

# Theosophy

IN AUSTRALIA

ISSN No. 1038-1139

November 2023

volume 87 number 4



**INSIDE** From the National President  
The Self - An Illusion or the Reflection of a Deeper Unity (Pt.2)  
National President's Annual Report  
Annual Membership Analysis

## INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

The Theosophical Society has its International Headquarters at Adyar, Chennai, India.

International President: Tim Boyd  
International Vice-President: Deepa Padhi  
International Secretary: Marja Artamaa  
International Treasurer: Nancy Secest

## NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS:

L2, 162 Goulburn St, Surry Hills NSW 2010  
Phone: +61 02 9264 7056  
Web: [theosophicalsociety.org.au](http://theosophicalsociety.org.au)  
Email: [tshq@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:tshq@theosophicalsociety.org.au)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/  
TheTheosophicalSocietyInAustralia](http://www.facebook.com/TheTheosophicalSocietyInAustralia)

National President: Stephen McDonald  
Email: [pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

National Vice-President: Gaynor Fraser  
Email: [gaynorfraser6@gmail.com](mailto:gaynorfraser6@gmail.com)

National Secretary: Vacant  
Email: [natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:natsec@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

National Treasurer: Beatrice Malka

Education Coordinator: Simon O'Rourke  
Email: [education@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:education@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

Editor: Stephen McDonald  
Email: [pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

Editorial Committee: Janice Scarabottolo, Olga Gostin, Patricia Ossenber, Ruth Holt

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

**We invite articles or other items with a preferred maximum of 2,300 words**

**Email: [pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au)**

Cover photo: River and turtles, Shutterstock image.

Printer: Kwik Kopy, 324 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. 



**November 2023**  
**Volume 87 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.

## CONTENTS

- 114 From the National President
- 115 The Self - An Illusion or the Reflection of a Deeper Unity (Pt.2)
- 122 National President's Annual Report
- 141 Annual Membership Analysis
- 142 National Calendar of Events
  - 2024 Convention Programme
  - 2024 Springbrook Retreat
- 147 Minutes of the 2023 Annual Convention Business Meeting
- 151 Annual Convention Business Meeting Agenda
- 152 The TOS Australia National Coordinator Report for 2023
- 153 Report - Springbrook Event
- 155 Annual Index
- 156 News and Notes
  - 148th International Convention
  - The School of The Wisdom
  - Result of State Representative Ballots
  - Tribute to Michael Breen
- 159 Section Directory

### Mission Statement of the Theosophical Society

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

## From the National President

Stephen McDonald



After almost three years as National President of the Australian Section, the membership has seen fit to reappoint me for a further three years commencing from the Convention Business meeting in January 2024. I was re-elected unopposed by a yes/no vote, which is required under our rules. After my new term commences in January, I'll describe some of the objectives I have for the coming three years. There's still time to register for the National Convention in Perth in January. Check out the full Programme under Calendar of Events to see what you'll be missing out on if you don't attend.

I wish to welcome Aina Notoa to our team at the Sydney office. Aina worked for over a year at the Brisbane Lodge and came to us highly recommended. She has a strong background in business administration and will prove to be an asset for the national Society. Over time, we expect that Aina may move into the role of National Secretary.

We also have two new State Representatives on the National Council: Kevin Davey representing South Australia and the Northern

Territory, and Bruce Cassidy representing Queensland. You can find the result of the ballot by the returning Officer, Walter Mason, later in the magazine. I thank Kevin and Bruce for stepping into these roles and look forward to working with them in the coming years.

As usual, this edition of *Theosophy in Australia* is dominated by the obligatory reports about the functioning of the Australian Section over the previous year. These documents have to be presented at the Australian Convention Business Meeting (our national AGM), but they are also an historical record about the activities happening throughout the Section and the scope of our work in Australia. This year, unfortunately, the magazine and the financial reports have been substantially delayed by the long outage experienced at the National Headquarters and the loss of two members of staff. Our office is gradually recovering from the debility caused by these events and we expect to be back on track by the New Year.

## The Self - An Illusion or the Reflection of a Deeper Unity - Part 2 - 2023

Richard Silberstein



The notion of the brain as a filter to reduce the level of interaction with nonphysical domains is, I think, very real. I think there's a process whereby consciousness leads to identifying itself with the constraints of the brain. The brain imposes consciousness and they become mutually identified. The consciousness basically considers itself constrained by the brain and by the body. In other words, you feel as if you're one because the two are identified. It's a bit like a glove and a hand, both changing their shape. The glove fits to the hand and the hand adjusts a little bit to the glove so you think it's just one thing, but in fact it's two.

So, the metaphor that I would suggest is rather than the charioteer and the horses we should think of the centaur, part man and part horse. Consciousness and body acting as if they are one until we come to points, such as the near-death experience, where the filters are reduced.

So, what are these filters within the brain? Well, we know that there are inhibitory systems within the brain



Centaur in the Village Smithy (Arnold Böcklin)  
- Wikimedia Commons - Public Domain

called inhibitory neurotransmitters, and we know that they tend to play a crucial role in normal consciousness. There are a number of drugs which reduce those, and there has been some recent research about this process, but I've been a little bit skeptical about it. The research has been around psychedelics, particularly such things as psilocybin which are the active constituents in magic mushrooms. There is evidence that the intensity of mystical experiences which people experience with these psychedelics is correlated with reductions in brain activity, not increases. People

were expecting the more intense the experience, the greater the activity, in fact, it was the other way around. There is now increasing evidence that these networks within the brain that determine your automatic responses to things become loosened as a result of psychedelics.

There has been an enormous increased interest in the use of psychedelics in treatment for psychological disorders, addictions, etc. And there is a significant proportion of people reporting quite profound mystical experiences with psychedelics. The filters are being reduced, there's no doubt about that. But the point is that there are many sources of experience and memories that can come from many areas from your own unconscious, but also from the superconscious, and other levels as well. I'm not suggesting the use of psychedelics and I've tended to be very wary of that myself. Nevertheless, the research suggests that these can play a crucial and interesting role which is consistent with the notion of the brain as a filter.

The notion of the brain as a filter is also consistent with some parapsychological work. People were looking at a simple parallel psychological experiment where you had to influence the output of a quantum random number generator. The random numbers are simply displayed as the position of a

line on a screen which moved around depending on what the number was.

You're trying to mentally increase the size of the numbers that the quantum random number generator is producing. And you would see that as the line moving to the right of the screen. So, it's jittering around and you're trying to make it move to the right. What they found was that people with brain injuries could do that much better than normal people without injury. This suggested that the brain injury, particularly in the left frontal cortex, seemed to be a key part of the filter. When it was injured, they were better able to do these parapsychological tasks. This further adds to the notion of the brain as a filter. And as a result of that being a filter of consciousness, your current daily consciousness is actually a combination of brain processes and these nonphysical subtle processes as well.

I want to touch briefly on multiple personality disorder. In normal waking consciousness, essentially the nonphysical aspect personnel interact with specific networks. Basically, there are specific networks, and networks of memories that are associated with particular contexts. So, for example, as I said, there are networks which are preferentially activated at work. And there are other ones, for example, within the home. Now, those networks

are linked to each other. So, it's not as if you feel you're a different person, but there are just different aspects of your personality. If the interaction between those networks is disrupted, which can occur as a result of trauma, particularly in childhood, there is a tendency to manifest independently. So, what essentially happens is that you can have this manifestation of multiple personalities where one set of networks seems to be isolated from another set of networks, and it manifests as if you are two personalities.

The notion of multiple personality disorder has been a controversial one. In the late 80s, I was an expert witness to a famous case in Queensland of a multiple personality case. I'm going to mention a name because it's widely available in the press. It was the case of a woman called Tracey Wigginton, who was involved in an in famous murder case. I was asked to look at her EEG, when different personalities were elicited under hypnosis. At that stage, I thought, I wasn't sure whether multiple personality was a real thing. But what I found was that one of the personalities that was supposed to have actually committed the murders had completely different patterns of brain activity; very low frequency. It looked like a brain injury pattern of brain activity. And yet when she was in the other personality, it was normal. It was

really quite amazing. And I presented that as an expert witness in a court case in Queensland.

Notwithstanding the fact that there is one level of consciousness, because it manifests and it is linked to different memory subnetworks, the apparent personality is different. But I'm arguing that the core is really still the same. If you look at Ian Stevenson's work on reincarnation, one of the things that you see that he reports quite frequently is that there are birthmarks on the body, in the location of where the lethal injury was sustained in a past life. So, someone was, for example, shot in the head and the subject might have a birthmark at the entry point or the exit point, etc. Or if they were strangled, they might have a strange birthmark around the neck.

If something as physical as birthmarks can occur and be a consequence of previous life experience, why not something within the brain as well; neural networks within the brain? I think that would occur if reincarnation occurred relatively rapidly. And most cases that Stevenson reports, particularly from the East, tend to be cases where the rebirth occurred relatively rapidly. So, under those circumstances, it may well be that some aspects of multiple personality disorder may progress into subsequent lives.

