

Theosophy IN AUSTRALIA

ISSN No. 1038-1139

November 2017 volume 81, number 4



INSIDE A New Understanding
 The Festival of Christmas
 2018 Convention Programme
 National President's Annual Report
 Gravitational Waves

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Subscriptions: non-members \$25 p.a. within Australia, \$30 p.a. overseas

We invite articles or other items of no more than 2,300 words

email: pres@austheos.org.au

Cover photo: Shutterstock

Photos in this issue by: Dr Helen Lambert and Pedro Oliveira.

Photos also sourced from Wikimedia Commons and Art Explosion 600,000 with the authority of Nova Development Corporation, USA.

Printer: Kwik Kopy, 320 Pitt St, Sydney. Recycled paper.

The Society is not responsible for any statement in this magazine unless made in an official notice.

Published quarterly by: The Theosophical Society in Australia.



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November 2017

Volume 81 no. 4

The Theosophical Society welcomes students or seekers from all walks of life, belonging to any religion or to none and who are in sympathy with its Objects. It was formed to assist in showing to people that Theosophy exists, and 'to ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities'. Wisdom is known by a mind that is completely open. Therefore freedom of thought and open enquiry are given special emphasis in the Society. **Theosophy** essentially refers to 'Divine Wisdom', Sacred Knowledge, which is a transcendent state of consciousness. In a secondary sense, Theosophy is an ancient yet distinct stream of enquiry, exploring and interpreting the truths of existence in terms suited to particular ages, e.g. in the teachings of ancient India, ancient China, Platonism, Neoplatonism, and, since 1875, through the contribution of the TS. At the core of Theosophy is the principle of indivisible Unity underlying the diversity of forms.

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The Three Objects of The Theosophical Society

- I. To form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.
~
- II. To encourage the study of Comparative Religion, Philosophy and Science.
~
- III. To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in the human being.

From the National President

Linda Oliveira



Christmas, as we experience it now, is the product of centuries of customs which are probably in the main forgotten. This issue includes an article which explores the rich tapestry of traditions that have contributed to the festival of Christmas. Even Charles Dickens had a part to play. Approaches by those who observe it may be religious, secular or a mixture of both.

N. Sri Ram, the Society's fifth International President, is one person whose writings may not have received as much attention as they deserve in the TS. An archival piece from 1966 is reprinted in the following pages, consisting of his observations on brotherhood, some of the subtleties of open mindedness, and the TS itself, at the end of a major tour of this Section in 1965. His writings somehow remain fresh and relevant and do not diminish in significance with the passage of time. Various books by him are still in print, available in TS libraries and bookshops. They are recommended reading.

My annual report in the pages that follow reflects the breadth of the activities which have taken place throughout the Section, nationally and

locally, during another twelve month period. It is a reminder, too, of the strength and significance of the whole, which exceeds the sum of its parts. This brings me to the Section's draft business plan that lodges and branches received, and were invited to comment on, during the year. This is not an ordinary business plan, being tailored specifically to the TS and its purpose in this country. See page 148 for more information on this new initiative.

This Society and what it stands for has impacted many thousands of lives since 1875. It is naturally stronger and more effective wherever there is a harmonious dynamic. The lasting vitality of the TS is drawn not just from those spiritual Teachers who were behind its formation, but also from past and present members. The extent to which each person can contribute therefore also enriches the Society's effectiveness. Together we can help show people, without sensationalism, that there is a way of understanding life in a broad sense which has the potential to be transformative, opening us to new dimensions of perception and therefore new ways of being.

A New Understanding *From the Archives*

N. Sri Ram



Brotherhood has become a very worn word – cheap currency – so that we do not know what this term really signifies. But perhaps the most important thing we can do is to create a sense of the spirit of true brotherhood, which is not just a superficiality, not sentimentality, not emotionalism; which does not consist in merely calling another ‘brother’. We have to come down to the deep meaning of the word. If there were such a spirit today in the world, the world would become a paradise. There would be no war; there would not be all the crimes, the exploitation, the stories of torture and things of that sort. Even in a family true brotherhood is rare.

But I think that brotherhood has a more beautiful meaning. If you can cooperate just out of affection, out of friendly feeling, then I think that cooperation is something which is far truer than

merely an alliance for some common object. If there were real brotherhood, affection, kinship (whatever term you like), there would be an understanding of each other’s thoughts or feelings and their needs.

In this Society, there has to be that quality in the very texture of our thought and in our relations with one another. Words do not matter. It is really a question of how you think about another and the way you act. I feel that if there is brotherhood in the Society, there can be no attempt to advance oneself, envy of another, or personal ambition which aims at placing oneself in a position of dominance. Now if the Society is free from all this, then it surely stands for universal brotherhood – not if it merely proclaims it.

Open Mindedness

Really to understand either the truth of another person – their mind – our

minds have to be open. This open mindedness does not mean that the mind has to be an empty bag, which is impossible. You will always have something filling your mind, but we must not close our mind with our own ideas by being attached to them. If I have a certain idea, it is not just *an* idea, but *my* idea. That makes all the difference. So I stand for my idea against yours. I am pitted against you. Let us see who succeeds, who prevails. We form ideas on all matters – political, social, economic, religious, and Theosophical – all kinds of matters, and then, because of this attachment to the ideas, they just stay there in their various positions and then the mind is completely closed by them. I think that there should not be that kind of mentality in the Society.

Openness does not mean that we have to be so neutral that we cannot distinguish the true from the false. It does not mean that, even when you see something as truth, you must somehow force yourself to doubt it in order to be open to another idea and so force yourself into a state of agitation, doubt, and conflict. All these seem to me to be a complete misunderstanding of that kind of openness which is needed for the perception of truth and also for the realisation of our brotherhood, our kinship with others.

Openness does not mean that we have to be so neutral that we cannot distinguish the true from the false. It does not mean that, even when you see something as truth, you must somehow force yourself to doubt it in order to be open to another idea and so force yourself into a state of agitation, doubt, and conflict. All these seem to me to be a complete misunderstanding of that kind of openness which is needed for the perception of truth and also for the realisation of our brotherhood, our kinship with others.

Openness is essential in our Society, but it does not mean that you cannot see the truth. It may be that if you keep the mind open, if you are not attached to your own ideas, you may be able to see perhaps the same old truths in a new perspective. You see a greater depth in it. You see a meaning which you had not perceived before. So with regard to many things which we accept under the term Theosophy, there is the possibility of knowing them more deeply than we do.

Most of us know something about reincarnation and karma, but what we know about them is really superficial knowledge. We do not know the

inwardness of the phenomenon – how it arises, what it signifies in one’s life or in the whole cosmic process. So I think that our approach should always permit more light to come in, so that we are able to see something new, or perhaps see the same thing in a new light.

H.P. Blavatsky warned us against the danger of the Theosophical Society becoming a sect, that is to say, developing a creed to which everyone must subscribe, or becoming an organisation which is just built around one personality; therefore, what that person says is the truth, nothing else. This does not mean that we do not value and appreciate particular persons who might have helped us, but that we should not limit truth to any particular presentation. It may be beautiful, it may be wonderful, it may just suit you, but you cannot say therefore that truth comes only from this particular source, at least any source which exists in the external world.

The Symbolism of Words

The only relationship in which the mind and heart can completely rest is the relationship to the truth. The relationship is between truth on the one hand and the consciousness which apprehends or experiences that truth. That is the true relationship. So I think we have to have that attitude of looking

for the truth in any statement which is made. Truth is not just a form of words; it must be a living truth which each one experiences. Truth is manifold, and infinite. It cannot be exhausted by any presentation and I think that we have to have that all-embracing attitude in the Society.

In our studies, we must not be content merely with using certain technical terms – Atma, Buddhi or anything else of that sort. Very often we do not understand what the word means and the word is like a plank which covers a hollow on which we walk, that is all. Therefore the words which we use conceal our ignorance, our lack of knowledge.

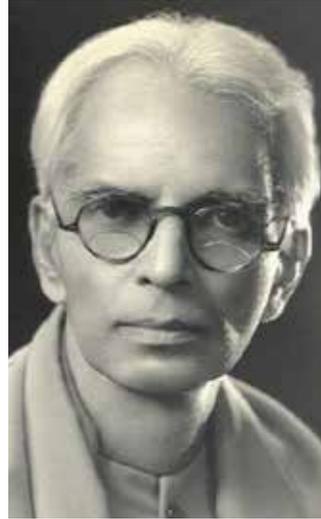
If we use the word Buddhi, people say, ‘Oh yes, we have heard about it long ago’ – they want some other word. But if you try to understand the nature of that faculty or that state of consciousness which is Buddhi, see in what manner it may be working, when you try to do that, people will say ‘Yes this is the modern presentation of Theosophy’. There is no distinction between the modern and the ancient. The ancient presentation summarised all that under one single term ‘Buddhi’. If you understand that state of consciousness, the way the consciousness works, the faculty, the quality which belongs to it, then the term does not matter: you can

say ‘Buddhi’ or ‘Spiritual intuition’ or any other phrase you like. You know the actual fact and the word is of comparatively little significance.

A word is merely a symbol, like a geometrical figure – the cross, for instance. Similarly with regard to many words which we use, if a word refers to a quality or a state of consciousness – a state of mind or heart which we have not experienced – then that quality cannot be conveyed by any word. Supposing you have not experienced something and I use a particular word to refer to that kind of experience, the word will mean nothing. In fact it may give rise to various false ideas which are very far from the actuality.

Stereotyped Forms

Some people think that the old presentations must either be discarded or recast. Someone suggested recently that *The Secret Doctrine* should be rewritten in modern terminology. I do not know how you respond to that. Surely you cannot rewrite it without destroying its quality, its suggestiveness, its texture, the depths of meaning which it contains. A person who is going to rewrite it, even if extremely clever, and acquainted with all the aspects of modern talk – will not be able to render it into his particular jargon or language.



N. Sri Ram

I do not believe in destroying or burying underground a beautiful statue or an ancient vase because it does not conform to the ideas of modern art. You find a wonderful statue somewhere but you say, ‘well that is not art in this 20th century’. It would be rather absurd; it is the same mentality which says that all these old statements of truth, whether you find them in the Upanishads or HPB’s writings or the *Bhagavad Gita* or somewhere else – are not of value to us in these modern times.

Modernity can become a craze. It does not mean necessarily that we are something superior to what obtained in the past. Science is modern of course. But with all its data, its extraordinary accomplishments which of course

are marvels of ingenuity, you must remember that certain ideas of modern science which are put forward are merely theories. They may be altered in course of time. Science gives us only the husk. I hope I am not offending any student of science. It is not concerned with the living substance; it deals only with the outer crust, the rind of the universe so to speak. The human mind – its actions, experiences, its depths and shallows, the problems of life and death, of joy and sorrow, of hope and regret, love and loneliness; all this is outside the province of science.

If someone tells me that we must cover the same ground as science, that what science says we must say in other terms, then that is a misunderstanding of what we are attempting to do in the Theosophical Society. We are concerned especially with the nature of life and the nature of consciousness and all that pertains to them. All our different presentations are like so many pictures which we hang on the walls and if you are going to paint a picture and add it to this collection, I would say you are welcome to do so. But at the same time I should be sorry to see Theosophy stereotyped in some form, some idiom, some jargon, so that we are unable to get away from those particular terms and look at this wisdom which is a living process from an entirely different standpoint.

