
 - Hints for Worshipful Masters
 - Lodge Officers' Manual
 - Lodge Administration Manual
 - Notes for Director of Ceremonies
- CH Harley Lodge: WM Notes, Wor Bro Terry Keane
- Camp Hill Lodge: Elements of a Mentoring Plan, Wor Bro Don Barry
- *Understanding Freemasonry*, RW Bro AW Martin, PSGW
- *What Every Freemason Should Know*, Wor Bro Paul Crabbe
- *King's Companion*, RW Bro Richard King, PJGW
- *Continuing Studies for Masonic Education and Advancement*, The Millenium Masonic Lodge.
- *Gould's History of Freemasonry*
- *Let There Be Light*, JG Sullivan, PSGW

Masonic Education

This falls readily into three quite distinct branches:

- I. Knowledge of administrative structures, procedures, and hierarchies
- II. Knowledge of the practices used in the Craft generally, and in particular lodges

What we do

- III. Historical and philosophical principles, theories, and hypotheses

Why we do what we do, and why we are as we are

To come to grips with these multi-faceted divisions, much study is necessary. It is very unlikely that any brother, especially a new brother, will embark on, or persevere with, a study course without help and guidance. Indeed, many will treat their lodge merely as a social outing, and will not feel any need to know the “whys” of Freemasonry. These brethren will rely on long exposure by more or less regular attendance at their lodge to arrive at a smattering of procedural comfort; it is likely they will never pursue knowledge of the “whys”.

But the sad reality is that this method leads to many becoming more and more marginalised. They deprive themselves of most of the enrichment of the Masonic life. What is also true is that, by the method of mere exposure to ceremonies and their contents, it takes a very long time to learn about and appreciate lodge and Masonic philosophy. Thus, many leave before they have been adequately exposed to Masonic insight. This phenomenon is another sad reality which we must all face.

The Lodge Mentor – Finding the Man

The characteristics to be looked for in a brother suitable for Lodge Mentor include the following:

1. He must be a willing self-starter, prepared to take ‘ownership’ of, and responsibility for, the lodge education programme
2. His personal traits will include:
 - Friendly and affable
 - A good reader
 - A well organised mind
 - Thoughtful and considerate
 - A diligent teacher
 - A good listener
 - Systematic
 - Keen and enthusiastic
3. Masonically:
 - A very regular attender at all lodge practices, meetings and social functions
 - Masonically experienced
 - A competent ritualist
 - A Past Master
 - Preferably, a served Past Grand Officer
 - A good organiser of trainings, tutorials, and workshop sessions
 - Able to talk competently and confidently about the Masonic life

Most lodges will not have such a brother ready made. If they had, then such a man would already be doing something about Masonic Education in that lodge. In the absence of such a brother, the lodge must examine the abilities and aptitudes of every member to discover the potential ideal man. It will be a combination of the desire of the lodge generally to establish a Masonic Education scheme, and the diplomacy and persuasive eloquence of the WM in procuring a brother to take on this onerous (but entirely essential) task.

What the Mentor must do in preparation

1. Embark on a programme of reading. (See reading and reference list – Appendix A)
2. Read the UGLQ Orientation Kits and become familiar with all the pamphlets and papers therein
3. Have read, and be familiar with those particular resources set out at p.5, *ante*.

In short, every Lodge Mentor must do some serious study so as to possess broad knowledge to add to the experience he brings to the task.