Let's have a look now at what happens to those constraints of the brain, particularly associated with a near-death experience. People are now looking at these as the sort of typical characteristics of the near-death experience; generally, seeing oneself outside one's body, a feeling of peace, being able to see the dark tunnel, meeting beings of light, etc. There's a whole range of them. People have tried to describe these in terms of simple changes in the activity of the brain, as the result of disordered brain processes.



Photographic illustration of a near-death-experience -  
Jesse Krauß - Wikimedia Commons - Public Domain

The people who've probably done the most work on this is Drs Peter Fenwick and Pim Van Lommel. Pim is currently engaged in a huge research program, called the "AWARE Program" with people in intensive care. Those that survive are then interviewed closely about what they were able to see. One of the parts of the experiment was a screen placed above their eye with

some images on it. The point was to see if someone who was experiencing a near-death experience outside the body could see the operating theatre, etc. Will they see the image on the screen and be able to recall what it was?

They've had quite a few cases of near-death experiences where people describe what's happening in the operating theatre very accurately. But I don't think anybody has yet reported what was on the screen.

In one sense, that's a little disappointing. But in another sense, I don't think it's terribly surprising. Let's face it, you know, you're near death. You're looking at yourself and what is happening to you. The last thing you'd want to know is, "I wonder what that screen is saying just over there?" That's just my view. There's certainly a large number of hospitals that are engaged in this research, which indicates interest in this area which wouldn't have been there 20-30 years ago.

What we think is happening is that these filters are becoming less effective. There's a drug called ketamine which is, just recently, being used in the treatment of depression. Ketamine gives rise to experiences uncannily like some aspects of near-death experience (NDE). And some of the sceptics have argued that here, finally, is proof that these NDEs have all just been a sign of



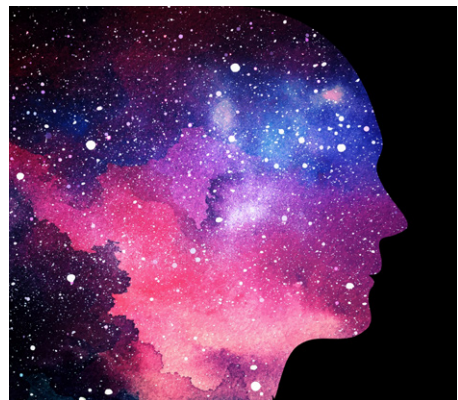
disordered brain processes. But what is ketamine doing? Ketamine is a drug that blocks the effect of a particular transmitter, called “glutamate”.

You’ve got two important kinds of cells. A certain kind of pyramidal cell releases a transmitter, glutamate, which excites other cells. Another type of cell is inhibitory and releases a neurotransmitter called “GABA”, which is an inhibitory neurotransmitter. These two cells create a type of feedback. One cell fires and it activates another cell here which in turn, inhibits it. Basically, it switches it off. That’s the inhibitory loop. A particular cell fires a bit and then it gets inhibited.

If you block the effect of glutamate on the inhibitory cell, it can’t then be activated and it can’t inhibit the pyramidal cells, so the pyramidal cells tend to fire more. I would argue ketamine, in fact, blocks these inhibitory systems, which is why you’re getting features similar to the near-death experiences. There are other drugs that do it in a similar fashion, such as psilocybin, although through a different mechanism.

Scientists are still arguing about whether you are experiencing things when the brain has stopped working - flatlined is the popular expression. Certainly, the EEG, where it’s been measured, has tended to be very low

frequency and very low amplitude suggesting that the cortex is not doing anything. But more recently people have found that animals at the time of death, experience a sort of a burst of uncoordinated activity. And sceptics have said that those subjective experiences are due to this kind of activity. I would argue that if it was uncoordinated activity, you wouldn’t be having the type of highly structured experiences that people actually report in near-death experiences (NDEs). It doesn’t explain why key aspects of NDEs are consistent across cultures. And it certainly can’t explain the accurate reports of unusual events that people are able to report on when they are out of body. It would simply appear to be an attempt by sceptics to say that there is no substance to NDE reports. But I think the evidence points against that very strongly.



Human head on starry space background -  
Shutterstock.

I'd like to briefly touch on the issue of Terminal Lucidity. This is a fascinating subject. You have cases where, for example, in the case of dementia, a huge amount of atrophy and loss of cortical tissue and cognitive processes right near the end. And yet, what can happen is, someone can experience a kind of mental clarity.

Let me give you one example here, which was published on one of the most disabled patients living at an Asylum run by a man called Happich. Kathe was from birth seriously retarded and never learned to speak a single word. She could only make animal-like voices. Her bodily abilities did not exceed uncontrolled spasms and she was never observed taking notice of what was going on around her for even a second. One day, Happich was urgently requested to visit Kathe by a physician and psychiatrist of the asylum. Kathe was ill with tuberculosis, and she was going to die.

Now comes the fascinating part. When Happich entered the room, he was stunned. He saw Kathe, who'd never spoken one word and was entirely mentally disabled from birth, singing a dying song, specifically she was singing "Where does the soul find its home, its peace? Peace, peace, heavenly peace!" over and over again. For half an hour she sang that and then quietly died. Her face, previously

so stultified, was transfigured and spiritualised.

That's a rather dramatic example. It's a very common situation where seriously ill or seriously disabled near the end seem to experience a degree of mental clarity. I've wondered what could be behind that, and this is now becoming a very intense area of research and psychiatry as well. Rather than calling it a "Terminal Lucidity", they now call it "Paradoxical Lucidity." But it's exactly the same thing, and it seems to me these are two possible interpretations which are not mutually exclusive.

One interpretation, what I'll call "Bottom Up," and that is that, because of brain injury, the inhibitory systems become less effective. It is similar to that brain injury model that I was mentioning earlier. And this allows consciousness to become more manifested, the inhibitory systems and the filters are less effective, and the actual underlying ego is able to express more clearly. That's not a complete interpretation and I don't think it's completely correct. I think it has an aspect of truth to it. But I think possibly what might be more important is that the highest self, being aware of the imminent end of life, activates whatever residual brain and cognitive capacity is available. It also permits loved ones the opportunity for a final

farewell. That's a sort of top-down process, which I think is probably the most important one. But I think both processes, bottom up and top down, may in fact be playing an important role in this Paradoxical Lucidity.

So, let me now just briefly touch on Theosophical perspectives at higher levels. From our point of view, personality interacts with the brain via a whole range of networks. This has been viewed as one of these personalities. In other words, the life we see now is the person you see in front of you. You are a unique case, absolutely unique, born of specific genetics and experiences. At the same time, there is that aspect of the ego, as well, which is an essential part of that picture. And it is the ego, or the soul, or as some people refer to it as the more fundamental aspect of our reality. It incarnates an aspect and creates these personalities, which you can think of a little bit like your experience in a dream. You feel you're doing something. You feel the real you within the dream, but it is at another level an illusion. What I'm suggesting is from the perspective of the deep self or the ego, our everyday self with its sense of separation is an illusion. However, it's a necessary illusion.

If one looks more deeply, and particularly from some of the work of near-death experiences associated with individuals, there's a sense of an

individual and transcendent sense of oneness that can occur. Interestingly enough, if one looks at Madame Blavatsky she says in *The Secret Doctrine*: "Our minds are but the product of the Universal Mind. So is the latter but a differentiated ray of the absolute Mind or No-Mind. The ONE, or Absoluteness is the only eternal reality that deep underlying unity, which in a sense is reflected multiple levels down." And finally, to D. J. Moores: "Mysticism then is the perception of the universe and all of its seemingly disparate entities existing as a unified, whole bound by love".

### Profile

*The title and role of Emeritus Professor at Swinburne University, Melbourne, was conferred on Richard Silberstein in 2014. His long and distinguished career there spans 40 years of service, which has included roles in teaching, research, management and services to the scientific and broader community. He developed Steady State Topography (SST), a new and unique method for imaging brain function. Richard Silberstein has been a member of the Theosophical Society for over 50 years.*

## National President's Annual Report

1 JULY 2022 TO 30 JUNE 2023



### PREAMBLE

Presented in the pages that follow is my Annual Report to the members of the Australian Section. This is my third year as National President and most of the activities throughout Australia have returned to normal. There have been a number of highlights on the national calendar, which are described in this report.

### NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

#### National President

With the restrictions of the global pandemic behind us, the activities of most of the Lodges, Branches and Groups have returned to normal.

In August 2022, I visited the Melbourne Theosophical Society to give a talk on the direction of the Australian Section and to meet with members of their board of directors to discuss various issues affecting their Lodge. I spoke at Newcastle Lodge and at Perth Branch in September 2022. During my visit to Perth (my first because of the Covid restrictions), I had the opportunity to inspect two possible venues for the

National Convention to be held there in 2024: St Catherine's on Park and St George's College. I was accompanied by the President of Perth Branch, John Davey, for both inspections. I also met with the Perth Branch executive to discuss their preparations for the Convention. October included a visit to Canberra Group and an event at Springbrook led by Berry Dunston from Hobart Branch and Gayle Thomas from the National Headquarters.