Spirit of Exploration

I think that whatever we present to the public or to our own members should always be in a spirit of exploration, of attempting to seek, and not dogmatic assertion. That should be the attitude of mind with which we pursue our studies, trying to learn, trying to see; can that be so, is that the truth? The Upanishad-s, as well as the thought of Plato and the modern philosophers, are products of that spirit – a spirit of attempting to find the truth – not the attitude of already knowing the truth, and all that has to be done is to convey it to other people. I think we need to have that kind of an approach – the approach of a student who is trying to perceive, trying to learn, who is enquiring into the truth of things. However much one may know, there has still to be that attitude, always the attitude of a learner, of a seeker, of one who has that humility without which there can be no wisdom.

As I see it, the Society has still an important work to carry out. It can renovate itself. It can undergo a spiritual rebirth. That depends upon the members. If they have the attitude which I have been trying to put before you, we will find that the Society becomes a new body. It begins to function with a certain freshness, a

vitality which has not existed there, at least in the recent past.

Vitality and Strength

The Society can be much more vital than it is. I do not think that vitality or enthusiasm can be produced by any method or plan which seeks to cater to people's interests or ideas. There are so many agencies and organisations which are catering to the tastes of people, giving them just the excitement, the sensation and so on which they want. Does the Society exist for that purpose? Is it going to amuse and entertain people? Is that the business of the Society? I do not think so. We are here to make the Society strong in a real sense – not just numerical strength – say 50,000 members. You may have 50,000 sheep instead of 50,000 members. What does having 50,000 members matter? So it seems to me, to make the Society strong, the only way is to embody in oneself and radiate the understanding which the whole world needs to solve its problems and to transform itself. If we are not going to give to the world what it really needs, the Society may as well not exist at all. If it exists merely to record what so many people say, to afford a forum for people who want to wax eloquent, then I think the Society has completely missed its purpose.

A New Understanding

So the effort of embodying in oneself a new understanding and then conveying it to others, if you can, that has to be an effort by the many, not by just one so-called leader. Each one of us must become a channel for the flow of life that will renovate the Society, for the forces that can transform life on this earth from what it is – cruel and unlovely – into a thing of joy and beauty. I think that this responsibility rests upon every single member.

I hope that someday we will have a Society which will flourish with great lustre, with great beauty, with understanding, with wisdom, that is to say, amongst its members. Even if the number is small, if the members have something striking to give to the world, if they embody in themselves a spirit which is not to be found elsewhere, that smaller body will be much more potent than a large organisation, the strength of which consists merely in the largeness of numbers, or the largeness of something of a purely material nature.

This article is reprinted from *Theosophy in Australia*, December 1966. It was a talk given to members at the conclusion of the World President's 1965 Australian Tour.

The Festival of Christmas

Dianne K. Kynaston



Festivals are not celebrated in order to reflect the soul-life of the earth in its changing seasons, but to add what comes from the human spirit and the human heart. *author unknown*

Christmas is both a religious and social festival, bringing together families, friends, and the community as a whole. For the religious it is a time to celebrate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, and for the community it is a time to renew friendships, share the joy of celebrations, spread goodwill, and express concern for the needy. Unfortunately it has also now become a time for commercial extravagance. Many traditions and customs have become entwined in the festive season, but where do they all come from?

The word 'Christmas' quite obviously is made of two words, Christ and Mass, coming from the Greek *Khristos* (from the Hebrew Messiah, the anointed) and the Latin *Missa* – Eucharist. The first recorded use of the word Christemasse is in 1038 C.E. Other names include Noël,

used in France, and Yule or Yuletide in Germany, though this term goes back to Nordic festivals prior to the coming of Christianity.

For Christians the birth of Jesus is celebrated on 25 December in the Western churches (Roman Catholic and Protestant) in accordance with the Gregorian calendar (though in some countries it is on 24 December), and on 6 January in the Eastern churches (Greek, Russian Orthodox, et cetera) in accordance with the Julian calendar. In the Armenian Church it is celebrated on 7 January. The Council of Tours in 567 CE declared that the twelve days between these dates should be referred to as the 'unified festal cycle', as a means of unifying the different festive days.

The choice of 25 December by the early Church Fathers is considered by some

researchers to be the Christianising of the pagan festival in Rome of the *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti*, meaning ‘the birthday of the Unconquered Sun’, thought to have been inaugurated by the Roman emperor Aurelius, to celebrate the sun god and the Winter Solstice.

Some traditions calculate the birth of Jesus as being approximately nine months after 7 April (or 25 March in the Julian calendar) and with the date of 14 Nisan in the Jewish calendar, which is believed to be the date of ‘creation’, as well as of the Exodus and thus of Passover. 25 March is then seen as marking both the conception and the crucifixion of Jesus. In Buddhism, the Wesak Festival held around the full moon in May celebrates the birth and death of the Lord Buddha, so maybe the marking of the conception/birth and death of the teacher on the same date reflects a cycle.

Astronomical Alignments

The celebration of religious and cultural festivals has, from time immemorial, been held in association with astronomical alignments, mostly in conjunction with the movement of the sun, the moon and the star systems of the Pleiades, Orion and Sirius.

The four most prominent days of the sun are the Summer and Winter Solstices and the two Equinoxes. In the northern

hemisphere the Winter Solstice falls on 22 December. The term ‘solstice’ literally means ‘the sun stands still’, and so it was considered that the amount of sunlight remained static, but then on the twenty-fifth the sun was ‘reborn’.

There is evidence that the celebration of the Winter Solstice goes as far back as Neolithic times. Many ancient sites are aligned to this event. Examples are: 1) Newgrange in Ireland, its alignment being to the rising sun of the Winter Solstice, and 2) Stonehenge in England which is aligned to the setting sun.

In ancient Persia the Winter Solstice was celebrated as ‘Yalda night’, with the family gathering to share food, drink, and read poems.

In Egyptian mythology the goddess Isis gave birth to her son, Horus, on the Winter Solstice. There are many statues of the baby Horus sitting on his mother’s lap, reflected later in statues of the Virgin Mary, the baby Jesus and the Black Madonnas throughout Europe.

Pagan Scandinavian and Germanic people celebrated a twelve day ‘midwinter’ holiday called Yule – with pine trees, wreaths and Yule log, as a festival dedicated to the Norse gods such as Odin, and the World Tree, Yggdrasil.

One of the major festivals of ancient Rome was the Saturnalia, held at the Winter Solstice. This was marked with

gift giving, merry making, and slaves being attended by their masters for a day.

Mithras and Jesus

The cult of Mithras arose in Persia out of the Zoroastrian religion, approximately six centuries before the time of Jesus. He had an antecedent in India where he was known as Itu, considered to be a derivative of Mitu or Mitra. However the worship of Mithras morphed into a cult within the Roman military in which his title was ‘Sol Invictus – the Unconquered Sun’.

There are very few written records about Mithras, with scholars relying on carvings, sculptures and remnants of temples, such as the one at Bath in England. Mithraism was very prominent in the Roman world during the early days of Christianity, and it seems that much of its symbolism has crossed over into Christian traditions.

Mithras is known as a ‘saviour god’, and there are varying traditions about him, including the fact that he was said to have been born in a cave to a virgin named Anahita on 25 December.

There are many other similarities with Jesus – both are described as ‘The Way, the Truth, the Light, the Son of God, the Good Shepherd’, et cetera, and both are depicted as carrying a lamb on their shoulders. Other similarities include:

- The babe wrapped in swaddling

clothes, placed in a manger and attended by shepherds.

- Both were considered great travelling teachers.
- Both had twelve companions or disciples.
- Both performed miracles.
- Both identified with the Lion and the Lamb.

There are many other similarities between the two teachers, and this does not detract from their stories, but in fact reflects deeper meanings of their symbolic nature.

History of its Celebration

Up until the Middle Ages the celebration of Christmas was a more low key church activity, or it was combined with other pagan festivities.

Christmas Day rose to prominence after Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas Day in 800 CE, followed by the anointing of King Edmund the Martyr in 855 CE and King William 1 of England in 1066 CE. The holiday was celebrated with much frivolity, feasting, drinking, and the performance of plays, singing and dancing.

Reformation

The Protestant movement at first kept up the various traditions, Martin Luther having supported it, but some denominations began to dispute it, such as the Puritans.

In England Oliver Cromwell, when he came to power in 1647, banned the Christmas celebrations and this resulted in rioting, especially in Canterbury. The restoration of the monarchy in 1660 ended the ban, but the Presbyterian Church in Scotland continued the ban, and it was not until 1958 that Christmas again became a Scottish public holiday.

The Puritans, who sailed to America as the Pilgrim Fathers, continued their ban on Christmas celebrations in their various settlements. However the Dutch settlers took their own festivities, with their roots in Scandinavian traditions of the Yuletide, to America, and so continued to develop the Christmas festival. To this day the Jehovah's Witnesses still reject any celebration.

Saint Nicholas – Santa Claus

Saint Nicholas was a 4th century Greek bishop who lived in southern Turkey. He was noted for the care of children, generosity and the giving of gifts – his feast day is 6 December. By the 13th century he had become popular in the Netherlands where he was known as 'Sinterklaas'.

It was through Dutch immigrants to the U.S.A. that he became popular in the area around New York in the early 19th century and was depicted in bishop's clothing. By the 1880s he had evolved into more secular attire through the



Eget Vaerik
Wikimedia Commons

cartoonist, Thomas Nast, and by the 1920s he had become the current Santa Claus in his red outfit and white beard, this character being part of a marketing strategy by Coca Cola.

Christmas Celebrations Today

Many of our Christmas activities have their roots in ancient times, but others have only evolved in recent times.

Gift giving can be seen to go back as far as the Saturnalia in Rome.

In early days, decorations consisted of greenery such as holly, ivy and mistletoe. Christmas trees come from the Germanic/Scandinavian traditions, but were not used in England till the early 19th century through the Hanoverian links with the British royal family.

The traditional colours of Christmas are red, green and gold: red for the blood of Christ, green symbolising eternal life and the evergreen tree, and gold being one of the three gifts of the Magi.

Family gatherings can be seen to go back to ancient Persia in the feast of Yalda.

Carol singing goes back to the Middle Ages, when it started off as a group of dancers around a singer.

Sending cards was first instituted when commercially produced cards were created by Sir Henry Cole in 1843.

Charles Dickens set much of the tone for our current Christmas festivities. In 1854 he wrote the novel, *A Christmas Carol*, which helped to revive the ‘spirit’ of Christmas. Its popularity played a major role in portraying Christmas as a holiday, emphasising family, goodwill and compassion.

Today the Festival of Christmas is held all around the world, primarily in countries where Christianity is the dominant religion, but celebrations are also held in other countries, such as India. The city of Chennai is a major Christian centre, with connections to the apostle St. Thomas, and there are many Christian centres throughout the country.

Countries such as China may only have a small Christian population, but the fact that most of our decorations are made in Chinese factories makes the festival an important part of the Chinese economy.

Sacred Time

We may find that the commercial aspects of Christmas have become a bit overwhelming, but despite the intensity

of Christmas shopping, this festive season still has much to offer us as a Sacred time.