What the Mentor should do in practice

1. The most crucial activities are to do adequate research and reading, and to think deeply and carefully about the mentoring function
2. Adopt (or prepare his own) Orientation Kits suitable for new members
3. Prepare an ongoing Masonic Education syllabus/curriculum
4. Collect Masonic books and articles for the lodge library
5. Seek out and assemble '5 minute talks on Masonic topics and of general interest
6. Establish an ordered protocol for dealing with the training and educational needs of prospective members, EAs, FCs, MMs, and progressing lodge officers
7. Ensure that no new member is ever left on his own before, during or after meetings, when excluded during higher degrees (these periods offer an excellent opportunity for tutorials), or when visiting.
8. Prepare and administer a revision or testing regime for all progressing brethren
9. Convene and arrange venues for :
 - Ritual and practice workshops
 - Discussion group sessions
10. Receive and review feedback, and alter or modify the syllabus or procedures accordingly
11. Attend all lodge planning and management sessions, so as to maintain support for the education scheme, and so as to keep the lodge abreast of progress
12. Liaise with the lodge DC re training needs for new brethren and for progressing officers

Institute and administer a Masonic competence plan so that no brother advances 'beyond his strength' either through the degrees or through progressive offices

Post Script

Having read all the foregoing, very many lodges, and a large proportion of brethren will be tempted to say that it's all too hard. There is no doubt that that it will be hard to find a willing mentor, and it will be hard to erect a culture and practice of Masonic Education in your lodge. It will also be hard to achieve majority compliance with, or acquiescence in, whatever syllabus you decide upon.

But, as some sort of education programme is an essential for lodge progress, giving up before you get started is **not** an option. If your lodge fails to accept the challenge of devising and implementing an education scheme, then it will (and absolutely certainly!) wither and die. Young men of today leave Freemasonry all too often, and much too soon, because we don't teach them just what it is they have joined. This failing spells doom, and in the short term rather than the long term!

The answer lies in carefully assessing what you **can** do, and proceeding with that as a start. Increasing competence will come with effort, and this, in turn, will provide the confidence to expand your scheme both in what you do, and in how you do it. A top flight scheme such as that described in this booklet, will be achieved if you develop its elements gradually, and persevere. It must be tackled in much the same way as one would eat an elephant – one bite at a time!

THE TEN CRUCIAL QUALITIES OF THE GOOD MENTOR

- 1. He must be empathetic and friendly**
- 2. He must be a good listener**
- 3. He must be enthusiastic**
- 4. He must be interested in general Masonic knowledge, Masonic history and Masonic symbolism**
- 5. He must be a competent ritualist**
- 6. He must be prepared to:**
 - Read the Orientation Kits**
 - Conduct workshops and discussion sessions**
 - Set standards, assignments and tests**
 - Have a working knowledge of the books on the reading lists**
- 7. He must be able to organise Open Nights and seminars**
- 8. He must act as Lodge librarian (or have a good delegate)**
- 9. He must collect, copy and distribute articles of Masonic interest**
- 10. He must prepare and deliver '5-minute talks'**

1.5 Social Activities

It is notable that the strongest and most active lodges have a very active social programme designed to involve not only brethren, but also their wives and partners, and even children. Some even have wives/partners at every festive board, and all reports are that this stratagem builds strong relationships, makes for strong support by ladies for their partners' lodges, and cements a sense of belonging in everyone.

Suppers and dining vary widely, from very simple to very elaborate. Traditionally, and very widely, simple suppers with bread and butter, sandwich makings, nuts and crisps are provided. This type of catering has the advantage of ease of preparation, simple clean-up, and low cost. The downside is that it is also the least attractive and is often squalidly presented.

But, even at this low standard, all is not lost. With a bit of thought and effort, and marginal extra cost, the most modest of suppers can be substantially dressed up.

First, always provide table napkins. Linen ones will add a distinct touch of class, but they cost money to buy originally, and they will cost some brother time and effort to launder and press them between meetings. Paper napkins are, in the long run, an expensive alternative, but they are very convenient.

Second, the makings for sandwich type suppers need attention. Standard fare is nearly universally low quality processed meats and very roughly sliced tomatoes and onions.

You can up the ante by minimal effort and cost merely by:

- Preparing and slicing your own meats (chicken, ham, corned beef, pork) and by presenting it well.
- Slicing tomatoes and onions thinly and evenly.
- Including lettuce and cucumber, and perhaps celery and carrot sticks.
- Perhaps providing 'slice yourself' bread of higher quality than the normal sliced sandwich loaves.
- Providing pickles and mustard.
- Sliced gherkins and pickled onions are a tangy addition and are always appreciated.