In November I gave an online presentation for the Indo-Pacific Federation Conference. This Conference, normally held every three years, was again held online because of uncertainties around international travel. The next Conference will be held in person, most likely in Perth, Western Australia. I also made my first visit to Tasmania during November, giving talks in Launceston and Hobart. There is a small, but enthusiastic membership at these two centres. The meeting of the General Council of the TS was held at the International Headquarters in December followed by the International Convention at which I

gave a talk. Both the General Council and the International Convention provide invaluable opportunities for the exchange of information and ideas from members and representatives from around the world.

After almost three years, January 2023 saw the resumption of our National Convention as an in-person gathering in Adelaide, South Australia. There was a healthy attendance (perhaps because of the long hiatus) with over 55 residential delegates and 20-day visitors. The participation by a host of excellent speakers and an enthusiastic and involved audience, created an atmosphere of sharing and fellowship making the Convention a memorable event.

After the Convention, I gave a talk at Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney. In February, I also participated on the Indo-Pacific Federation Council meeting by Zoom, at which discussion took place for the planning of the next Federation Conference to be held in Australia. After the pandemic, the Blue Mountains Certified Group had remained in suspension. In April, I led a meeting with the NSW State Representative, Gerard Brennan and several members of the Group, to chart a way ahead. A plan was developed to restore regular meetings in early July.

Another feature of our calendar was the tour by International Lecturer,

Juliana Cesano, in April and May 2023. Juliana started her tour in Sydney and then led the annual Australian School of Theosophy at Springbrook, Queensland. She was supported by Simon O'Rourke and I in the afternoons. After the School concluded, Juliana continued with a tour of the Australian Section, giving talks and workshops in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, and Melbourne. Juliana's thoughtful and reflective manner brought a special atmosphere to the meetings wherever she visited.

In June 2023 I visited Perth Branch where I gave a talk to members and guests. I also revisited St Catherine's on Park to meet the new Functions Manager and confirm the details for our National Convention in January 2024. I was accompanied by the Secretary of Perth Branch, Jean Dawson. From Perth, I continued to London where I was a guest at Blavatsky Lodge for a few days and then attended the General Council meeting and planning days at the International Theosophical Centre (ITC) in Naarden, The Netherlands.

The following is a summary of my main additional duties during the reporting period: Preliminary work on a draft program for the National Convention to be held in Adelaide in 2023. Planning and preliminary organising for National Lecturer tours. Compiling, editing and production of four issues of *Theosophy*

*in Australia (T in A)*, in consultation with the Editorial Committee. Member of the National Council. Member and Chair of the national Executive Committee. Director and Chair of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust. Membership of several working committees. Member of the General Council of the Theosophical Society. Ongoing liaison with TS centres around the Section, as well as dealing with a significant amount of correspondence and other administrative work.

### **National Council**

The National Council met in January and in July 2023 in-person. As at 30 June 2023 the National Council comprised the 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:

**Ruth Holt** - Tasmania (resigned in June 2023)

**John Davey** - Western Australia

**Barry Bowden** - Queensland

**Gaynor Fraser** - South Australia/  
Northern Territory (Chair)

**Edward Sinclair** - Victoria

**Gerard Brennan** - New South Wales/  
Australian Capital Territory

Special appreciation is extended to the State Representatives for their voluntary service to the Council

which included, among other things, online and in-person meetings of the National Council, and correspondence in between meetings on matters of importance. Beside liaison with the members and committees of the Lodges/Branches and Certified Groups within their state, an important function of members of the National Council is to regularly review the National Policies Document and the National Rules.

The following appointments were made by the National Council for a 12-month period in January 2023:

- Chair of the National Council and Vice-President until January 2024 - Gaynor Fraser.
- National Executive Committee (see next item).

### **National Executive Committee**

The national Executive Committee deals with the ongoing administration of the Section and the National Headquarters office. It met several times during the year (usually bimonthly). As at 30 June it comprised the usual 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: Berry Dunston (Hobart), Denise Frost (Devonport), and Edward Sinclair (Melbourne) and Barry Bowden (Toowoomba). Michael Svoronos (Sydney) was appointed as

a non-voting member and as Assistant to the Treasurer. These meetings were conducted at the headquarters in Surry Hills, Sydney except for some members who attended online.

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. At its meeting in February 2023, the national Executive Committee reappointed Stephen McDonald as the Editor of *Theosophy in Australia* and appointed the following working committees: Education & Training, Rules, Finance, and Electronic Media & Marketing.

### **Headquarters Staff and Volunteers**

The National Headquarters is staffed by a small, dedicated group of people who undertake a large range of tasks necessary to support the overall work of the Australian Section. Most of the staff at the Headquarters are employed on either a part-time or casual basis. There are also several volunteers who give their time working on committees of the Section and carrying out a number of projects within the headquarters. The main tasks performed by during the year are listed here:

**Gayle Thomas:** *National Secretary.* During the year in question, the National Secretary was responsible

for reporting to the national Executive Committee and the National Council and arranging their meetings at the headquarters in Surry Hills, Sydney and online. Taking care of all routine business for these entities; writing and distributing their Minutes and Agendas; ensuring that their statutory requirements are met. Reporting to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). Maintaining appropriate workers compensation cover for the National Headquarters, and maintaining appropriate Public Liability, Building/Contents, Association Liability and other cover for all Lodges/Branches in the Australian Section, as required. Overseeing the work of the Section's bookkeeper and ensuring all receipts and payments are made in a timely manner. Advising Lodges/Branches on their rules. Producing and distributing quarterly investment trust reports to seven investment partners with a beneficial interest in the Section's Maple-Brown Abbott portfolio. Administration of the Springbrook Theosophical Education and Retreat Centre, the Canyonleigh Centre and the BCT agreement. (resigned in July 2023)

**Simon O'Rourke:** *National Education Co-ordinator.* Research for presentations to several TS centres. Research for and maintenance

of the Section's Facebook page. Communicating with National Members on educational resources. Responsible for the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives including the digital Catalogue, and ordering suitable new titles for its collection. Providing assistance to Launceston Lodge, which has been hampered by a reduced membership and only a few dedicated volunteers. Initiating and setting up a Meetup account for Launceston and Newcastle Lodges and Logan Group. Responsible for educational and other content on the TS website, ongoing liaising with developers, and recommendations to the Executive. Member of the Education and Training, and Electronic Media and Marketing committees. Assistance to the National President. Ordering and sale of books and study courses. Processing leaflet and brochure orders for lodges, branches and certified groups. Assisting with proofreading four issues of *Theosophy in Australia*. Helping to organise *T in A* mail-outs. Answering educational enquiries from TS members as well as from members of the public. In addition to his specific duties, Simon has also provided assistance with many IT matters, including the transition to a new IT services company for the headquarters.

**Jennifer Hissey:** *Librarian, Campbell Theosophical Research Library.* Coordinating and assisting Branch librarians with upgrading their collections. Maintaining Campbell Library holdings and the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC). Providing material to external researchers from the Campbell Library. Accumulating resources for archival and website use.

**Gil Murdoch:** *Webmaster for the Australian Section's website.* Substantial work on adding and maintaining material on the website and web pages of lodges, branches and certified groups. Helping train and advise designated lodge members in adding events and programme material for their lodges. Maintaining AV, sound equipment and data projectors. Updating the Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals and maintaining its search facilities, including adding new index items from important theosophical periodicals. Maintaining the index of the *Brahmavidya* journal and its search facility. Continuing work on a new index of *The Theosophist* including a dedicated search facility. A continuing major addition of article titles and authors has been made to the index of *The Canadian Theosophist*. Maintaining and developing Links to Theosophical Texts Online, a resource for those seeking to find theosophical



writings online. Assisting in the Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives. Exploring the rendering of some theosophical writings into web format compatible with computers, tablets and smart phones. Assisting with *T in A* mail-outs as required. (Please note that, sadly, Gil passed away in August 2023).

**Richard Larkin:** *Membership Secretary - Preparing membership reports.* Maintaining the membership database and processing the application and transfers of memberships. 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. Organising *T in A* mail-outs. Data entry for the Union Index, currently recording “The Canadian Theosophist” to be added to the Union Index.

**Walter Mason:** *Casual National Lecturer.* Also, assists the Editor of *Theosophy in Australia* with the compilation and proof-reading of articles. Provides general assistance to the National Secretary and helps with various specific projects at the National Headquarters, including tasks related to the National Convention.

**Leo Ta:** *Convention Secretary (from 2023).* Assists the National

President with administrative tasks associated with organizing the annual National Convention and Springbrook seminars/events. These include: Processing registration forms; sending Welcome Letter and Arrival/Departure forms to registrants; room allocation for the delegates; following up with outstanding incomplete registration; checking payments and chasing outstanding payments from registrants; dealing with queries from delegates; communicating with the venue manager for queries related to accommodation.