Well-known Theosophist, Dora Kunz, once wrote a pamphlet, ‘Christmas of the Angels’, and stated that the Angelic hosts use all the goodwill expressed during the festive season to send a blessing around the world.

All religious festivals act as lenses between the planes of existence, sending out joy and goodwill on such occasions, so as we enter the Festive Season we should keep in mind the words of the carol:

All glory be to God on high
And on the earth be peace;
Goodwill henceforth from heaven to
men
Begin and never cease.

Source of various details including dates:
Wikipedia



Dianne Kynaston served for eight years as General Secretary of the Australian Section, and as editor of *Theosophy in Australia*. A former President of the Indo-Pacific Federation, she is currently a National Lecturer for the Section.

New Year - 1944

The morn was crystal –
white and clear.
'More radiant than the sun am I' –
The frost lay still – on every branch
a sphere
Of luminous, reflected light;
'Purer than the snow, subtler than
the aether
Is the self' – in silence came the flight
Of mystic wings, the VISION, and the
cry
The burst of sound – the Seeker's
Voice:
'I AM THAT SELF. THAT SELF AM I.'

Joy Mills



The National President's Annual Report

1 SEPTEMBER 2016 TO 31 AUGUST 2017

Preamble

Another year has gone by remarkably quickly, it seems, as the time arrives to write this annual report. These reports are a tangible reminder that although we have sixteen TS centres and groups, we are indeed one Section, one body. Following is a consolidated summary of a twelve month cycle of activities around the Section in summary form – both national activities, and those of TS centres throughout the year – which will remain for posterity.

Notable highlights during the year included:

- The January National Convention in Hobart, on the theme 'Eastern Spirituality, Psyche and the Human Journey', featuring a fine public talk by Dr Bruno Cayoun on 'The Core Mechanisms of Buddhist Spirituality'. An audio file of his talk has been uploaded onto the national website.
- The very successful tour by Dr Pablo Sender, from the USA, which included the School of Theosophy as well as his weekend seminar in Launceston, which was professionally recorded. He spoke at several Lodges.
- The development of a draft business plan for the Section, which was approved by the National Council and will be further developed.

- The commencement of the development of a new, dynamic national website which will have flexible functionality and will enable Lodges/Branches to have a new look online.
- The offer of an annual prize at the University of Western Australia for a third year undergraduate course on 'Philosophy East and West'. An official response is awaited.

More about each of these items below.

NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

National President

My travels for the Section during the year covered nearly all TS centres around Australia, a trip to New Zealand for the Indo-Pacific Conference, and a trip to Adyar for the 2016 International Convention and General Council meeting. While presentations are always given at TS centres, these trips also invariably provide a valuable opportunity to discuss any issues of concern in person with Lodge/Branch Presidents, Group Coordinators and committee members.

In addition, the following is a summary of my main duties within this Section during the year under review: arranging and overseeing the Annual Convention in Hobart; developing and giving presentations to nearly all Lodges,

Branches and Certified Groups; reviewing National Council policies; organising the National Speakers' schedule with several National Lecturers and one International Lecturer; organising and giving presentations at the annual School of Theosophy at Springbrook; editing and production of four issues of *Theosophy in Australia*, in consultation with the Editorial Committee; writing e-Bulletins for email distribution; proofreading and suggestions for the new study course on *The Secret Doctrine*; member of the National Council; member and Chair of the national Executive Committee; Director and Chair of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust; Director of The Theosophical Foundation; membership of several working committees; ongoing liaison with TS centres around the Section; correspondence and meetings with members of four Lodge/Branch committees about some issues of concern including, in one case, a mediation session; and a sizeable volume of correspondence. (Regarding additional duties, see also item on General Council further on.)

National Council

The National Council met in January in Hobart, and during June at the National Headquarters in Surry Hills. As at 31 August 2017 the National Council comprised three ex officio members (the National President, the National Secretary and the National Treasurer), along with six elected State Representatives, each of whom may serve up to three two-year terms:

Helen Steven – Tasmania
 Franco Guazzelli – Western Australia
 Phillipa Rooke – Queensland

Travis James – South Australia/Northern Territory

Gloria Yiangou – New South Wales/
 Australian Capital Territory

Kari Torgersen – Victoria

Great appreciation is extended to the State Representatives for their voluntary service to the Council which included, among other things, several days of National Council meetings during the year under review.

The following appointments were made by the National Council for a 12 month period in January 2017:

Chair of the National Council and Vice-President until January 2018 – Phillipa Rooke.

Executive Committee – see next item.

National Executive Committee

The national Executive Committee deals with the ongoing administration of the Section. It met monthly during the year except for January, until April when a decision was made to trial two monthly meetings until the end of 2017. As at 31 August its members included three ex officio members, the National President, National Secretary and National Treasurer, as well as the following members who were appointed by the National Council in January: Dai Trandang, Dianne Kynaston and Marie McArdle, along with Denise Frost and Harry Bayens who travelled to Sydney for meetings from Devonport and Perth respectively.

The members of the national Executive Committee are also required to be Directors of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust, which is responsible

for the Section's properties. In December, the national Executive Committee appointed Linda Oliveira as the Editor of *Theosophy in Australia*. At the same meeting, the Executive Committee also appointed several working committees: Rules, Finance, Electronic Media, and Education and Training.

Headquarters Staff and Volunteers

Once again, great gratitude is due to the members of staff at the National Headquarters, with whom it is a pleasure to work, and to all the various dedicated volunteers who are part of our immediate and extended National Headquarters team. The main tasks performed by each during the year were:

Dara Tatray, National Secretary and Assistant Treasurer: Reporting to the national Executive Committee, the National Council, and The Australian Section Theosophical Trust on matters pertaining to the properties owned by the Trust, matters pertaining to the Rules and matters pertaining specifically to administration and personnel; taking care of all routine business for these four entities; writing and distributing their Minutes and Agendas; ensuring that all their statutory requirements are met. Assisting the National Treasurer. Conducting the annual renewal of the Section's several insurance policies, including building and contents, group personal accident and public liability for all the Lodges/Branches and Groups comprising the Australian Section; ensuring that premiums are at an appropriate level for all Lodges/Branches. Overseeing the annual audit and preparing

for the audit. Overseeing the payment of wages, and paying all bills for the National Headquarters, The Australian Section Theosophical Trust and the Springbrook Education and Retreat Centre. Conducting a detailed inspection of the Springbrook Centre and conducting the Caretaker's performance review. Producing and distributing quarterly investment trust reports to the seven investment partners with a beneficial interest in our Maple-Brown Abbott portfolio. Working on the Budget and end of year financial statements with the National Treasurer. Overseeing arrangements for the National Convention, especially regarding accommodation and any other matters not taken care of by the National President. Liaising with David Nye of Brave Vision regarding the new website. Seeking out and engaging a new service provider to take care of the sewerage treatment plant at the Springbrook Centre, finally bringing the STP into full compliance for the first time. Dealing with various other Trust property issues. Assisting one Lodge with HR issues. Preparing the first draft of the Section's business plan to present to the National Council at its meeting in January and keeping the Lodges/Branches informed. Conducting the Easter Retreat at Perth Branch and presenting two additional talks there. Conducting a six-month course at Blavatsky Lodge on the Perennial Philosophy. Presenting talks at Brisbane Lodge, Sunshine Coast Lodge, and Blavatsky Lodge. Attending all Strata Committee meetings of the Owners Corporation at 162 Goulburn St and hosting the committee meetings at the National Headquarters. Preparation for a series of

six webinars given for the Theosophical Society in America and available for use by any Lodges/Branches or Groups for study. Supervision of National Headquarters' staff.

Jennifer Hissey: Entering data for the Online Public Access Catalogue; handling enquiries for material in the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives as well as cataloguing work; networking with other libraries in Australia; liaising with Softlink in order to improve OPAC; Convention Secretary; extensive additional work in relocating books and archival material in the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives; assisting with *T in A* mail outs.

Gil Murdoch: Webmaster for the Australian Section's website; adding and maintaining a large amount of material on the website and web pages of several Lodges, Branches and Certified Groups; maintaining AV, sound equipment and data projectors; formatting and emailing out e-Bulletins and electronic versions of *Theosophy in Australia* magazine, updating the *Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals* and maintaining their search facilities; indexing the *Brahmavidya* journal and maintaining its search facility, and continuing work on a new index of *The Theosophist*; assisting in the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives; operating the sound system and making and editing audio recordings at the National Convention; assisting with *T in A* mail outs.

Pedro Oliveira, Education Coordinator: preparing and presenting classes at the annual School of Theosophy; organising an event and preparing/presenting all

classes at the Springbrook Centre; additional presentations to several TS centres and at the National Convention; development of a new educational module on '*The Secret Doctrine: an Eclectic Introduction to its Study*' for the Resources Package; maintenance of the Section's Facebook page; responding to requests for educational material and general educational matters; responding to DVD and CD orders; responsible for the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives; member of the Education and Training and Electronic Media committees; assistance to the National President; ordering and sale of books and study courses; proofreading four issues of *Theosophy in Australia*; assisting with *T in A* mail outs.

Richard Larkin, Membership Secretary: preparing membership reports; maintaining the membership database; banking; general office duties; assistance to the National President, the National Secretary and the Education Coordinator; OPAC data entry, cataloguing, downloading and editing material from other Libraries; creating new book items on OPAC; assisting with *T in A* mail outs.

Kay Schiefelbein: Caretaker, Springbrook Centre and caterer for two national TS Springbrook events.

Beatrice Malka: volunteer – National Treasurer; member of the national Executive Committee and Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust; Director and Chair of The Theosophical Foundation Pty Ltd.

Dai Trandang: volunteer – organising the quarterly mail out of *Theosophy*

in Australia; work on the *Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals*, member of the national Executive Committee and Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust; Director of The Theosophical Foundation Pty Ltd.

Gloria Yiangou: volunteer – assistance in the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives, assistance with mailing out *Theosophy in Australia*; State Representative since September 2016.

Marlene Bell: volunteer – member of the national Executive Committee and Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust until January 2017.

Marie McArdle: volunteer – member of national Executive Committee and Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust, ex officio Director of The Theosophical Foundation Pty Ltd.

Dianne Kynaston: volunteer – member of national Executive Committee and Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust; Director of The Theosophical Foundation Pty Ltd., National Lecturer; member of Editorial Committee until January 2017; State Representative until September 2016.

Denise Frost: volunteer – member of the national Executive Committee and Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust.

Phillipa Rooke: volunteer – State Representative and National Vice-President as from 19 January.

Franco Guazzelli, Travis James and Helen Steven: volunteers – State Representatives. Janice Scarabottolo, Dr Olga Gostin and Patricia Ossenberg: volunteers – members of Editorial Committee.

Ruth Holt: volunteer – member of Edit-

orial Committee since January 2017.

Barry Bowden, Simon O'Rourke and Skip Pry: volunteers – National Lecturers.

Barry Bowden, Helen Steven and Rosanna Cummins – catering for a national event at Springbrook.