Third, unless washing up is a real problem, china plates should always be used. Paper plates, while very convenient, are extremely expensive in the long term.

Fourth, beverages should never be neglected. Jugged iced water is a nice touch, but it takes a bit of arranging. Beer and soft drinks should never be drunk out of the bottle or can at any Masonic supper.

- Supply good quality soft drinks. Cheap lines are cheap for a reason. They are invariably lower quality than the better ones. Cordials, while very cheap, indicate a meanness and lack of style unbecoming in Freemasonry.
- Beer must always be supplied in various strengths. A simple consumption survey will give a guide to proportions. The days of brethren 'boozing' at lodge suppers are gone; the RID campaigns have seen to that, and, in any event, good manners dictate that over-indulgence is unacceptable.

Wine is a vexed area. Considerable expense may be incurred if your lodge doesn't have a wine buff who can be a frugal provider. On the other hand, good quality wines have never been more abundant or cheaper on the Australian market, and for those who like them the choice of economically priced good wines may make them an attractive addition

- to your suppers. They are certainly stylish. If you serve wine, ensure that proper wine glasses are provided.
- Spirits. It is suggested that spirits only be provided on special occasions such as Installation banquets or Christmas parties. They are expensive, and none but hardened drinkers will complain of their absence.

Above the minimum catering detailed, there is a considerable hierarchy of increasing quality, all the way up to special menu, chef prepared, liveried waiter served, grand banquets.

Some lodges have in-temple catering for simple cooked meals, such as soups, stews, curries, pasta dishes, and the like. These are easy to dress up a bit too. Good quality bread, and some small salads or accompaniments will do the trick.

Some lodges even serve a number of courses which goes down well if the dining occurs early enough for this to be suitable. It is also observable that people eat more in the cooler months.

Still others have the custom of dining out with wives and invited guests at local cafés and restaurants.

Whatever your lodge decides in regard to style and quality of suppers, you must aim to be as classy as possible at the chosen level. Certainly the quality of your suppers will strongly influence the desire of your members, ladies and visitors to return to your lodge.

Not infrequently, members raise objection to real meals when they are to be served at 9.30 to 10.30 pm. They say it's too late to be eating a full meal. This is not an entirely invalid objection. One lodge in country south-east Queensland meets at 5.30 pm. They have a couple of convivial drinks, and then sit down to their evening meal at 6.00pm or so. They have their ladies as guests at every meeting. After dining, they then repair to the lodge room where their normal meeting is conducted. After the meeting, they go home straightaway, although some might have a coffee or tea before departure. This scheme works extremely well for that lodge.

Some attention ought to be given to the incidentals served with your meals. Nibbles and dips are often neglected. As with everything, quality varies widely. Suggestions for improvement include:

- Cheese – pre-diced is the lowest quality, and is the most unsuitable for placing on a cracker biscuit. Try for slightly more piquant cheeses, and slice them yourselves.
- Olives, stuffed olives, and pickled onions are always popular
- With peanuts and crisps the better quality brands are well ahead of the cheaper lines.
- If serving dips: have good quality biscuits, both plain and savoury. Supply fresh vegetable sticks such as celery, carrots, shallots etc. With the dips themselves, ready made commercial products can never match the taste and quality of home made dips.

It will be a matter of consensus among the members of your lodge as to what extra programme of social events will be agreeable and supported. Be warned, however, that whatever strategy or programme is adopted, there will always be some knockers, and there will always be some who will not support any programme proposed, no matter how carefully planned or attractively implemented. Regarding those few, their lack of enthusiasm (or, indeed, downright criticism!) must be ignored. Disappointment at their lack of support should not incline the lodge to abandon an otherwise popular programme.