**Kay Schiefelbein:** *Caretaker, Springbrook Centre.*

**Tinh Van Vo-Nguyen:** *Volunteer - National Headquarters.*

**Gloria Yiangou:** *Volunteer - National Headquarters.*

**Beatrice Malka:** *Volunteer - National Treasurer. Member of the National Executive Committee. Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust. Chair of The Theosophical Foundation Pty Ltd.*

**Berenice (Berry) Dunston:** *Volunteer - member of the National Executive Committee and Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust.*

**Denise Frost:** *Volunteer - member of the National Executive Committee. Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust.*

**Edward Sinclair:** *Volunteer - member of the National Executive Committee. Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust. State Representative Vic.*

**Barry Bowden:** *Volunteer - State Representative Qld. Member of the National Executive Committee. Director of The Australian Section Theosophical Trust. National Lecturer.*

**John Davey:** *Volunteer - State Representative WA.*

**Ruth Holt:** *Volunteer - State Representative Tas. (resigned in January 2023)*

**Gaynor Fraser:** *Volunteer - State Representative SA/NT. National Vice-President.*

**Gerard Brennan:** *Volunteer - State Representative NSW. President of the Indo-Pacific Federation.*

**Janice Scarabottolo, Dr Olga Gostin, Patricia Ossenber and Ruth Holt:** *Volunteers - members of Editorial Committee.*

## GENERAL COUNCIL (the international governing body)

During the reporting period, the General Council of the Theosophical Society met in person in December 2022 and in June 2023. In December 2022, reports were given by the International President, Tim Boyd, and by the International Treasurer, Nancy Secrest. Reports were

also given about progress of the lease of Damodar Gardens, which is a part of the estate at Adyar. The President also provided reports and updates about numerous projects being carried out around the world.

Stephen McDonald also attended the General Council meeting held in June 2023 at the International Theosophical Centre (ITC) in Naarden, The Netherlands, which was followed by project planning meetings. Items discussed included: arrangements related to the new lease of Damodar Gardens (a 14-acre part of the TS estate at Adyar) to the Shiv Nadar Educational Trust, which will yield a substantial ongoing income to the Theosophical Society; finalising the proposal from Canada to host the World Congress in 2025; arrangements for the next International Convention to be held in Adyar, India from 31 December 2023 until 4 January 2024. Principles of marketing were discussed related to promotion of the TS. This included a presentation on utilising the Theosophy World website to include best practice ideas and other information, such as course materials that can be shared around the world. New ways to operate the Theosophical Publishing ventures was also discussed.

## MEMBERSHIP

### Statistics

As at 30 June 2023 the Section had 632 members, a loss of 26 members

over the 12- month period concerned. Reflecting previous years, the main losses and gains in numbers occurred in several larger TS centres. For more details, see the annual membership analysis at the end of this report.

## **National Members**

As at 30 June, the Section lost 22 National Members. Our National Members receive periodic e-Bulletins by email, as well as the magazine.

## **Letters to New Members**

Newly joined members have online access to 22 Letters to New Members from the National President.

## **Exit Surveys**

All former members who have either resigned or been lapsed are sent an optional exit survey. A few were returned during the year in question. Reasons cited for leaving the TS were usually of a routine nature, but sometimes issues with a local TS centre were mentioned, in which case centres concerned were subsequently notified for any action as required.

## ***Theosophy in Australia***

Four issues of the national magazine were printed in September, November, March and June during the year under review. The emphasis continues to be centred around local contributions and attempts to reflect the diversity of our membership. For 2023, a theme

emphasising indigenous spirituality was highlighted. Once again, my thanks go to the members of the Editorial Committee who volunteer their services by assisting me to review and appraise articles before they go to print.

## **CONVENTIONS**

### **2023 Convention**

Adelaide, South Australia, was the host city for the annual National Convention in January 2023. The pandemic caused the cancellation of two conventions, in 2021 and 2022 (apart from the obligatory Annual Convention Business Meetings that were held online). The theme for the Convention was ‘New Frontiers for an Ageless Wisdom: Exploring the Powers Latent in Humanity’. The Adelaide event featured an exceptional programme of Australian speakers, including a keynote address by Professor Emeritus Richard Silberstein. In most respects, the feedback received from the members that attended was enthusiastic and very positive.

### **2024 Convention**

Preparations for the National Convention to be held in Perth, Western Australia, in January 2024 are well-underway. The theme for the Perth Convention is ‘*The Wisdom Traditions, the Great Teachers, the One Life*’.

## EDUCATION

### Education and Training Committee / Educational Resources

The Education and Training Committee comprises the National President, the Education Coordinator and the National Secretary, plus two additional members: Berenice Dunston and Barry Bowden (appointed in January 2023). The committee meets periodically to review and discuss the educational needs of the Section. Awarding of the annual University Prizes in Perennial Philosophy is also overseen by this committee.

### Campbell Theosophical Research Library and Archives

A number of new books were acquired for the library. In total, 29 new titles were catalogued, including Edi Bilimoria's substantial four volume set, "Unfolding Consciousness," two books on indigenous spirituality by Amunya Andrews, a quality reprint of Besant and Leadbeater's "Thought Forms" with new contributions from staff at Columbia University and the Guggenheim Museum, and a number of donated books in braille such as "The Voice of The Silence".

Jennifer Hissey, our librarian, continued to research TS history in Australia and the influence of theosophists on world thought and philosophical movements,

such as the influence of the Loyalty League in the Liberal Catholic Church. She has been helped in this by Tinh Van, a regular volunteer. The Section's Archives also provides material for research on the Society's history, and biographical information on members who have made substantial contributions in various fields.

Some of the requests we have received in the past year included a request for information on the Lotus Circle for an American speaker and a request by a student asking what is the difference between the Theosophy taught by H. P. Blavatsky and Annie Besant.

### National Speakers' Schedule

As well as the administrative assistance provided to TS centres, the National Headquarters also coordinates a National Speakers' Schedule. The schedule includes National Lecturers, the National President and the Education Coordinator, as well as International Lecturers.

In January 2023, the National Council appointed (or reappointed) the following members as National Lecturers for 2023: Helen Steven (Hobart) and Barry Bowden (Toowoomba). Permission was also given to appoint casual lecturers and Walter Mason was engaged in giving a number of talks and workshops around the Section.

## **International Lecturers**

For the first time since the pandemic started, the Section was able to host an international lecturer. Juliana Cesano, from the United States, came to Australia in April and May 2023. Juliana led the annual Australian School of Theosophy at Springbrook, Queensland and continued on a national tour giving talks and workshops in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Melbourne and Sydney. There was positive feedback from all of the centres that she visited.

## **National and Lodge/Branch Library Catalogue**

Access to the holdings of TS libraries around the country may be found through the Section's Online Public Access Catalogue at: <https://catalogue.theosophicalsociety.org.au>

Searches may be conducted online in any popular web browser, though recently Simon has begun a project to promote the Liberty app available through the Apple and Android stores. Some testing of the system was done during the year towards adding TS members, to enable the digital borrowing of books and easy access to recent search histories. We assisted three sites during the year with the purchase of barcode labels.

Resource lists of the most requested subjects are available from the search page under 'Other searches'. Jennifer

Hissey welcomes suggestions for further lists and can be contacted at: [catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

This unique catalogue is an important contribution for researchers from Australia and from around the world.

However much of Jennifer's time in the past year has involved assisting our Lodges and Branches to update their holdings in the Library Catalogue Database (see our website for links). Particularly assisting Blavatsky Lodge to add their many books, and who have recently joined the National Society's Catalogue with the support of their Executive Committee led by then President, Rosanna Sheridan. Jennifer's knowledge has been invaluable in maintaining consistency with international standards. A number of dedicated staff and volunteers from around the country have been helping with this work.

## **Book Depot, National Headquarters**

Book sales from our special selection at the National Headquarters continued during the year in question at cost recovery prices including postage. We sold 6 books in the first 6 months, 43 books in the next 6 months plus 79 at the Convention. Sales at the National Convention in Adelaide were boosted when some of our titles were mentioned by speakers and by the helpers, especially Walter Mason.

Several courses were sold, the most popular being John Algeo's course Introduction to Theosophy.

### **Online Meetings**

A new project was begun this year to expand our educational work online, with a regular zoom study meeting on the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each Monday utilizing the Seven Theosophical Manuals, beginning with Annie Besant's "The Seven Principles of Man (the Human Being)".

### **Universities**

#### **University of Sydney**

The Theosophical Society in Australia continued to award the John Cooper Memorial prize to Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney, for work on the Perennial Philosophy in its Eastern and Western traditions, a prize which commenced in 2000. In 2022 two undergraduate essays were submitted by the University as potential candidates for the John Cooper Memorial Prize. The Education Committee recommended that the prize be awarded for one of those works. As I was travelling at the time of the prize-giving ceremony, Simon O'Rourke attended in my place. Simon was able to give a short talk about the TS, which was well received by the audience.