GENERAL COUNCIL

The General Council has commenced twice yearly meetings, with a meeting held in May at Naarden in the Netherlands, in addition to the usual December meeting in Adyar. The 70 international Rules changes proposed by the international Rules Committee which I chaired over a couple of years, were all adopted by the General Council at its December 2016 meeting. Also, as a result of a proposal by me at that meeting John Vorstermans, the National President of the New Zealand Section, and I, were asked to draft a new resolution on the purpose and scope of the TS for consideration by the General Council. The draft has been completed and the resolution is due to be considered at the Council's December meeting this year. It aims at further clarifying the purpose of our Society in the world today, and has the potential to serve as a useful guide for Section and Lodge/Branch work.

MEMBERSHIP

Statistics

Membership declined by a total of 9 during the year, bringing the number of members in the Section to 811 as at 31 August 2017, a considerable improvement on the decline the previous year. (See also annual membership analysis.) Most of the losses were sustained by two or three Lodges/Branches. It is hoped that, as marketing of the TS gets onto a more

solid footing at the national level, more interested people will be drawn to the Society in different parts of the country. (See also item on marketing.)

National Members

As at 31 August, 101 National Members were attached directly to the National Headquarters. We welcomed a number of these members from around the Section to national events during the year under review. The Education Coordinator wrote to all National Members sending them an updated list of books for sale and new articles on the website, as well as information about Springbrook events. Their continuing membership of the TS is valued.

Exit Surveys

Some former members who either resigned or lapsed completed and returned the optional exit surveys which were sent to them by the National Headquarters. Usually the reasons given were of a routine nature, but from time to time issues with a local TS centre were cited, in which case the centres concerned were notified for action as appropriate.

Membership Forms Online

Plans are in place for application forms for national membership to be placed on the Section's website. The National Secretary wrote to Lodges/Branches to invite them to allow the placement of their application forms online as well, as we want to actively promote Lodge/Branch membership. A number of TS centres have replied positively. As a new website is currently under development (see item

on new website), membership forms will now be placed on the new site rather than the current one, as originally envisaged.

Theosophy in Australia

The national magazine is an important avenue of communication with members, especially the November issue which is posted to every member and which includes a number of items that all members are required to receive under the Section Rules. The remaining three issues of the magazine throughout the year were posted to those members who pay slightly higher annual dues in order to receive print copies. Some extra copies continued to be posted to Lodges, Branches and Certified Groups for members to browse. Each issue of the magazine was placed on the Section's website at the same time as copies were mailed out, with all TS centres advised accordingly. Those who chose to receive direct notification when the magazine is online were sent an email from the National Headquarters. Members who are interested in receiving these notifications can email Gil Murdoch, National Headquarters office, at:

web@austheos.org.au

2017 CONVENTION

Much appreciation is due to the President of Hobart Branch, and those local members who supported her in the hosting of the Convention; also, to the several members of staff at the National Headquarters office who assisted with the considerable preparation work involved. Many positive remarks were received about the public talk by Dr Bruno Cayoun, clinical psychologist and developer of mindfulness-integrated

cognitive behaviour therapy. The Annual Convention is the major event of the year for this Section. It is a great opportunity to explore a theme together, renew acquaintances and meet new friends from far and near. Members are encouraged to attend Conventions.

2018 and 2019 CONVENTIONS

Plans continued during the year for the 2018 Convention, to be held in Brisbane, with featured presenter Emeritus Professor Richard Silberstein, long-time TS member and neuroscientist. Unfortunately, Duchesne College (University of Queensland) had accidentally double booked us with another group, which had precedence. Fortunately St. John's College, at which we have held Conventions before, was able to accommodate us on the required dates and therefore the venue was changed.

Plans were also commenced for the 2019 Convention, due to rotate to Melbourne. Melbourne Lodge is in a period of transition for a period of some eighteen months after the recent sale of its building, prior to purchasing a new property. At the time of writing this report, after consultation with Melbourne Lodge officers, a decision was made by the National Council and the national Executive Committee to rotate the 2019 Convention to Sydney instead of Melbourne, with a Convention to be held in Melbourne in January 2020. After that, the usual order for rotation of the Convention around six different states will be resumed.

Questions without Notice

A decision was made by the national

Executive Committee that in future a limited number of questions from individual members will be permitted from the floor at Convention Business Meetings. Questions from a Lodge/Branch committee, or from all members of a Lodge/Branch, will need be sent to the National Secretary in advance in future, so that considered replies may be given at these meetings.

EDUCATION

Education and Training Committee / Educational Resources

The Education and Training Committee comprises the National President, the Education Coordinator and the National Secretary. Information on their travels and presentations appears elsewhere in this report.

The production of a comprehensive Educational Resources Catalogue of educational material available at the National Headquarters was nearing completion at the end of the year under review. In due course copies will be sent to Lodges, Branches and Certified Groups and the completed catalogue will be placed on the website.

The latest study course on *The Secret Doctrine – An Eclectic Introduction to its Study* was completed by the Education Coordinator during the year. This has undergone four print runs since December 2016, with many copies either purchased by TS centres and individuals or else sent to National Members upon request. The course on *Understanding the Psychic World* featured on the programmes of several Lodges/Branches. Information about our study courses, which are

available for purchase by all, appears on our website at: <http://austheos.org.au/printed-media-study-courses/>

A video about the resources available at the National Headquarters was completed and placed on the Section's website. Handouts from Pablo Sender's School of Theosophy, and his two seminars while in Australia, were sent to all Lodges/Branches and Certified Groups.

Blavatsky Lodge in Sydney agreed to a suggested activity proposed by the Education and Training Committee, entitled 'Ancient Wisdom Series', with one presentation a month on a specific set of Theosophical topics for a period of time. A number of these presentations had been given by the end of the year under review.

Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives

Jennifer Hissey, our Librarian, sent material to an English researcher, Jenny Cuff, who later on published a book on the life and work of Herbert Whyte, founder of the International Order of the Round Table and TS member in England. The author acknowledged Jennifer's contribution in the book. New acquisitions include the new edition of '*The Secret Doctrine: the Landmark Classic of Occult Philosophy*' by H. P. Blavatsky.

Jennifer Hissey has catalogued more than one hundred books and magazines. This information will now be available in the Libraries Australia online catalogue and eventually in WorldCat.org, the world's largest library catalogue. The winning thesis and essays for the John Cooper Memorial

prize 2016 were placed in the Campbell Library. Also, we received from the Krotona Institute of Theosophy news of the Joy Mills Collection, an extensive collection of lectures, essays, articles, photographs, correspondence, and over 500 books.

National Speakers' Schedule

The National Speakers' Schedule is a significant means of support provided by the National Headquarters to TS centres around the Section. It includes National Lecturers, the National President and the Education Coordinator, as well as International Lecturers. During the year under review, a total of 80 presentations were organised around the Section by the National Headquarters. This figure excludes the additional presentations which were given at the National Convention, as well as the national events which were presented at the Springbrook and Canyonleigh Centres during the year.

At its mid-year meeting the National Council appointed the following as National Lecturers for 2018, subject to their agreement which was subsequently obtained: Barry Bowden, Dianne Kynaston, Simon O'Rourke, Skip Pry and Dara Tatray.

International Lecturer

Pablo Sender's April tour of the Section was particularly well received. This included presentations at several TS centres, his study classes at the School of Theosophy at Springbrook and his weekend seminar at Launceston. (See also relevant items under National Events.)

Book Depot, National Headquarters

Our depot of some fifty specially selected

books at the National Headquarters continued to attract sales during the year at cost recovery prices.

UNIVERSITIES

University of Sydney

The two winning entries for the Section's 2016 John Cooper Memorial prize to Studies in Religion, the University of Sydney, were an undergraduate essay by Morgan Jackson on 'Could Clement of Alexandria be considered a Gnostic?', and part of an Honours thesis by Giselle Bader on 'Mind-Body Dualism in the "Apocryphon of John"'. This annual prize has been awarded since 2000.

University of Queensland

In 2014 the TS in Australia commenced a new TS prize for research into the Perennial Philosophy in its Eastern and Western traditions, for Studies in Religion, the University of Queensland, the parameters being the same as for the University of Sydney prize. Two prizes were awarded in 2016, one for an undergraduate paper by Sara Scroope for her paper, 'Challenging the Comprehension and Conceptualising of Early Indian Philosophy as "Mythical".' At the Honours level, the second prize was awarded to Jessica White for her paper, 'From liberation to self-realisation: the evolution of the subtle body in modern meditational yoga'. Both have been lodged in the Campbell Theosophical Reference Library.

Offer of New Prize - WA

For some time the National Council has been interested in the possibility of the TS widening its support for university research in Australia which is relevant

to this Society's core concerns. After some investigation had been undertaken, I approached Dr Miri Albahari, Philosophy, University of Western Australia, to explore the possibility of a new prize at UWA. She teaches a third year undergraduate course called 'Philosophy East and West' and works with comparative philosophy, in particular Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta as they interface with the philosophy of mind, metaphysics and epistemology. UWA has no postgraduate courses in this area. In August the national Executive Committee approved the offer of a prize to UWA for Dr Albahari's undergraduate course, with the same general parameters as our existing university prizes, and which may be split into two from time to time at the discretion of the university. The offer had been duly made and at the time of writing this report a formal reply was awaited from the university.

NATIONAL EVENTS

Springbrook Centre

No national event was held at the Springbrook Centre in October, due to the proximity of the Indo-Pacific Conference which was held in New Zealand that month. The study classes on 'The Yoga of Theosophy' by Dr Pablo Sender at the annual School of Theosophy were extremely well received, with messages of appreciation sent by some students after the School. A seminar in July run by the Education Coordinator on the theme 'Unfathomable Godhead: Exploring the Mysticism of Meister Eckhart', attracted a good attendance. Plans were also commenced for a seminar later in 2017 on 'Science and the Ancient Wisdom'.

Canyonleigh Centre

A successful one day event for the TS in Australia was run by Dianne Kynaston in February 2017 on the theme, ‘Some Glimpses into Western Esoteric Traditions’, with seven short talks. This attracted participants from around the region and requests for another one day event. A Canyonleigh event scheduled in May on the theme ‘Towards Stress Free Living: Cultivating Stillness’ did not proceed due to insufficient registrations. This event has been rescheduled for March 2018.

PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

Facebook Page

The many posts during the period under report include one about Thomas Edison and William Crookes, scientists who were also members of the TS; the facsimile of a short letter from HPB to a young George Arundale; and a link to the video ‘Has Science Discovered the Etheric Body?’ by Prof. Richard Silberstein. Two posts were boosted during this period: the National President’s video on ‘Kali-Yuga: the Rise and Fall of Narcissism’ and a slide, prepared by David Nye, containing a photograph of J. Krishnamurti which included a quote from Krishnamurti on the idiocy of ideologies. The first post attracted 3,700 ‘likes’ and the second, 4,400.

We also included introductions to Brisbane, Blavatsky and Adelaide Lodges, and Hobart Branch, including historical photographs, and an image of ‘The Messenger’ by Nicholas Roerich, with explanatory text. Also added were a photograph of Col. H. S. Olcott with Buddhists in Colombo, in 1880; photos of

the visit by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama to Adyar in 1956; the video of Krishnamurti’s interview with the BBC in 1985 and also an interview with David Bohm. At the time of writing this report the page had 1,180 likes.

e-Bulletin

Five e-Bulletins were emailed to our distribution list during the year under review, continuing to provide material about events, inspirational quotations, items for sale by the National Headquarters and various snippets of information. At the time of writing this report, 478 people were on the distribution list.