There follows a list of the types of functions which may appeal, and succeed in involving your members and their families in lodge social activities:

- Beachside barbecues

- Bush picnics – best for breakfast or late afternoon, and most comfortable in spring and autumn. In planning, make sure the facilities will match your needs. E.g. picnic tables, shelter in case it rains, toilets, water supply, BBQ fuel, etc
- Lodge bus, or convoy private car, trips to desirable scenic or recreational features in your locality. Long distances may deter some, so choose carefully.
- Trivia nights in combination with lodge suppers, or separately, as fund-raising evenings
- Children’s Christmas tree
- Dining out with wives or partners
- Lodge golf, bowls or other sports days
- Special occasion fraternal visits to other lodges
- Reciprocal stewarding arrangements with other lodges
- Country/city weekends with sister or adopted lodges. The host lodge, whether city or country, should prepare a special programme for these very enjoyable Masonic occasions
- Theatre or cinema nights
- Charity functions

A last general recommendation should refer to one of the great obstacles to an active social programme. This is the matter of cost.

It is true to observe that even in active lodges there will be some members on fixed incomes who will find themselves unable or unwilling to spend scarce funds on participation in lodge social activities. This is, or may become, a quite sensitive matter. On the one hand, it is possible to exclude (for financial reasons) some of your brethren. This is obviously undesirable. On the other hand, the enjoyment of active social intercourse must not be prejudiced by reducing activity to the lowest (financial) common denominator. This too is undesirable – and may prove fatal to lodge futurity. One phenomenon which is readily appreciated is that there is very rarely any complaint if every activity is good value for money.

One way round the problem of financial exclusion is to offer subsidies or concessions to members who are on fixed incomes. This requires delicate handling, but, with due tact, should always be successful in overcoming the problem.

1.6 Community Involvement

All Freemasons should be aware of three truths about Freemasonry:

1. We are religious, but we are not a religion
2. We are charitable, but are not a charity
3. We serve our communities, but we are not a service club.

So, in being religious, we respect and value the religious beliefs and pursuits of all in society. We teach obedience to universally accepted spiritual and moral values.

Further, in being charitable, not just with time and money, but in all our reactions and dealings with other people, we enrich the communities in which we live.

And, by doing our bit by way of community good works, we not only improve society, but also create a creditable status for Freemasonry itself.

Therefore, every lodge should be examining ways in which it can be involved in its local community, thus promoting our status as good citizens and desirable members of society.

This is one big area where brethren individually, and lodges collectively, must ***think!*** Opportunities to make worthwhile community contribution are as limitless as human ingenuity and imagination.

However, some suggestions as to becoming favourably known in your community and making a contribution to its welfare are as listed below:

- Whenever engaged in any public endeavour, always wear distinctive Masonic indicators such as shirts and hats or caps. If appropriate, also have signs stating who you are and what you are doing.
- Engage with local schools, churches, charity groups or service clubs so as visibly to assist them in charity or service projects.
- See whether, as a regular contribution, your lodge can help with maintenance at local heritage sites, the local cemetery, fire or ambulance station, retirement village or school.
- Establish a retiree assistance scheme where you may be able to help out frail or handicapped pensioners with household chores, such as:
 - Shopping and other errands
 - Mowing
 - Window cleaning
 - Changing tap washers or light bulbs
 - Car washing
 - Mere social visiting

You may be surprised at the appreciation and goodwill generated.

- Train one or more of your members as a youth counsellor and involve yourselves in helping young people
- Volunteer to help at the local Court House on sitting days
- Run a driver-reviver station on the local highway
- Give bursaries at the local school, TAFE college, or university, and ensure that you get to publicly present them
- Establish a Certificate of Appreciation scheme for conspicuous good citizenship

- Always help out as volunteers at all local shows, festivals and community events
- Have a local Masonic Awareness programme, such as a public picnic or barbecue.

Above all, don't be reticent about making your community contribution public. Advertise your own initiatives beforehand, and attempt to obtain good press or publicity afterwards in local &/or regional newspapers.