#### **University of Queensland**

Since 2014 the TS in Australia has made available a prize for research

into the Perennial Philosophy in its Eastern and Western traditions to Studies in Religion at the University of Queensland, with parameters identical to the University of Sydney prize. In 2023 two prizes were awarded, one for an honour's thesis and one for an undergraduate essay.

#### **University of Western Australia**

The Theosophical Society Perennial Philosophy Prize is awarded to selected students of an undergraduate course on 'Philosophy East and West' at the University of Western Australia. No submission was received from UWA in 2023.

## **NATIONAL EVENTS**

### **Springbrook Centre**

International Lecturer, Juliana Cesano led the annual Australian School of Theosophy at Springbrook, Queensland. The theme of the School was "Awakening Spiritual Consciousness through the Heart Centre". Juliana led an exploration of the meaning and nature of the heart from an esoteric and mystical perspective, including the foundations of a heart-centred meditation practice. In the afternoons, Simon O'Rourke and Stephen McDonald held some practical sessions on presentation skills and public speaking. Juliana's quiet and reflective manner was especially suited to the peace and beauty of our retreat centre at Springbrook.

## Canyonleigh Centre

The house and property had been closed during the pandemic and a substantial clean-up was necessary before it could be used again. In August 2022 an event was held at Bolitho House, our retreat centre in the Southern Highlands of New South Wales. A small, but lively group of members from Sydney and Canberra enjoyed a day sharing stories and information about the history and development of this beautiful place. The National Council and Executive Committee has been considering the future options for the use or possible sale of the property.

## PUBLICITY AND PROMOTION

### New Booklets

In addition to our leaflets, we have produced ten new booklets to highlight some of the principal ideas of Theosophy and of the Society. These were made available at the Convention with 410 booklets distributed to individuals and Lodge/Branches. All of the booklets and leaflets are available on our national website.

### Facebook Page

During the year in question, our Education Co-ordinator, Simon O'Rourke has been working on ways to revitalise our online presence, including through utilisation of Facebook.

Members are encouraged to look at our Facebook page. You do not need to be a member of Facebook in order to browse our many and varied posts. Go to: <https://www.facebook.com/TheTheosophicalSocietyInAustralia/>

### e-Bulletin

A number of e-Bulletins were released between June 2022 and June 2023. These have mainly been focused on promoting national and international activities, including the National Convention, the School of Theosophy at Springbrook, Queensland, the national lecture tour by Juliana Cesano and international events, such as the International Youth Gathering held at Naarden in the Netherlands. Any members who do not receive e-Bulletins, and who would like to do so, can contact the National Headquarters: [web@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:web@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

### OPAC

Electronic publicity for the holdings of TS libraries around the country continued during the year through the Section's Online Public Access Catalogue at: <https://austheos.softlinkhosting.com.au>

Blavatsky Lodge holdings are being added and their unique collection will add hundreds of new titles to our OPAC Brisbane Lodge are also in the process of updating their holdings with Perth coming soon.

Resource lists of the most requested subjects are available from the search page under 'Other searches'. Jennifer Hissey welcomes suggestions for further lists and can be contacted at: [catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

This unique catalogue is an important contribution for researchers from Australia and from around the world.

### Website

The programmes of Lodges, Branches and Certified Groups were included on the site on a regular basis. The largest usage by country has come from Australia, the United States, India, China and the United Kingdom.

The website was recently updated in terms of software functionality and compatibility with its underlying platform. Many educational resources have been uploaded to the website, including new articles and texts from our literature categorised by subject, such as Meditation and an Introduction to Theosophy. Notably, we have a category of educational literature on the three important days in the Theosophical Calendar, Adyar Day, White Lotus Day and Founders Day, to assist Lodges/Branches and Groups in maintaining the spirit of our Theosophical culture and ethos. Other resources added includes a section for new and transferring members; resources for Committee Members; a resource listing useful Theosophical

books and videos; and a promotional section of downloadable booklets and leaflets for study, local printing and sharing.

The Union Index of Theosophical Periodicals, which is appreciated internationally, had a large number of hits. As in previous years, other items popular on the website were Brahmavidyā - the electronic index of Adyar Library and Research Centre Bulletin, and the magazine *Theosophy in Australia*.

Gil Murdoch, our Webmaster, besides his ongoing work on the Section's website, has uploaded the regular issues of *Theosophy in Australia* and formatted and distributed the e-Bulletins. Gil has also produced regular updates of the Union Index.

## SUPPORT

### Annual Fund

Since the early 1990s members of the Australian Section have provided donations to help finance various new educational and promotional initiatives. This money is not for administrative purposes; it is used for special projects. My thanks go to all those who have donated to the Annual Fund, no matter how small the contribution.

### Lodges/Branches and Groups

An ongoing part of the work of the National Headquarters involves providing assistance in a variety of ways



for Lodges/Branches and Certified Groups from around Australia. This involves help for the larger Lodges and Branches, and especially for smaller, less resourced centres.

The following items, most of which are dealt with elsewhere in this report, are additional forms of support from the National Society for our TS centres: the provision of a shared platform on the website helping to enable the promotion of our centres, the material produced from the Education and Training Committee, the National Speakers' Schedule, International Lecturers, OPAC and Marketing. Also, regular advice provided by the National Secretary related to administrative matters.

## OUR INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

### Adyar

As the global pandemic lifted, most of the usual in-person activities in India, such as the annual International Convention and the School of the Wisdom at Adyar, have recommenced. A highly successful convention was held at the international headquarters in Adyar from December 2022 - January 2023, as well as a new and expanded programme for the School of the Wisdom. The next International Convention in December 2023 will be held in-person at the Adyar campus in

Chennai, India. Information about the convention and registration is available from the following website: <https://tsconvention.com/>

### International Youth Gathering

Young Theosophists from around the world came together at Adyar in December 2022, to coincide with the International Convention. Also, another well-attended meeting of Theosophists under the age of forty was held at the International Theosophical Centre (ITC) in the Netherlands during June 2023. Revival of the World Federation of Young Theosophists is well underway.

### Indo-Pacific Federation

Since 2016 Gerard Brennan (member of Blavatsky Lodge, Sydney and NSW State Representative) has been President of the Indo-Pacific Federation, of which our Section is a member. Due to the after effects of the global pandemic, the Indo-Pacific Conference was hosted online by the TS in Malaysia in November, 2022. Plans are afoot for the next Conference to be held in Perth, Western Australia, in November 2026.

## RULES

### Elections for State Representatives

Elections for State Representatives were carried out in 2022. As there

was only one candidate for each of the Electoral States, a yes/no vote was held and the following were elected or re-elected unopposed for New South Wales/ACT (Gerard Brennan), Western Australia (John Davey) and Victoria (Edward Sinclair). The role of our State Representatives is an important one, constituting two thirds of the membership of the National Council and representing every member in their Electoral State at the Council's six-monthly meetings.

### **Lodge/Branch Rules**

Routine amendments to the Rules of TS centres around the Section were reviewed by the Section's Rules Committee during the year, for a decision by the National Executive Committee.

### **Notices of Motion**

There were no notices of motion presented to the Australian Convention Business Meeting during the reporting period.

## **LODGES/BRANCHES AND CERTIFIED GROUPS**

The work of the TS in Australia is largely undertaken by dedicated volunteers; dedicated not only to the daily tasks of running the organisation, but to the spirit and inner purpose of our Society. It is mostly due to those volunteers in the Lodges, Branches and Groups that the wheels keep turning.

The following is a summary of each Annual Report received from our Lodges/Branches and Certified Groups:

### **Hobart Branch, TAS (chartered 1889)**

Two study groups were held: one on Lam Rim Buddhism; and a basic Theosophy study group (via Zoom) which was conducted by the National Education Coordinator. Regular talks were given by members of Hobart Branch. Highlights of the year included visiting speakers who presented the following talks: The Vision and the Way (presented by Stephen McDonald); Self Realization through love: the Bhakti sutras of Narada (Juliana Cesano); A spiritual journey as an artist deeply connected to First People, Land and Country (Artist Clare Noble); and My Journey in Learning the Aboriginal Approach to Healing (Geoffrey Dunlop).

### **Melbourne Lodge, VIC (chartered 1890)**

Weekly meetings were held with talks by numerous members of the Lodge. A number of Study Groups were also hosted during the year. Some highlights of the Lodge calendar included the following presentations: The Three Enlightenments Workshop (presented by Simon O'Rourke); Nurturing

the Heart: Divine Intimacy (Juliana Cesano);

Beyond Traditions: Are We Our Identity? (Eleni Mitas); Leadership & Facilitation of Members Meeting (Stephen McDonald). Preparation of the new bookshop lounge area for daytime presentations, talks, music, book launches with presentation screen, sound system and moving in of piano.