OPAC

The Online Public Access Catalogue operating from the National Headquarters, continued to provide electronic publicity for TS libraries throughout Australia at no cost to our TS centres.

At the time of writing this report the number of holdings in our Lodges/Branches which had been entered were:

Adelaide	3688
Blavatsky	1075
Brisbane	5780
Campbell	2749
Launceston	2114
Melbourne	6565
Perth	1341

Also, the following items were added to Libraries Australia and WorldCat during the year: the Campbell Library’s entire collection of periodicals, the TS Adyar General Reports of the TS from 1901-2014, the Adyar Pamphlet Collection

and ‘Adyar Popular Lectures’ by Annie Besant.

Marketing

A general decrease in membership in recent years is part of the reason for the recent development of a business plan and marketing strategy. The draft of the first business plan for the Section was developed by the National Secretary, reviewed at a national workshop in June, and adopted by the National Council along with the priorities set at the workshop, to be further assessed at the Council’s next meeting. The plan will require ongoing development and review. Anyone wishing to see the comprehensive plan may obtain a copy from the National Secretary.

Website

The average number of monthly visits to the website during the year under report was 29,969. The four most visited pages were the Home page, the *Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals*, *Links to Theosophical Texts Online*, and Leadbeater’s writings. The largest usage from countries outside Australia during the same period has come from the European Union, Germany, the Russian Federation, Ukraine and Brazil. The PowerPoint presentation, ‘An Overview of the Mahatma Letters’, by Chong Sanne, was very well-received by users of the website.

Gil Murdoch, our Webmaster, has worked on the various web pages for Lodges, Branches and Groups, which he updates on a regular basis, as well as on *Links to Theosophical Texts Online* and the *Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals* to make

them adjust automatically for portable devices. As a result of his work all the individual indices now present better on a smaller screens operated in portrait mode. Gil also uploaded a number of the 2017 Convention videos. He uploaded the list of winners for the John Cooper Memorial Prize at the University of Sydney as from 2000. The Adyar Library Bulletin (*Brahmavidya*) electronic index was the third highest referrer to the website, having received 5,631 hits in July, and continues to be popular.

New Website

Our marketer, David Nye, presented a workshop at the National Convention in January, which included the potential benefits to TS centres of a dynamic website. The workshop was very well received. Suggestions made by members helped form part of the draft business plan for the Section. In June the national Executive Committee gave approval for his company to develop a new, dynamic website with a fully functioning Content Management System, sophisticated billing system with user accounts and fully integrated social media. Construction of the new website was proceeding at the time of writing this report, after some initial discussions about the menu and general functionality of the new site.

FINANCE

Annual Fund

Gratitude is expressed to all those who have donated to the Annual Fund, no matter how small the contribution. This Fund is being used for the construction of the new dynamic website, a major new initiative.

SUPPORT

Support for TS Centres by National Headquarters

In December I sent an annual letter to Lodge/Branch Presidents to remind them of the range of support available to them at the National Headquarters.

Requests for assistance are received regularly from TS centres around the country and responded to by members of staff at the National Headquarters.

See also the following items:

Education and Training Committee, National Speakers' Schedule, International Lecturers, OPAC, Marketing.

International Support Adyar Security Fund

This Fund consists of accumulated donations from this Section over a period of time, which are held for the International Headquarters. As a result of a special request, \$14,000 from the Adyar Security Fund was transferred during the year to the International Headquarters from this fund, rather than the regular annual remittance of \$7,000

Indo-Pacific Federation

Our most recent three yearly Indo-Pacific Conference was held in Auckland in October 2016, hosted by the New Zealand Section. The theme was 'The Why of the Theosophical Society'. The Conference proved very successful, with special guest International President Tim Boyd, accompanied by his wife Lily. A delegation of twenty-eight Australian members participated, including four members of the National Headquarters staff. Gerard Brennan from Blavatsky

Lodge, Sydney, was elected as the new President of the Federation for a three year period. At the time of writing this report Gerard had already travelled enthusiastically to several countries in the region, and received tuition at the National Headquarters to help him manage and update the Federation's website. His travels and presentations at the end of the year under review had already included: the 2016 International TS Convention, during which he convened IPF meetings; Colombo Lodge, Sri Lanka; Selangor Lodge, Malaysia, including planning for the 2019 Indo-Pacific Conference to be held there; and visits to lodges across Java, Indonesia, during a two week period. Gerard's emphasis will be on trying to strengthen the TS work across the Federation, particularly by helping to renew the work in places which require extra assistance.

It is envisaged that some financial support will be provided by this Section for speakers and students within the Federation, based on recommendations from the Federation President. At last year's conference it was agreed that the next Indo-Pacific Conference will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from 1-6 November 2019. Approval to conduct the conference is required from the relevant government authorities in Malaysia and this process is being further investigated.

INTERNATIONAL LINKS

A reminder about our international links, too, as a worldwide Society. During the year a number of our members attended TS conferences in other countries and sessions of the School of the Wisdom at Adyar. At each of our National

Conventions members were able to sign postcards of greeting to Sections and smaller TS bodies around the world, as well as a number of members. These always result in a number of messages of appreciation. I also sent several messages of greeting during the year, on request, to TS gatherings in other countries, on behalf of the members of our Section.

RULES

Elections of State Representatives

As usual, elections for State Representatives were carried out during the year. As there was only one candidate for each of the Electoral States the following were elected unopposed: Gloria Yiangou (NSW/ACT), Franco Guazzelli (WA, re-elected) and Kenneth Edwards (Vic). Kenneth Edwards was unable to proceed due to pressures of other work, so an election was held to fill a casual vacancy under Rule 18(3) (a). As there was only one candidate in the ensuing election, Kari Torgersen was elected unopposed as State Representative for Victoria.

Lodge/Branch Rules

A number of amendments to Rules of TS centres around the Section were checked by the Section's Rules Committee during the year, for referral to the national Executive Committee for a decision.

Notices of Motion

A number of Notices of Motion were drafted by the Rules Committee during the year, resulting in a set of proposed amendments to the Section's Rules. These were presented to the national Executive Committee and the National

Council, and approved for circulation to all members with the November 2017 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*, prior to voting.

REPORTS FROM LODGES/ BRANCHES

Hobart Branch, TAS (chartered 1889)

As mentioned previously, Hobart Branch hosted the Section's Convention in January. Some members of the Branch attended the Tasmanian seminar in Launceston by International Lecturer Pablo Sender. Visitors to the Branch included the National President, the Education Coordinator and National Lecturer Simon O'Rourke, among others. Titles of presentations included 'Homer's Odyssey: the Ageless Journey Within to Union with the Higher Self'. Weekly evening meetings continued, with the commencement time brought forward slightly for convenience.

Melbourne Lodge, VIC (chartered 1890)

A major development for Melbourne Lodge during the year was the sale of its building in Melbourne city. Future options for housing the Lodge are under investigation as this report is written. The library was opened by a member of staff and three volunteers for four days each week. Seminars included 'Mahatma Letters and the Path of Occultism' with National Lecturer Barry Bowden. Dianne Kynaston, also a National Lecturer, gave a presentation to the Lodge on 'The Heart Sutra'. The bookshop hosted a monthly 'Conversations with Authors' event. Eight study/discussion groups were held

during the year, along with a number of members' meetings and one public meeting per month. In addition, the TOS conducted two workshops at the Lodge and held an end of year picnic.

Adelaide Lodge, SA (chartered 1891)

Adelaide Lodge's library was opened six days a week during the year, operated by volunteers. The bookshop was opened seven days a week, and a new bookshop manager was appointed. Visiting speakers included the National President, National Lecturer Dianne Kynaston and International Lecturer Pablo Sender. Regular members' meetings and public meetings were held. Study/discussion groups included book study, 'Exploring Meditation', *The Secret Doctrine*, 'Theosophy Science' and other Theosophical discussion and topics. A number of renovations to the premises were carried out including structural repairs. Also the TOS was active during the year, organising a number of fund raising events.

Brisbane Lodge, QLD (chartered 1895)

The Science of Yoga was studied at members' meetings, with group members leading in turn. Study groups included a 'Blavatsky Study Group', and a study course on *The Secret Doctrine*. Weekly meditations were also held. Two meditation weekends were held at the Springbrook Centre. Visiting speakers included the National President, the Education Coordinator, and National Lecturer Dara Tatray, among others. A 'Festival of Oriental Arts' was held and lecture presentations included 'Theosophy Past and Present', 'Compassion as Radical

Living' and 'Quantum Theory, Zen and Subject-Object Duality'. The kitchen was renovated. A decision was made to sell second hand books only through the bookshop, as an increasing number of donations are received. Also, the TOS held two musical concerts.

Perth Branch, WA (chartered 1897)

Perth Branch is now our largest TS centre, with 190 members at the end of the year. Study/discussion groups included a monthly Meetup group, and a 'Theosophy' group. National Lecturer Dara Tatray gave a seminar on the Easter weekend as well as two talks. National Lecturer Barry Bowden led a retreat at the Branch's Mt. Helena Centre and presented a two day seminar. The National President visited, as well as National Lecturer Dianne Kynaston. The bookshop continued as a modest operation, focussing on Theosophical titles. Also, the TOS held three fundraising evenings through the year which included a guest speaker, light supper and miscellaneous items for sale.

Launceston Lodge, TAS (chartered 1901)

The library of Launceston Lodge was re-shelved after being boxed up during building renovations. Two requests from non-TS libraries were received for inter-library loans, as a result of the listing of titles on OPAC. A study/discussion group was held on 'Walking the Pathless Path'. The Launceston seminar with Pablo Sender on 'The Illumined Mind', offered by the National Headquarters, was a highlight during the year. Regular evening meetings were recommenced. Visiting speakers included the National

President as well as National Lecturers Dara Tatray and Dianne Kynaston.

Blavatsky Lodge, NSW (chartered 1922)

Blavatsky Lodge's active programme during the year included five book study/discussion groups, three meditation groups, weekly public meetings and monthly members' meetings. Two workshops were conducted by the Lodge President to help develop some priorities for action. Course topics included 'Yoga of Theosophy East and West', 'Introduction to Theosophy', Pablo Senders' 'Birth of Humanity' and *The Key to Theosophy*. Three 'all Day Saturday' events were programme highlights, featuring an afternoon concert preceded by a morning programme and lunch. Visiting speakers included Pablo Sender, USA, and National Lecturer Barry Bowden, among others. Second hand book sales have proved very popular, and generous book and DVD donations were made to the lending library. Also, some rooms and car spaces were leased out.

Newcastle Lodge, NSW (chartered 1941)

Members' study groups were held at Newcastle Lodge on *The Key to Theosophy*, along with monthly public meetings. Some members of the Lodge attended international and national TS events, and one member serves on the national Executive Committee. Visiting speakers included the National President, National Lecturer Simon O'Rourke and the State Representative, Gloria Yiangou.

Atherton Lodge, QLD (chartered 1950)

Atherton Lodge continued to draw in members and enquirers from the surrounding district during the year, for its monthly public meetings. Visitors included the National President, the Education Coordinator, National Lecturer Dr Brian Harding, and Tina Hentisz, a previous President of Perth Branch. The programme included subjects such as 'The Wisdom Tradition in Christianity', 'The Septenary Constitution of the Human Being' and 'The Steep and Thorny Road – Towards Personal Transformation'. A visitor from the Baha'i faith also spoke.

