



FREEMASONS  
Queensland

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WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?





## WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest and largest fraternal organisations. It provides a code for living in today's society based on moral and ethical standards. Its members strive to live by the principles of integrity, goodwill and charity.

As a non-profit organisation that supports numerous charities and community services, Freemasonry unifies men of high ideals, regardless of colour, creed or worldly status.

## WHEN DID FREEMASONRY BEGIN?

The precise origins of Freemasonry have been lost in time. However, its traditions date back to the Middle Ages when stonemasons built the castles and cathedrals of Europe. To undertake these tasks, the builders had to have considerable knowledge of geometry, arithmetic and engineering.

These talented artisans therefore formed themselves into "lodges" to protect the skills and secrets of their trade and to pass on their knowledge to trusted apprentices. Importantly, these men were not bondsmen and were free to travel to any building site. Hence the origin of the word "Freemason".

By the 17th century, many vast building projects had been completed and worthy men who were not workers in stone were progressively accepted into

Freemasonry's ranks. They were called "free and accepted" Masons, and continue to be known as such today.

The first Grand Lodge was established in England in 1717. It united existing lodges and advanced the growth of Freemasonry, which gradually spread throughout the world.

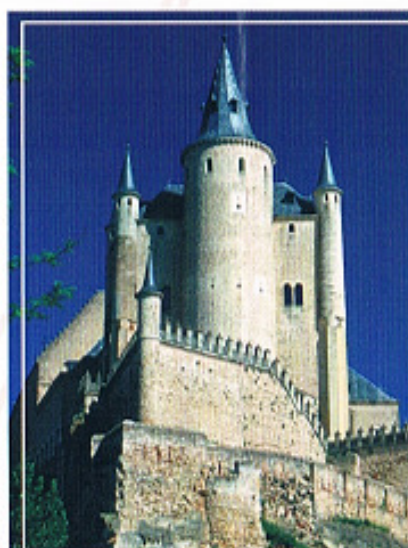
Freemasonry has been practised in Australia since the early 19th century. It is believed that the first Freemason to set foot on Australian soil was Sir Joseph Banks, the distinguished botanist on Cook's voyages of discovery.

## WHO ARE THE FREEMASONS?

Freemasons are ordinary men aged 18 years and over, from all walks of life. While they may come from different backgrounds, they share a concern for humanity and the maintenance of moral standards. They are required to respect the laws of the land and the rights of individuals.

Freemasons believe in a Supreme Being and in honesty and decency in everyday life.

There are some five million Freemasons worldwide and about 75,000 in Australasia.







## WHY DO MEN JOIN?

There are many reasons. Freemasonry promotes self-development. It respects the role of women and the family in society. It offers a hands-on opportunity to be involved in community help projects. It extends a practical blueprint for daily life.

Freemasonry boosts a member's self-esteem and teaches him self-confidence. It introduces him to a new circle of like-minded friends from all sections of society.

## IS THIS A SECRET SOCIETY?

No. Freemasonry used to be discreet about its activities – even its community work. Today, times have changed. And so has Freemasonry. Freemasons now talk freely about their activities. Their lodge rooms are often open to visitors. They welcome enquiries about their work.

Back in the Middle Ages, people were predominantly illiterate. It was necessary, therefore, for Freemasons to use recognisable symbols, such as the square and compasses. They also used handshakes, passwords and signs to identify themselves and so protect the highly prized technical knowhow of their trade.



Nowadays, these inherited modes of recognition are used in lodge ceremonies. Their purpose is to indicate a member's sincerity and his competence in the Craft.

## IS FREEMASONRY A RELIGION?

No. This is a misconception. Freemasonry has no theological doctrines. It offers no sacraments. It does not claim to lead to salvation. It is not a substitute for religion, nor is it a forum for religious discussions. Freemasons are required, however, to have a belief in a "Supreme Being". They come from many faiths. They have respect for the sacred customs of others. There is nothing whatsoever in being a Freemason that conflicts with a member's religious beliefs or practices.

Freemasonry strongly advocates unity and tolerance among all men and does not discriminate against religion. It could be said that its teachings complement its members' individual faiths.

## IS FREEMASONRY ANTI-CATHOLIC OR ANTI-SEMITIC?

Emphatically not. Freemasonry promotes a spirit of unity and understanding among all men. It does not discriminate against any religion. Its principles and







practices are compatible with any faiths that instill reverence for the deity and tolerance towards one's fellow man.

If anything, Freemasonry complements the philosophies of these faiths. There are many practising Catholics and Jews who are Freemasons. There are also members who adhere to Oriental faiths.

## HOW IS THE ORGANISATION STRUCTURED?

Individual Freemasons come together in a local lodge. In Queensland, more than 330 lodges exist from the far north to the southern border, and from coastal communities to outback towns. Some meet in architecturally impressive meeting centres; others occupy quaint buildings with tin roofs. Each lodge, however, has a distinct character and personality of its own, and its program is largely formulated in response to the individual wishes of its members.