### **Adelaide Lodge, SA (chartered 1891)**

Monthly Members Meetings have continued, as well as monthly Theosophy Science meetings. Study groups continued around Pablo Sender's videos. A highlight of the year was a visit by International Lecturer, Juliana Cesano who delivered two talks entitled, "Awakening Spiritual Consciousness through the Heart Centre" and "Experiencing the Divine: Mysticism Across the Religious Traditions". The Lodge continued to operate the New Dimensions Bookshop.

### **Brisbane Lodge, QLD (chartered 1895)**

Brisbane Lodge has continued to hold a regular programme of events. Study Groups continued on the 'Gupta Vidya' and 'Ancient Wisdom, Modern Insight'. There were meditation retreats held at Springbrook Centre,

as well as a workshop entitled 'The Heart: Doorway to our Soul and Higher Consciousness'. Other highlights included 'Experiencing the Divine Mysticism across Religions' (Juliana Cesano); 'How do we develop Spiritual Consciousness?' (Barry Bowden); 'The Key to Contemplation' (Simon O'Rourke); 'The Human Journey - The Spark of the Divine' (Helen Stevens). There have been new brochures and colorful posters designed, a three-minute Welcome Video produced, and a strengthened social media presence instituted during the year in question.

### **Perth Branch, WA (chartered 1897)**

Weekly meetings have resumed and study groups were conducted on: 'At the Feet of the Master'; 'Approaching the Secret Doctrine'; 'Evolution of the Higher Consciousness'; and 'Basic Theosophy'. Seminars and workshops were conducted have been held at the Mt Helena Centre, and a weekly 'Introduction to Theosophy' session. Talks were given by the National President, Stephen McDonald and by the National Education Coordinator, Simon O'Rourke. International Lecturer, Juliana Cesano, gave two sessions entitled 'The Transformative Teachings and Poetry of Jalal-al-Din-Rumi' and 'Awakening Spiritual Consciousness through the Heart Centre'.

### **Launceston Lodge, TAS (chartered 1901)**

Some highlights of the year included the following presentations: ‘The Light that Dispels the Darkness of Illusion’ (Simon O’Rourke); ‘Suffering, its Causes and Alleviation’ (Denise Frost); ‘The Vision and the Way: The Work of the Theosophical Society and the Future of Humanity’ (Stephen McDonald); ‘The Three Enlightenments’ (Simon O’Rourke); and ‘A review of Juliana Cesano’s talk in Hobart - “Self-Realization through Love: the Bhakti sutras of Narada” (Marck Guimaraes).

### **Blavatsky Lodge, NSW (chartered 1922)**

Blavatsky Lodge continued to hold a regular programme of events with weekly talks and occasional special events. The following study groups were also held: ‘Key to Theosophy’; ‘The Mahatma Letters’; ‘Light on the Path’; ‘The Heart Sutra’; ‘Buddhism’; ‘Raja Yoga’; ‘Is the Future Ours to See?’; and regular meditations. Two beautiful pictorial presentations were given by Isolde Sueltemeyer: ‘Remembering Celia Novy’ and ‘Remembering Dianne Kynaston’. International Lecturer, Sri M spoke to members on Helpful Spiritual Teachings. Juliana Cesano gave two presentations entitled ‘Annie Besant’s Wisdom for To-day’s Challenges’ and

‘Awakening Spiritual Consciousness through the Heart Centre’. The transition of the Adyar Library Collection to Headquarters’ Liberty Standard System continues to be the major undertaking of the Librarian assisted by a small, dedicated group of volunteers.

### **Newcastle Lodge, NSW (chartered 1941)**

Monthly meetings have been conducted, with a number of interesting presentations including: ‘The Significance of Non-violence in the Face of Conflict’ (Gerard Brennan); ‘The Vision and The Way’ (Stephen McDonald); ‘Views on Jesus’ (Tony Buzek); ‘Who Was HPB?’ (Pedro Oliveira); ‘The Three Enlightenments’ (Simon O’Rourke); ‘Freedom of Thought and the TS’ (Linda Oliveira); ‘An Introductory View of HPBs Works’ (Pat Bolsover); and ‘First Steps in the Spiritual Life’ (Jane Wilson).

### **Sunshine Coast Lodge, QLD (chartered 2004)**

‘Forgiveness’ (Tony Petcopoulos); ‘Developing Consciousness’ (Barry Bowden); ‘Time & Transcendence’ (Kerry Oldfield); ‘White Lotus Day’ (Esther Pockrandt); ‘Pluto’s Aquarian Transformation’ (Nicky Basset); and ‘Mindfulness’ (Russell Sturgess). Study courses were conducted on the ‘Root Races’ (Jim Driver) and ‘At the Feet of the Master’ (Kerry Oldfield).

An online study course was also conducted on the ‘Seven Principles of Man’ (Simon O’Rourke).

## REPORTS FROM CERTIFIED GROUPS

Our various Certified Groups have been in existence for up to twenty-seven years, and once again helped make the TS better known in their areas.

### **Blue Mountains Group, NSW (certified 1997)**

The Blue Mountains Group has been struggling to re-establish its regular meetings since the onset of the pandemic. A meeting was held in April 2023 and a decision was made to recommence meetings at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre in Katoomba from July 2023. As a coordinator was not forthcoming, Stephen McDonald agreed to be the temporary Coordinator for one year until a replacement could be found.

### **Canberra Group, ACT (certified 2019)**

After the pandemic ceased, regular monthly meetings have resumed. Some of the highlights during the last year have included: a Christmas in July event; showing of a talk by Dianne Kynaston entitled ‘Holy Grail in the Modern World’; The Enduring Truths of the Ancient Wisdom’ (Gerard Brennan); ‘The Vision and the Way’ (Stephen McDonald); ‘The Three

Enlightenments’ (Simon O’Rourke); ‘Walter and Marion Griffins’ Canberra Design’ (Grahame Crookham); ‘Paratge and Occitanian Culture’ (Elayne Srahan); ‘The Great Change in Humanity’ (Marie McArdle).

### **Gosford Group, NSW (certified 1997)**

The last year has seen the resumption of activities with regular monthly talks and study group meetings. Some highlights of their programme included: ‘Near Death Experience’ (Suzy Greene); ‘Fairy Tales and Theosophy’ (Dr Ian Ellis-Jones); ‘Mystery School. Magic School. Mighty School!’ (Keith Howes); ‘Beauty and Beyond - the Life and Art of Sulamith Wuelfing’ (Isolde Sueltemeyer); ‘The Divine Wisdom - Beyond Ideology’ (Gerard Brennan); ‘The Secret Life of Water: Water Consciousness’ (Nat Dodin-Boyd).

### **Logan Group, QLD (certified 2019)**

Logan Group continued to meet bimonthly on one Thursday evening per month and on one Thursday morning per month with a number of speakers and a book study group: ‘As a Man Thinketh’ and ‘The Gita’. Discussions over morning coffee have provided opportunities for fellowship.

### **Mornington Peninsula Group, VIC (certified 2000)**

In the second half of 2022 and in 2023 a number of presentations were

given on varying topics, including: ‘Cycles of Life’; ‘Atlantis - is history repeating?’; ‘Ancient Wisdom; the Divine Feminine’ and ‘Mystical Ancient Egypt: What can it teach us today?’.

### **Northern Beaches Group, NSW (certified 1996)**

The Northern Beaches Group, located in Sydney, has continued to hold regular monthly meetings. Some of the interesting titles on their programme included: ‘The Mystery of Tulpas’ (Clayton Spencer); ‘Plugged into the Planet: timeless understanding for global healing’ (Philip and Marianne); ‘The Psychologist and the Magician’ (Dr Ian Ellis-Jones); ‘A Course in Miracles’ (Jo Nicotra); ‘Theosophy of the Mystics’ (Pedro Oliveira); ‘Fire in the Heart: the life and poetry of Jalaludin Rumi’ (Nila Chambers); and ‘Contemplative Living in the Modern

World’ (Linda Oliveira); A meditation is also held before the meetings.

### **Toowoomba Group, QLD (certified 2007)**

No report was provided for the period in question.

## **CONCLUSION**

This concludes my Annual Report to the Australian Section which summarises and highlights the exceptional service of so many individuals around our Section. A number of our centres have experienced a resurgence in attendance and participation by members and guests. This came after a period in the doldrums due to the effects of the global pandemic. My hope is that in the coming year we can build on this renaissance.