Canberra Branch, ACT (chartered 1971)

Some points from the Branch's comprehensive report are selected here. Presentations during the year included subjects such as 'Religious and Spiritual Beliefs', 'Self Empowerment and Personal Responsibility', 'At the Feet of the Master' and 'Atma, Guardian Spirit, Higher Self'. Regular study took place on a book, *Progressions*. An annual Christmas picnic was held. Some members attended a one day national event at the Canyonleigh Centre and the Branch's well produced three monthly newsletter continued, receiving some very positive feedback. The National President and the State Representative both gave presentations, among others, and the small TOS group met three times during the year, with the donations being raised for several projects.

Sunshine Coast Lodge, QLD (chartered 2004)

The National President and the National

Secretary both visited this Lodge during the year. Altruism, and Theosophy as transformation of consciousness, are emphasised by members who are chairing meetings. A substantial audit of the Lodge's collection of nearly 1,000 library books was carried out, with further decisions to be made about various books. The Lodge was without a President for some months, with an acting President appointed. Committee members have been jointly sharing all functions of committee work, a model which will also be taken up in the next year. The Lodge only meets at one venue instead of two now, in Buderim. Also, the TOS held a very successful fundraiser for Syrian refugees, with 60 in attendance.

REPORTS FROM CERTIFIED GROUPS

Blue Mountains Group, NSW

This Certified Group, West of Sydney, continued to meet monthly for a short talk and discussion, except on Public Holidays. Study continued on *The Secret Doctrine* with an enthusiastic group of seven participants, this activity forming the core of the group's work together.

Gosford Group, NSW

The Gosford Group continued to meet once a month for a public meeting, and once a month at various members' homes. Two of the items studied were the DVD of the talk by International President Tim Boyd on 'Urban Spirituality' and an article from *Theosophy in Australia*, 'Six Ingredients to a Happier Life'. Visiting speakers included the National President, the Education Coordinator,

National Lecturer Dianne Kynaston and Pamela Peterson, among others.

Mornington Peninsula Group, VIC

This group in Victoria continued to meet monthly. Some of its members attend Conventions and other national TS activities. Study/discussion groups included a Pablo Sender DVD, and two presentations from members of their research topics at the School of Theosophy. Speaker topics included 'The Origin of Human Beings' and 'Communion with God'. The National President visited. Attendances increased during the year due to active marketing in a local newspaper, and placement of flyers around the area. Also, personal letters to ex-members have resulted in one quarter of them resuming attendance at meetings. Monthly mandala classes were given at a local library for the TOS.

Northern Beaches Group, NSW

The Northern Beaches Group in Sydney met monthly for most of the year. The meeting time was changed some months ago from evening meetings to an afternoon time slot. Meeting topics included 'Heart of the Universe' and experiences of visiting Adyar, for Adyar Day. A new member of the group has offered her home for some meetings.

Toowoomba Group, QLD

This group in south-eastern Queensland met fortnightly, alternating between talks and meditation sessions. A study group on the subject of 'Self-Culture' took place. Two informal meetings were held at local cafes. The Education Coordinator visited and the subjects of presentations

included ‘Krishnamurti’, ‘Initiation Ancient and Modern’, ‘Evolution of Consciousness’, ‘Golden Link College’ and ‘The Inner Observer’.

Wodonga-Albury Group, VIC

Another small but keen group continues to hold its activities in shopfront premises, near the border of Victoria and New South Wales, thanks to a small group of dedicated volunteers. The group’s library is open for a few hours from Monday to Friday each week. Weekly meditation sessions are held, as well as a weekly discussion and study group. Visiting speakers included the National President and National Lecturer Barry Bowden.

INFORMAL GROUPS

An Informal Group continued its activities in Sydney City. Also, the national Executive Committee approved an application by a TS member to form a new Informal Group in Logan, south-eastern Queensland.

THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

The *National Coordinator* reports:

This year I have seen outstanding support for our Syrian Refugee appeal. Another highlight of this year has been the response to our forthcoming TOS Fundraiser Tour around southern India.

This year TOS made total donations of \$26,500 made up as follows:

- Pakistan Home schools \$4400
- Pakistan Educational sponsorship \$4650
- Philippines Golden Link College \$3000
- Syrian Refugees via TOS Italy \$9000

India :

- Adyar Olcott Memorial School \$2000
- Adyar Animal Dispensary \$ 150
- Adyar Women’s Welfare Centre \$ 500
- Adyar HPB Hostel \$ 700
- Assam Mobility Project \$ 750

My personal thanks to both Carolyn and Geoff Harrod for their unfailing support, Travis James our Secretary, Donald Fern our auditor, and to all our TOS members who go about doing what needs to be done – you are simply amazing people.

Jean Carroll

National Coordinator

CONCLUSION

This brings to a conclusion a summary of another year’s varied activities around our Section, nationally and locally. I look forward to working further with members and committees during the next year, and wish all TS centres an inspiring and fulfilling period ahead.

Linda Oliveira

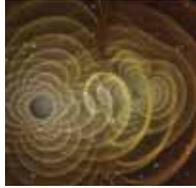


Annual Membership Analysis of Lodge/Branch Membership as at 31/08/2017

Lodge/Branch	Members 31-Aug-16	Trans in	New	Rejoin	Total in	Resign	Lapse	Dec Trans out	Total Out	Members 31-Aug-17	Diff
Adelaide	80	0	4	0	4	7	3	1	1	72	-8
Atherton	14	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	15	1
Blavatsky	166	0	9	10	19	9	19	3	4	150	-16
Brisbane	53	1	6	4	11	1	4	0	1	58	5
Canberra	21	0	4	0	4	1	4	0	0	20	-1
Hobart	20	2	0	1	3	2	0	0	0	21	1
Launceston	20	0	3	1	4	0	0	0	0	24	4
Melbourne	116	0	5	2	7	4	16	3	0	100	-16
Newcastle	11	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	9	-2
Perth	166	1	54	4	59	9	22	1	0	193	27
Sunshine Coas	48	0	3	0	3	0	3	0	0	48	0
Sub Total	715	5	89	22	116	36	71	8	6	710	-5
National	105	5	4	6	15	3	10	2	4	101	-4
Total	820	10	93	28	131	39	81	10	10	811	-9

Gravitational Waves

NASA simulation of merging black holes



Gravitational waves were first predicted by Albert Einstein just over 100 years ago. In modern physics, interactions between particles are often described in terms of exchange of field, or mediating, particles or quanta. There are four known fundamental forces in the universe – the electromagnetic, the weak nuclear, the strong nuclear and gravity. Each of the first three are mediated by known particles. In the case of the familiar EM force, for example, the particle is the photon, but the particle that mediates gravity, the ‘graviton’, remained undetected. The recent detection of gravitational waves, the fifth such detection, clinches the fact of their existence and that of the corresponding graviton (as required by wave/particle duality). From the physics point of view, this neatly completes the picture of known forces. But the detection of gravity waves has much wider ramifications. These include ‘confirmation of Einstein’s theories about the speed of light, a more accurate estimate of the size of the universe, an identification of the source of mysterious gamma ray bursts, and the first recorded glimpse of the power of these stellar explosions to produce rare, heavy elements like gold’ (ABC Science, 17 Oct 2017).

The first detection of gravitational waves in 2015 by the Advanced LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory) team in the USA, using their

two detectors 3000 km apart, was greeted with caution by some scientists. But the existence of gravitational waves is now beyond doubt. The cause of the first four detections was colliding black holes. But the fifth (detected in August) was exciting because the waves were traced back to colliding neutron stars. This new discovery was made by the Advanced LIGO teams in the US along with a third, the Virgo team in Italy. It was followed up by astronomers using space and land-based optical telescopes enabling astronomers to trace the waves back to their source.

A note about the often quoted view of Madame Blavatsky and her Masters that there is no such thing as the force of gravity, ‘only attraction and repulsion’. I find this view strange – what are these if not forces? But it is true that gravity is not like a force in one sense. If you whirl a weight around your head on the end of a piece of string, the string sustains balancing forces which act along it. But there is certainly no ‘string’ between planets. As shown by Einstein, the gravitational force is created by the curvature of space by large masses. So a planet moving around the Sun is more like a ball-bearing whirling around the inside of a bowl. Gravitational waves are ripples in space-time created by massive events, like the collision of neutron stars or black holes. The recent findings confirm the understanding given to us by Einstein and Relativity.

Dr Brian Harding

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/science/2017-10-17/gravitational-waves-and-neutron-stars:-why-this-discovery-is-big/9053756>

2018 Convention Programme



The Theosophical Society in Australia 20-27 January, Brisbane 'The Quest for Truth, Science and the Spiritual Search'

Featured Speaker: Professor Emeritus Richard Silberstein
TS Member and neuroscientist

Sat 20 January

- 7.30pm Welcome, Introduction – Key Speakers, Workshops
Greetings to the Convention
Tea and Coffee

Sun 21 January

- 7.30am Morning Attunement
9.15am Official Opening of Convention
ANNUAL CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING OF THE
THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA
Roll Call of Voting Delegates and Proxies
Confirmation of Minutes of 2017 Convention Business Meeting
National President's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2017
National Treasurer's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2017
Financial Statements and Balance Sheet for the Year Ended
31 August 2017, and Auditor's Report thereon
Budget for the Year Ending 31 August 2018
Appointment of Auditor
Announcement of Newly Appointed Officers and National Council
Members
Announcement of Ballot Results:
- National President
- Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia/Northern Territory
Vote on Notices of Motion
Place and Time of Next Convention
Resolutions of Goodwill
Any Other Business
2.00pm The Theosophical Order of Service
'Spiritual Evolution: A New Future for Human Consciousness'
Katherine Steevens
4.00pm PUBLIC TALK – KEY SPEAKER, Richard Silberstein
'Bioelectric fields, where Reincarnation and Biology Intersect.'
7.30pm Helen Lambert – 'A Visual Journey into Bhutan and Nepal'

Mon 22 January

- 7.30am Morning Attunement

- 9.15am 'The Ever Present Search for the Holy Grail'
– Linda Oliveira
- 11.00am 'HPB, Phenomena and Science'
– Brian Harding
- 2.00pm Short talks:
'The Impact of Compassion' – Carolyn Harrod
'A Pen in the Hand of God: Is this our Quest?' – Helen Steven
- 4.00pm Workshop for Lodge/Branch Committee Members – Practical Exercises
Facilitators: Denise Frost and Harry Bayens
- 7.30pm 'Glimpses into Occult Chemistry'
– Pedro Oliveira

Tues 23 January

- 7.30am Attunement
- 9.15am Short talks:
'Ahimsa' – Phillipa Rooke
'The Call from Within' - Barry Bowden
- 11.00am 'The Nature of Self, a Transpersonal Perspective'
– Richard Silberstein
- 2.00pm Workshops
Cassandra Au: 'What is the Purpose of Life?'
Christine Gwin: 'The Essence of the *Bhagavad Gita*'
- 1.45pm National Council, national Executive Committee and Lodge/Branch
Committee Members – meeting on issues of importance
- 4.00pm 'Classical and Ancient Theories of Learning Applied
to our Work in the TS'
– Dara Tatray
- 7.30pm An Impromptu Meditative Retreat (readings and silent periods)
– Linda Oliveira and Barry Bowden