Lodges throughout the state are represented administratively by the United Grand Lodge of Queensland

(UGLQ). With headquarters in the Masonic Memorial Centre in Ann Street, Brisbane, the UGLQ's jurisdiction includes Papua New Guinea.

District Grand Lodges at Townsville and Cairns overview their respective regions.

Lodges are semi-autonomous in function. Within the lodge, all members are considered equal. They address each other as "Brother". Officers who run the lodge are given the courtesy their roles deserve. The titles of these officers have their origins in history. For example, just as mayors are referred to as "Your Worship", the leader of a lodge is called "Worshipful Master" – meaning respected. The Grand Lodge is led by a "Grand Master". He represents and oversees Freemasonry within his jurisdiction. He is formally referred to as "The Most Worshipful Grand Master".



## WHAT DO FREEMASONS DO AT LODGE?

Lodge meetings are held regularly (usually monthly). As in most organisations, there is a business agenda with minutes, correspondence and accounts to be attended to. Plans for forthcoming events and charity activities may need to be addressed and discussed among members.



Lodge meetings are also ceremonial. They feature a series of formalised and symbolic scenarios that vividly highlight the principles and codes of conduct a Freemason is encouraged to adopt. These rituals are centuries old. Symbols, such as medieval stonemasons' working tools, are displayed to suggest how a member may refine his lifestyle.



Freemasons have a traditional mode of dress in lodge. They customarily wear formal or semi-formal attire. They also wear a neat apron to identify them as modern-day, speculative practitioners of the ancient stonemason's craft.

After business in the lodge room is completed, members usually relax informally and enjoy light refreshments. Freemasons often say they "meet on the level and part on the square." This means they meet as equals and part as true friends. Apart from these meetings, most lodges organise periodic social activities for families and friends, such as dinners, theatre parties, sports outings, picnics and barbecues.

## WHAT COSTS ARE INVOLVED IN FREEMASONRY?

As with most organisations, annual subscription fees are payable. These vary from lodge to lodge, depending on the style of lodge. Membership in

some lodges is expensive. However, fees of most lodges are reasonable and structured so as not to exclude any member of society.

When first becoming a Freemason, a one-off fee is payable. After a few months, the new member will also need to buy (or obtain) a Masonic apron. He may also prefer to acquire the formal or semi-formal attire that most members wear at meetings.

## WHAT SORT OF CHARITABLE WORKS ARE FREEMASONS INVOLVED IN?

Charity is a basic principle of Freemasonry. Members have been involved in charitable activities in this country for almost as long as European settlement.

Freemasonry has long been closely associated with the care of young people, orphans, widows, the sick, the aged and those affected by tragedy and natural disaster.

Queensland Freemasons have given support to many worthy institutions, such as the Leukaemia Foundation, the Royal Queensland Children's Hospital, the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the Mater





Mothers' Hospital Cord Blood Bank, the Geriatric Foundation and numerous others.

Masonic Care runs homes and facilities for aged people throughout the state. Masonic benevolence aids people who have encountered personal and financial difficulties. Masonic bursaries enable young people to pursue educational studies otherwise denied them.

For too long Freemasons have been reluctant to speak up and tell the community about the assistance, in cash and kind, they have given the disadvantaged. In any one year, Freemasons give generously and significantly to charities and not-for-profit organisations.

Money is raised at local, regional and state levels through diverse fund-raising projects initiated and conducted by Freemasons.



## TWO WAYS TO JOIN

The traditional way is to approach a Freemason known to you and express your desire to join. This Freemason would then become your "nominator".

If you are not already acquainted with a Freemason, you are welcome to contact the United Grand Lodge for personal advice and assistance.

## HOW CAN I GET FURTHER INFORMATION ON FREEMASONRY?

Most large public libraries have interesting books on Freemasonry. The UGLQ publishes a quarterly magazine, *The Queensland Freemason*.

Current bulletins appear on the United Grand Lodge of Queensland web site. Visit it at [www.freemasonsqld.org.au](http://www.freemasonsqld.org.au)

Alternatively, a request for the desired information can be sent to UGLQ fax number (07) 3229 9288. Enquiries are welcomed.

You can call into the office during business hours at 311 Ann Street, Brisbane Qld 4000. You can telephone the office during business hours on (07) 3229 3533. Courteous staff will be happy to help. The UGLQ headquarters building also contains a comprehensive Masonic reference library and museum.



## HOW CAN I BECOME A FREEMASON?

The basic qualifications are that you believe in a "Supreme Being", you are a law-abiding person, your decision to join Freemasonry is made freely, without improper inducement by others, and that you are not joining for personal gain.