Stephen McDonald

### ***The Freedom and Responsibility of Lodges and Branches***

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

*Resolution passed by the General Council of the Theosophical Society (2019)*

## Annual Membership Analysis of Lodge/Branch Membership as at 30/06/2023

Lodge/Branch	Members 30-Jun-22	Trans in	New	Rejoin	<b>Total in</b>	Resign	Lapse	Dec Trans out	<b>Total Out</b>	Members 30-Jun-23	Diff
Adelaide	46	1	4	7	12	0	4	1	0	53	7
Blavatsky	133	0	26	6	32	4	14	1	3	143	10
Brisbane	113	0	19	1	20	10	51	1	1	70	-43
Hobart	13	0	8	0	8	0	3	0	1	17	4
Launceston	9	1	0	1	2	4	0	0	0	7	-2
Melbourne	90	2	11	12	25	1	36	0	0	78	-12
Newcastle	17	0	3	0	3	1	7	0	0	12	-5
Perth	104	0	25	11	36	1	16	0	0	123	19
Sunshine Coast	27	0	1	2	3	0	3	0	0	27	0
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>-22</b>
National	106	3	9	6	18	2	17	2	1	102	-4
<b>Total</b>	<b>658</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>-26</b>

## National Calendar of Events

### 2024 CONVENTION PROGRAMME

The Theosophical Society in Australia  
20 - 26 January 2024

*‘The Wisdom Traditions, The Great Teachers, The One Life’*

Featured Speaker: International President - Tim Boyd

#### *Sat 20 January - Arrivals*

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

#### *Sun 21 January - Day 1*

**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  
Roll Call of Voting Delegates and Proxies  
Confirmation of Minutes of 2023 Convention Business Meeting  
National President’s Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2023  
National Treasurer’s Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2023  
Financial Statements and Balance Sheet for the Year Ended 30 June  
2023, and  
Auditor’s Report thereon  
Budget for the Year Ending 30 June 2024  
Appointment of Auditor



Announcement of Newly Appointed Officers and National Council Members

Announcement of Ballot Results for State Representatives:  
- South Australia/NT and Queensland

Vote on Notices of Motion

Place and Time of Next Convention

Resolutions of Goodwill

Any Other Business

**2.00pm** PUBLIC TALK - THE THEOSOPHICAL ORDER OF SERVICE

*'Human Rights as the Voice of Suffering and Compassion'*

- Professor Emeritus Baden Offord AO

**4.00pm** PUBLIC TALK - KEYNOTE SPEAKER

*'Boodjar Neh: Listening to the land or Aboriginal Way of Being, Thinking, Knowing and Doing'*

- Professor Emeritus Simon Forrest

**7.30pm** Audio-visual presentation -

*"Cultivating Joy: Where it hides and how to find it"*

- Diane Bellchambers

### *Mon 22 January - Day 2*

**7.30am** Morning Attunement

**9.15am** *'Perspectives on First Nations' Astronomy'*

- Kevin Davey

**11.00am** Short Talks:

1. *'The Ageless Wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita'*

- Perry Coles

2. *'Living Your Inner Wisdom'*

- Aina Notoa

**2.00pm** The Theosophical Order of Service: Annual General Meeting

**4.00pm** Workshops:

1. *'A Socratic Dialogue'*

Facilitator - Gunnel Watkins

2. *'2024: Pluto's Titanic Shift into Aquarius - how can we use this opportunity as a pathway to the Ageless Wisdom?'*

Facilitator - Nicky Bassett

3. *'Spiritual Equity and Planning for your Ascension Retirement'*

Facilitator - Taralei Williams

**7.30pm** Audio-visual presentation - *'Remembering Dianne Kynaston'*

- Isolde Sueltemeyer

### *Tues 23 January - Day 3*

**7.30am** Morning Attunement

**9.00am** OUTING: Cruise on the Swan River including Lunch

**7.30pm** Classical Concert - The CSO String Quartet

### *Wed 24 January - Day 4*

**7.30am** Morning Attunement

**9.15am** FEATURED SPEAKER

*'The Theosophical Movement and Global Culture'*

- Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society

**11.00am** Short Talks:

1. *'The Great Teachers, my personal search'*

- Jean-Robert Hote

2. *'Fohat and Electricity'*

- Wendy Dixon

**2.00pm** Workshop with Lodge/Branch Committee Members:

- Facilitators - Stephen McDonald and Aina Notoa

**4.00pm** Q and A Session with Tim Boyd and Stephen McDonald

- Facilitator - Simon O'Rourke

**7.30pm** Audio-visual presentation - *"The Spiritual in Film"*

- Simon O'Rourke

***Thu 25 January - Day 5***

**7.30am** Morning Attunement

**9.15am** *'Seeking the Common Ground - The Dreamtime, Christianity and some captivating Australian Aboriginal Myths'*

- John Davey

**11.00am** Talk: *'Is there an Inner Government of The World?'*

- Simon O'Rourke

**2.00pm** Workshops:

1. *'The Nature of Dukkha - a dialogue'*

- Facilitator - Bruce Cassidy

2. *'The Theosophical Movement Today'*

- Facilitator - Stephen Fiyalko

3. *'Wallace Slater's Raja Yoga and its application to everyday life'*

- Facilitator - Wendy Dixon

**4.00pm** PUBLIC TALK - FEATURED SPEAKER

*'The Power of Place'*

- Tim Boyd, International President of the Theosophical Society

**5.00pm** Invitation to 2025 Convention, Hobart

Closing of Convention (National President)

**7.30pm** Classical Concert - Jasmine Farghaly - Pianist

***Fri 26 January - Departures***

Departures after breakfast

NB: there may be some minor changes to this programme during the Convention.

**ADVANCE NOTICE: 2024  
SCHOOL OF THEOSOPHY,  
SPRINGBROOK RETREAT  
CENTRE, QLD**

**Event for TS Members only**

**Theme:** *The Three Evolutions, Physical, Mental and Spiritual: Studies in the volumes of The Secret Doctrine*

**Dates:** Thursday 18 April – Wednesday 24 April (inclusive)

**Guest Presenters:** Simon O’Rourke and Wendy Dixon

**Overview:** H. P. Blavatsky’s marvellous work, *The Secret Doctrine*, will be the subject of the school. We will be looking into each volume, dividing our studies each day between: the mental—comprehension of the incomprehensible immutable principle; the physical—an understanding of the septenary root-cycles in human development; and the spiritual—discussions based on the wisdom teachings of *The Secret Doctrine* concerning spiritual unfoldment.

“Logos is Spirit; or, as Occultism explains, it is a compound unity of manifested living Spirits, the parent-source and nursery of all the mundane and terrestrial monads, plus their divine reflection, which emanate from, and return into, the Logos, each in the culmination of its time. There are seven chief groups of such Dhyan Chohans, which groups will be found

and recognised in every religion, for they are the primeval SEVEN Rays. Humanity, occultism teaches us, is divided into seven distinct groups and their sub-divisions, mental, spiritual, and physical.” SD1 (573)

Some think The Secret Doctrine is only a synthesis of the knowledge known to humanity, but it has an inspiration that is much greater than this. We will explore the stanzas and the concepts of Monads, Rays and Emanations.

**Afternoon Sessions:** Unlike previous Schools, where student presentations were involved, the afternoon classes will be spent on interactive discussions and further examination of the concepts introduced in the morning sessions.

**Cost:** The cost of the School for the seven days is \$750 per person. This includes accommodation, meals, tuition and transit to and from the airport or station.

**Enquiries to:** Stephen McDonald, [pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au)



## Minutes of the 2023 Annual Convention Business Meeting

Minutes of the Convention Business Meeting of The Theosophical Society in Australia held on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at St Mark's College, University of Adelaide. Notification had been provided in *Theosophy in Australia* in accordance with Rules 13 and 14 of the Rules of The Theosophical Society in Australia.

The meeting was opened at 9.25 am.

### CONVENTION CHAIR

The Meeting was chaired by the National President, Stephen McDonald. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. All attendees were members of the Australian Theosophical Society.

### 1. ROLL-CALL OF VOTING DELEGATES AND PROXIES

In accordance with Rule 17(2) of the National Rules, the names of the voting delegates and proxies must have reached the National Secretary on Form 3 by 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Only those delegates identified on Form 3 by the due date were eligible to vote at the present meeting. They were noted as follows:

- Bruce Cassidy, or failing him, Russell Preston for **Brisbane Lodge**
- Walter Mason, or failing him, Heather Fisher, for **Blavatsky Lodge**
- Helen Steven or failing her Grant Dale for **Hobart Branch**
- Denise Frost or failing her Marck Lyrio for **Launceston Lodge**
- Patricia Bolsover or failing her George Ilkoweit for **Newcastle Lodge**
- Colin Darcey, or failing him, Gaynor Fraser, for **Adelaide Lodge**
- Mary Margarit, or failing her, Jean Carroll for **Sunshine Coast Lodge**
- Stephen Fiyalko, or failing him, Edward Sinclair for **Melbourne Lodge** (Informally, as Melbourne Lodge had not held their Lodge Convention Business Meeting. As there were no notices of motion to be voted on, this was allowed by the chair).

The members vote on agenda items at Lodge/Branch committee meetings, usually held in November or December, with the Annual Convention Business Meeting (ACBM) taking place in January. This meeting endorses the votes of the Lodge/Branch Convention

Business Meetings. As a result, no new business can be raised at the ACBM. Delegate voting in January can only be on very minor amendments. Any individual member of the National Society (seconded by another member); or any Lodge/Branch or Executive Committee; or the National President, the National Treasurer, the National Council or the National Executive Committee can put a matter to a vote by sending the National Secretary a notice of motion by the due date as outlined in the Rules.