Wed 24 January

- 7.30am Attunement
OUTING AND PICNIC LUNCH
Sunshine Coast Hinterland - Maleny, Montville, Mary Cairncross Park
- 7.30pm Classical Concert: 'Music in the Moonlight'

Thurs 25 January

- 7.30am Attunement
- 9.15am 'Awareness in Plants: Evidence for a Connected Consciousness'
– Roseanne deBats
- 11.00am Short talks:
'Spirituality and Science – Ancient and Modern' – David Allan
'The Trouble with Truth ...' – Pamela Peterson
- 2.00pm The Theosophical Order of Service: Annual General Meeting
FREE TIME for optional outings by own arrangement
- 7.30pm 'Science, Spirituality and *The Secret Doctrine*' – DVD with Elena
Dovalsantos, TS member, American Section

Fri 26 January

- 7.30am Attunement
 9.15am 'Dialogue: Why does the world need science?'
 – Brian Harding (moderator), David Allan and Grahame Crookham
 11.00am Workshops
 Marie McArdle: 'Oh, Hidden Light* Vibrant in Every Atom'
 Dianne Kynaston: 'Feminine Approaches to Science and Spirituality'
 Edward Sinclair: 'Pathways into the Unconscious'
 2.30pm Q and A: Pedro Oliveira, Dianne Kynaston, Cassandra Au,
 Marlene Bell and Chris Pang Way
 4.00pm Perspectives on the Convention
 Invitation to 2019 Convention, Sydney
 Closing of Convention (National President)
 7.30pm Concert – Amica Jazz Duo

Sat 27 January

Departures

Results -**ELECTION OF NATIONAL PRESIDENT**

On 16 February, in accordance with Rule 20(1) of the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia, the National Secretary called for nominations for the office of National President for a three year term commencing January 2018. One valid nomination was received by the deadline of 21 July 2017.

As there was only one nomination we did not call an election, but instead sent out voting slips affording each eligible member the opportunity to register a vote for or against the candidate. Deadline for receipt of those voting papers having passed on 29 September, the votes were duly counted by Beatrice Malka (National Treasurer) and Denise Frost (interstate member of national Executive). The results were as follows: of the 633 members eligible to vote, 257 were in favour and 9 against. There were 2 informal votes. Thanks to all those who cast a vote either for or against. Should the Notice of Motion concerning the election of a future National President be carried at the Convention Business Meeting in January, a majority No vote would disqualify a sole candidate from taking office, and trigger a fresh election.

I am happy to declare that Linda Oliveira has been re-elected National President for a term of three years, commencing at the Convention Business Meeting to be held in Brisbane in January 2018, in accordance with Rule 21(2).

National Secretary
 Dara Tatray

National Calendar of Events



Canyonleigh Centre

Bolitho House, 1070 Tugalong Road, Canyonleigh, NSW

**Theme: ‘Towards Stress Free Living: Cultivating Stillness’
arrivals Fri 23 March – departures Sun 25 March 2018**

Presenters: Linda Oliveira (National President), Pedro Oliveira (Education Coordinator), Marie Bertelle (meditation leader) and Brian Parry (former National Lecturer)

Cost & more information on this rescheduled event: <http://austheos.org.au/whats/>

Enquiries to: Pedro Oliveira, Education Coordinator
edcoord@austheos.org.au tel. 02 9264 7056 (Mon-Thurs)

2018 SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY

Springbrook Centre, 2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook, QLD

arrivals Thurs 26 April – departures Wed 2 May

Theme: ‘HPB’s Esoteric Instructions’ Guest Presenter: Michael Gomes, USA

Toward the end of her life Madame Blavatsky issued instructional material to members of her Esoteric Section. Using these as the basis, the nature of esotericism will be explored, including HPB’s contribution to the study of the subject and how her teaching compares with Eastern schools of esotericism.

Cost: \$360 (includes paid catering, accommodation, tuition and train/airport transfers)

Enquiries to: Linda Oliveira, National President
pres@austheos.org.au tel. 02 9264 7056 (Mon-Thurs)
Early registration is recommended.

2018 National Convention

Sat 20 – Sat 27 January

Theme: ‘The Quest for Truth, Science and the Spiritual Search’

Venue: St. John’s College, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Brisbane

Cost: \$735 for 7 nights, subsidised price, includes accommodation, meals and all sessions

Featured Speaker: Professor Emeritus Richard Silberstein

Full Programme: See page 142

Registration Deadline: for guaranteed rooms, live-in registrants, Thursday 30 November

Enquiries to: Jennifer Hissey, Convention Secretary, email: catalogue@austheos.org.au



Registration forms and further information for all events organised by

The Theosophical Society in Australia are at: <http://www.austheos.org.au/whats>

Education



A Snippet of Information from HPB's Adventures in Tibet

In his book *H.P. Blavatsky, Tibet and Tulku* (TPH Adyar, 1974, pp. 92-93), Geoffrey Barborka included a narrative by HPB of a demonstration of Tulku, the power to transfer consciousness from one body to another. He referred to 'a scene at which a European scientist affirms he was an eye-witness' of such power in a Buddhist temple.

... having been permitted to penetrate in disguise to the hallowed precincts of a Buddhist temple, where the most solemn of all ceremonies was taking place, [he] relates the following as having been seen by himself. An altar is ready in the temple to receive the resuscitated Buddha, found by the initiated priesthood, and recognized by certain secret

signs to have reincarnated himself in a new-born infant. The baby, but a few days old, is brought into the presence of the people and reverentially placed upon the altar. Suddenly rising into a sitting posture, the child begins to utter in a loud, manly voice, the following sentences: 'I am Buddha, I am his spirit; and I, Buddha, your Dalai-Lama, have left my old, decrepit body, at the temple of ... and selected the body of this young babe as my next earthly dwelling.' Our scientist, being finally permitted by the priests to take, with due reverence, the baby in his arms, and carry it away to such a distance from them as to satisfy him that no ventriloquial deception is being practised, the infant looks at the grave academician with eyes that 'make his flesh creep,' as he expresses it, and repeats the words he had previously uttered.



Yamdruk Tso - sacred Tibetan lake

ANNUAL CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING OF THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY IN AUSTRALIA

The 2018 Convention Business Meeting of The Theosophical Society in Australia will take place at 9.30 a.m. on Sunday 21 January at St. John's College, College Road, St. Lucia, Queensland.

This notification is provided in accordance with Rules 12 and 13 of the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia.

AGENDA

Roll Call of Voting Delegates and Proxies
Confirmation of Minutes of 2017 Convention Business Meeting
National President's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2017
National Treasurer's Report for the Year Ended 31 August 2017
Financial Statements and Balance Sheet for the Year Ended 31 August 2017, and Auditor's Report thereon
Budget for the Year Ending 31 August 2018
Appointment of Auditor
Announcement of Newly Appointed Officers and National Council Members
Announcement of Ballot Results:
- National President
- Tasmania, Queensland, South Australia/Northern Territory
Vote on Notices of Motion
Place and Time of Next Convention
Resolutions of Goodwill
Any Other Business



A Business Plan for the Australian Section

At its meeting in June the National Council approved the first draft of the Section's business plan. The initial draft outlined the plan in broad terms, with time-frames, budgets and priorities to be set in 2018. Approved at that time was the development of a new website with a shared platform, to be launched in January 2018. The business plan identifies the present position of The Theosophical Society in Australia, and how to get from there to a desired position. In broad outline the model is based on a strategy used by many content providers:

1. Wide user engagement at no cost and for little effort on the user's part via Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, a certain percentage of which will eventually find its way to our website.
2. The website will offer a deeper engagement with longer form content, perhaps on a freemium model (some content free and the rest at a cost to non-members), including new courses or courses adapted for the web. Membership will be encouraged in this and other ways.
3. From the website, which will include more effective promotion of events and programmes, a certain percentage of people will inevitably visit their nearest Lodge/Branch, which they could be encouraged to join.

New members will become long standing members, committed volunteers and future content creators (speakers, writers, workshop facilitators) if they value our presentation of Theosophy. In *The Key To Theosophy* one of our founders suggested that the work of the Society is to show the world that such a thing as Theosophy exists and to help people ascend towards it by studying and assimilating its eternal verities. Showing the world is possible now as it never was, through social media and other media. What remains is to delineate our subject matter, study it well, and promote the various ways of ascending towards it. Please contact the National Secretary for copies of the business plan and related material.



Theosophical Order of Service



This is my last report as Coordinator of The Theosophical Order of Service (TOS) having now served for a total of six years. At next year's Convention we will be breaking from the tradition of appointments to a democratic system, and for the first time will be electing our future Management Teams. Regardless of which system is in place, I have faith in the members of TOS as I have seen firsthand the tireless commitment to service shown by our TOS groups and their members.

All of our world's great traditions emphasise service as a path for spiritual growth. Our Theosophical world view stresses action/doing without looking at the fruits of action. Annie Besant stressed that service is a process; the first stage involves action and accountability i.e. being concerned with the results of such action. In time, this may change as the accomplishments become insignificant to the task at hand.

This year I have seen evidence of this with the outstanding support for our Syrian Refugee Appeal. A total of \$9,000 has been forwarded to TOS Italy where they have a programme already functioning on the border of Turkey and Syria assisting displaced persons, plus assisting asylum seekers at home in Italy. The knowledge that we cannot solve the problems of the world, but we can assist simply because it is the right thing to do, is the mindset that has enabled this project to be so successful.

Another highlight of this year has been the response to our TOS Fundraiser



Typical refugee camp

Tour. Twenty-eight passengers are soon to embark and attend the International Convention at Adyar followed by a twelve day tour around southern India.

This year TOS made total donations of \$26,500 made up as follows:

• Pakistan Home schools	\$4400
• Pakistan Educational sponsorships	\$4650
• Philippines Golden Link College	\$3000
• Syrian Refugees via TOS Italy	\$9000
• India :	
Adyar Olcott Memorial School	\$2000
Adyar Animal Dispensary	\$ 150
Adyar Women's Welfare Centre	\$ 500
Adyar HPB Hostel	\$ 700
Assam Mobility Project	\$ 750

My personal thanks to both Carolyn and Geoff Harrod for their unfailing support, Travis James our secretary, Donald Fern our auditor and to all our TOS members who go about doing what needs to be done – you are simply amazing people.

Jean Carroll
TOS National Coordinator

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Results – Election of State Representatives



Election of State Representative for Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia/NT

The deadline for receipt of nominations in the present election was 20 September 2017. As there was only one Candidate in each of the above-mentioned States I am happy to inform you, in accordance with Rule 19(5), that the following were elected unopposed:

Phillipa Rooke – Queensland
Gaynor Fraser – South Australia/NT
Helen Steven – Tasmania

The term of office for State Representatives is for a period of two years from the declaration of this election result. The State Representative will represent the Lodges (Branches), Groups and Members in the State in all meetings and affairs of the National Council. They shall also liaise with all Lodges (Branches), Groups and National Members in their Electoral State and shall represent their views to the National Council and to the National Society Officers, as appropriate. As well, they shall receive and deal with representations from individual Members within their Electoral State, and shall refer the representations where requested or deemed necessary.

Review

*For a Wayfarer,
Poems by Joy Mills,*
Quest Books,
The Theosophical
Publishing House,
Wheaton, 2017
US\$20.05,
available from
questbooks.com



Many members in this country still remember Joy Mills, who was the first National President of this Section from 1993 until 1996. She was at one time the Society's international Vice-President and also National President of the American Section. Perhaps even more significantly, Joy was an ardent student of Theosophy and literature, an author of Theosophical books, and a renowned teacher who liked nothing better than to discuss and share her discoveries. She had a great love of modern Theosophical classics – works like *The Secret Doctrine*, *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, *The Voice of the Silence* and *Light on the Path* – but this was supplemented by a keen, scholarly interest in contemporary thought, and a creative mind which always found room for new approaches. Indeed, her library was extensive. In recognition of her valuable literary contributions, the General Council of the Theosophical



Society, at its meeting on 25 December 2010, awarded her the Subba Row Medal.

Nelda Samarel, a close friend of Joy's, wrote the Foreword to this publication. After her passing, a very real surprise awaited when Nelda came across a hitherto unknown book of her handwritten poetry, in a cupboard along with old photos and college textbooks. During the twenty-six years of their mutual friendship, Joy had never once mentioned in conversation the topic of poetry. The book concerned was faded after seventy-five years of shelf life but, as Nelda mentioned, 'meticulously covered with plastic, as would be expected of Joy'.

The product of this discovery is a newly published volume of 167 pages of poems written between 1939 until the 1990s. They speak of 'nature, animals, love, beauty and more' and are preceded by a brief and interesting biography of Joy's life.

As one would expect from someone who, among other things, obtained a Master of Arts in English literature, Joy had a fine appreciation of the English language, and an accomplished way with words. Her poetry reflects this and provides a memorable immersion into her private thoughts. I recommend the book to anyone who appreciates poetry, or who knew Joy.

Linda Oliveira

News and Notes



2018 International Tour – Michael Gomes



In April 2018 the Australian Section will welcome back Michael Gomes, from the USA. Michael will lead the study classes at the annual School of Theosophy, to be held at the Springbrook Centre. Early registrations are recommended (see page 145). Michael has written extensively on the work of H.P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Movement. He has edited a number of Madame Blavatsky's writings, including the provision of abridgements of her major books *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. As

a lecturer he has presented at academic conferences and Theosophical organisations. He was chosen to give the prestigious Blavatsky Lecture of the Theosophical Society in England in 2017, honouring the centenary of its establishment. Details of Michael's tour will appear in the March 2018 issue of *Theosophy in Australia* and online.

2018 National Lecturers

At its June meeting the National Council appointed the following National Lecturers for The Theosophical Society in Australia during 2018: Dara Tatray, Barry Bowden, Dianne Kynaston, Simon O'Rourke and Skip Pry. Dates of visits by National Lecturers, national Officers and international speakers are added regularly to the national website: www.austheos.org.au

The Spirit of Altruism – Alive and Growing in Australia

Not so long ago, one member shared some very encouraging news from the most recent national census. The figures show that more Australians

are now volunteering in their spare time, indicating that altruism is an increasingly important value to many. Of those asked whether they had made a volunteering contribution in the previous twelve months to a recognised organisation (e.g. a sporting, service or church group), 21 per cent of those aged 15 and older said yes, compared with 19 per cent five years previously. This highlights an increasing generosity of spirit by Australians. Great appreciation must also be extended also to all those TS members around this country who are volunteering their services to Lodges, Branches and Groups, continuing to keep the altruistic spirit alive and well in this Section after more than one hundred and twenty years.

Paintings by Rona Scott



Dianne Kynaston from Sydney is currently researching the location of all paintings which were done in the early 1980s by TS member and artist Rona Scott, forming a distinctive series

which she called 'Cosmic Birth'. One of the paintings appears in the previous column. A number of these distinctive paintings are held by the National Headquarters, but not all. Dianne would welcome any information and can be contacted at:

diannedeva@gmail.com

Why are all Australian Members Receiving this Issue?

Each year, under the relevant Section Rule, every member must be provided with a number of items of information prior to the January Convention Business Meeting, e.g. the National President's annual report, the annual accounts and other material required under the Section's Rules such as Notices of Motion. Some of these items are included in the printed magazine and some are accompanying enclosures, therefore all of the items concerned are consolidated into one mail out.

The use of one gender to cover both genders is avoided as far as possible in this magazine. However, quotations from writings in which one gender is used in this way are printed as originally written. This applies both to older writings and some contemporary ones.

Section Directory

Australian Section National Headquarters

Level 2, 162 Goulburn Street,
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Ph: 02 9264 7056 / 9264 6404
Fax: 02 9264 5857
www.austheos.org.au

Campbell Theosophical Research Library:
campbell@austheos.org.au

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Branch, Chartered 17/7/1971:
Postal Address: c/- 53 Chataway Crescent,
Fadden ACT 2904
Meet: Friends Meeting House, cnr Bent
& Condamine Streets, Turner ACT 2612
7.30pm 1st Monday of month (Feb - May, Sep - Dec)
Emeritus Faculty ANU: 2.00pm 1st Saturday of
month (June - Aug), discussion group 2.00pm
3rd Saturday of month
President: Dr Grahame Crookham
Tel: 0490147020
email: tificrook@tpg.com.au
Secretary: position vacant
Newsletter Editor: Janice Scarabottolo
Tel: 02 6288 7656 email:janton@netspeed.com.au

New South Wales

Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:
Postal Address: PO Box 319, St Leonards NSW 2065
Meet: Suite 8, 599 Pacific Highway, St. Leonards
NSW 2065 (entrance in Albany Street)
Telephone: 02 92676955 Fax: 02 9283 3772
Email: contact@tssydney.org.au
www.tssydney.org.au
Meet: 1.00pm Wednesdays
Outgoing President: Marie McArdle
Outgoing Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:
Meet: Morrison Room, 29 Highfield Street,
Mayfield NSW 2304
7.30pm 2nd Friday each month
<http://www.austheos.org.au/newcastle/>
President: Tony Buzek
Secretary: position vacant

Tel: 0452 633 132
Email: gnlodgetheos@gmail.com

Blue Mountains Group:

Meet: Members' Lounge, Blue Mountains
Cultural Centre, 30 Parke Street (above Coles),
Katoomba NSW 2780
Meetings every Monday, 2.00pm
1st Monday of month - Public Meeting
Subsequent Mondays - *Secret Doctrine* Study Group
Coordinator: Donald Fern
Tel: 02 4757 1910

Gosford Group:

Meet: The Narara Community Centre,
Pandalala Road, Narara NSW 2250
8.00pm 2nd Tuesday each month
Coordinator: Marianne Fraser
Tel: 02 4339 7118, 0400 713 273
Email: marifraser256@gmail.com
Secretary: Roni Ostergaard
Telephone: 02 4358 1413

Northern Beaches Group:

Postal address: c/- The Manor,
2 Iluka Road, Mosman NSW 2088
Meet: c/- 31 Riviera Street, Avalon
NSW 2107
2.00pm 3rd Friday each month
Coordinator: Dianne Kynaston
Email: diannedeva@gmail.com

Queensland

Atherton Lodge, Chartered 27/4/1950:

Postal Address: 14 Herberton Rd,
Atherton QLD 4883
Meet: Meeting Room, Community Services
Tablelands, 38 Mabel St, Atherton
2.00pm 2nd Saturday of month except Jan.
President: Max Brandenberger
Secretary: Chris Pang Way
Tel: 07 4091 5156

Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:

355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000
Tel: 07 3839 1453
Email: brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au
www.theosophyqld.org.au
Meet: 7.30pm Wednesdays, library open 6.30-7.30pm
President: John Harris
Secretary: Lynette Muller

Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 1/4/2004

Meet: Buderim Croquet Club,
Syd Lingard Drive, Buderim QLD 4556
7.00pm Thursdays
Acting President: Pam Walsh
Tel: 0427 713 061 (Pam Walsh)
Email: theosunshinecoast@gmail.com
Secretary: Pam Walsh

Toowoomba Group:

Meet: 49 Lindsay Street, Toowoomba
1st Wednesday at 7pm and 3rd Sunday
at 2:30pm each month
(Meditation 1pm & Study Group at 1:30pm)
Annual Springbrook retreat each Winter
Coordinator: Gayle Thomas
Tel: 0438 331 885

South Australia*Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:*

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000
Tel: 08 8223 1129
Email: president@tsadelaide.org.au
<http://www.austheos.org.au/adelaide>
Meet: Members Meeting 10.00am 4th Friday of
every month. Please contact Lodge for additional
meeting dates.
President: Travis James
Secretary: position vacant

Tasmania*Hobart Branch, Chartered 7/6/1889:*

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000
Tel. 03 6294 6195 (please leave message)
www.theosophicaltas.websyte.com.au
Meet: 7.30pm Mondays
President: Helen Steven
Secretary: position vacant
Email: helen_steven@live.com

Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:

54 Elizabeth Street, Launceston TAS 7250
Postal address: as above
email: launcestontheosophicalociety@gmail.com
www.austheos.org.au/launceston
Meet: 1.00pm Wednesdays except first Wednesday of
the month and National Speaker meetings, when we
meet at 7.30pm
President: Jenny Haslem
Acting Secretary: David Bevan
Tel: 0411 862 748 (David Bevan)

Victoria*Melbourne Lodge, Chartered 9/12/1890:*

126 Russell Street, Melbourne VIC 3000
Tel: 03 9650 2315 Fax: 03 9650 7624
email: meltheos@bigpond.com.au
Meet: usually 4th Saturday each month
President: Ken Edwards
Secretary: Edward Sinclair

Mornington Peninsula Group:

Meet: Mount Eliza Neighbourhood House,
Canadian Bay Road, 1st Sunday
of the month
(12.00pm meditation - 12.30pm lunch - 1.30pm
Theosophy)
Coordinator: Alice Oppen
Tel: 03 5976 3815
www.austheos.org.au/centres/mpg

Wodonga-Albury Group:

Meet: Shop 6, Tower Place, High Street,
Wodonga VIC 3690
1st Tuesday each month
Library hours Mon-Fri 10.00am-2.00pm
Coordinator/Secretary: Denis Kovacs
Tel: 02 6024 2905

Western Australia*Perth Branch, Chartered 10/6/1897:*

21 Glendower Street, Perth WA 6000
Tel/Fax: 08 9328 8104
Email: tsp Perth@iinet.net.au
<http://www.tsp Perth.com.au>
Meet: 7.30pm Tuesdays
President: Franco Guazzelli
Secretary: Carole Ann Webster

Mount Helena Retreat Centre:

1540 Bunning Road, Mt Helena WA 6082
All enquiries to Perth Branch
Tel: 08 9328 8104

**Theosophical Education
and Retreat Centre, Springbrook, Qld**

2184 Springbrook Road,
Springbrook QLD 4213
Tel: Office/Hall 07 5533 5211
email: info@tsretreat.com.au
Caretaker: Kay Schiefelbein

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 emphasise 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 organisation 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 organisation.

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