Jean Carol, from the Sunshine Coast Lodge shared her 20 years of knowledge as to the procedures for the lodges and branches in preparation for the ACBM. As many Presidents and Secretaries are new in these positions, Jean will share this information in a written document (after this convention).

## VOTE ALLOCATION 2023

**Rule 16 - Voting at Convention** - each Lodge is entitled to one vote irrespective of the size of its membership, and in addition to this, each Lodge is entitled to one vote for every 50 members in Good Standing at the end of the previous financial year (in this case, 30 June 2022). Only Lodges/Branches that held a Lodge/Branch Convention Business Meeting may vote at an ACBM. For the 2023 meeting, the vote allocation was as follows:

Lodge	Members in Good Standing	Votes
Newcastle	15	1
Adelaide	45	1
Blavatsky	104	3
Brisbane	77	2
Hobart	8	1
Launceston	7	1
Sunshine Coast	22	1
Perth	94	2
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>12</b>
National	85	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>14</b>
Melbourne	57	2

## 2. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF THE 2022 ANNUAL CONVENTION BUSINESS MEETING.

The Minutes of the Annual Convention Business Meeting held on ZOOM Saturday January 2022 were published in the November 2022 issue of *Theosophy in Australia*. The National Secretary reported that all voting Lodges/Branches voted to **accept** the Minutes of the 2022 Convention Business Meeting, with the exception of Melbourne Lodge, which abstained on the grounds they did not hold a convention meeting. It was noted that of our 8 Lodges, 7 had held Convention Business Meetings. **Unanimous.**

### 3. NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022.

The Chair pointed out that the National President's Annual Report for the Year ended 30 June 2022 had been sent to every member of the Section in the November 2022 edition of *Theosophy in Australia*. The National Secretary reported that all Lodges/Branches voted to **accept** the Annual Report. **Unanimous.**

### 4. NATIONAL TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022

The National Treasurer's Report for the Year ended 30 June 2022 had been sent to every member of the Section in November 2022. The National Secretary reported that all Lodges/Branches voted to **accept** the National Treasurer's Report. **Unanimous.**

### 5. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND BALANCE SHEET FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2022 AND AUDITOR'S REPORT THEREON

The Financial Statements and Balance Sheet for the year ended 30 June 2022 along with the auditor's report had been sent to every member of the Section in November 2022. The National Secretary reported that all Lodges/Branches had voted to **accept**

the Financial Statements, the Balance Sheet and the Auditor's Report. **Unanimous.**

### 6. BUDGET FOR THE YEAR ENDING 30 JUNE 2023

The Budget had been sent to every member of the Section in November 2022. The National Secretary reported that all Lodges/Branches had voted to **accept** the Budget. **Unanimous.**

### 7. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITOR

SDJA Audit Specialists remain as Section auditors until at least the January 2024 meeting of the National Council, when it is next scheduled to appoint an auditor.

### 8. ANNOUNCEMENT OF APPOINTED OFFICERS

The National President reported that the following appointments remain the same:

**National Vice-President:**

(NC) Gaynor Fraser

**National Treasurer:**

(NC) Beatrice Malka

**Assistant Treasurer:**

(EC) Michael Svoronos

The National President, National Treasurer and National Secretary are *ex-officio* members of the Executive Committee for 2023. The National Council also appointed the following

additional members: Denise Frost (Launceston Lodge); Edward Sinclair (Melbourne Lodge); Berenice (Berry) Dunston (Hobart Branch) and Barry Bowden (Brisbane Lodge).

The Chair gave special thanks to Cassandra Au (Blavatsky Lodge), who retired in December 2022.

The National Council membership remained the same and was not read out (all information was shared informally after the meeting, with an invitation to email the National Secretary with any questions).

## **9. ANNOUNCEMENT OF BALLOT RESULTS**

### **State Representatives for WA., VIC., and NSW/ACT**

The National Secretary reported that in August the results of the election of the State Representatives were announced, for WA (John Davey, re-elected unopposed, after filling this vacancy due to a resignation midterm), VIC (Edward Sinclair re-elected unopposed), and NSW/ACT (Gerard Brenan re-elected unopposed).

## **10. VOTE ON NOTICES OF MOTION**

There were no notices of motion.

## **11. PLACE AND TIME OF NEXT CONVENTION**

The National President, Stephen McDonald, announced the next

Convention will be held in Perth at St. Catherine's College in January 2024 and details will be given during the Closing Ceremony of this Convention.

## **12. OTHER BUSINESS**

Gaynor Fraser passed on greetings from Bev Champion.

The Chair called for further questions or comments.

A question to Stephen McDonald on his recent overseas trip to attend the International Convention of the Theosophical Society and the meeting of the General Council allowed him to give an update on the renovations and changes being carried out at the Adyar campus.

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 10.10am.



## Annual Convention Business Meeting Of The Theosophical Society in Australia

**The 2024 Convention Business Meeting of the Theosophical Society in Australia will take place at 9.15 am on Sunday 21 January at St Catherine’s on Park, 2 Park Road, Crawley WA 6009.**

*This notification is provided in accordance with Rules 13 and 14 of the Rules of the Theosophical Society in Australia.*

### AGENDA

Roll Call of Voting Delegates and Proxies

Roll Call of Voting Delegates and Proxies

Confirmation of Minutes of 2023 Convention Business Meeting

National President’s Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2023

National Treasurer’s Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2023

Financial Statements and Balance Sheet for the Year Ended 30 June 2023, and Auditor’s Report thereon

Budget for the Year Ending 30 June 2024

Appointment of Auditor

Announcement of Newly Appointed Officers and National Council Members

Announcement of Ballot Results for State Representatives:

- Queensland and South Australia/Northern Territory

Vote on Notices of Motion

Place and Time of Next Convention

Resolutions of Goodwill

Any Other Business



## The TOS Australia National Coordinator Report for 2023



Theosophical Order of Service

Changing international financial requirements over the last few years have caused several of our international donations to rebound. The National Committee has been working very hard this year to address these issues and it has ended up with us needing to register with the ACNC and the Tax department so that we can present an official international presence to facilitate fund transfers in the future. This work appears to now be nearing completion so fund transfers will recommence.

TOS Australia has planned disbursements totalling AUD \$20,350 to the following international projects.

Syrian Refugees (via TOS-Italy)	\$4,000
Golden Link College Philippines ( <i>through Kern Foundation</i> )	\$2,000
Ukraine Refugees	\$500
Pakistan Home Schools	\$6,000
Pakistan student sponsorships	\$4,650

### *India:*

Olcott Memorial school Adyar	\$2,000
Women's welfare centre Adyar	\$500
Animal dispensary Adyar	\$200
HPB Hostel Adyar	\$200
TS Adyar Academy	\$300

Locally in Australia, a new national “**Food for Soul**” project, has started to raise funds (\$6,000 target) to improve the meals for the children at the Olcott school at Adyar. This is being spearheaded by Leo Ta, a TOS member in Sydney (also TS Convention secretary at the TS National headquarters). She can be contacted at the TS National office to get further details on how to contribute to the project.

Some other TOS work and activities that have been occurring around Australia this year include:

- Brisbane – A multicultural variety concert and supper that included presentations in music, poetry and on nature and environment from Iran, Australia, China, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea & South America.
- Perth – Taizé World Peace music meditations held monthly in conjunction with the LCC Perth.
- Canberra – fund raising through the sale of items donated by members and friends.

These are all ideas and opportunities that any of the TOS groups in Australia can be inspired by.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the TS convention in January in Perth where the TOS will be sponsoring the presentation by **Professor Emeritus Baden Offord AO** on *'Human Rights as the Voice of Suffering and Compassion'* and holding our TOS Australia Annual General Meeting. It will be a great time and an opportunity for all to reinvigorate and set some new plans for 2024.

A very heartfelt thanks is given to all the national officers. Dianne and Min continue to diligently execute the roles of National Treasurer and Secretary and have been very heavily involved in completing our registration with the

ACNC this year. I am very grateful for their most excellent support. I also extend a very hearty thank you to Jean Carroll who still mentors and supports us.

Finally, thanks go to all the TOS members around Australia for your ongoing support in all this valuable work. Your efforts and loving participation at the local level continues to make it possible for us all to live up to our motto **"A union of those that Love, in the service of all that suffer"**.

Love and Blessings to All,  
**George Wester**

*National Coordinator, TOS Australia*



## Astronomy and Astrology: What We Observe and What We Experience

### An Event at Springbrook Education and Retreat Centre, Queensland from 26 – 29 October 2023

*by Sushma Webber  
Wellington, New Zealand  
(6 Nov. 2023)*

A weekend event on the theme of Astronomy and Astrology was held from 26-29 October 2023 at Springbrook with 16 attendees

including the speakers. The sessions were interactive and lively with participants learning more about themselves as well as the happenings in outer space! A highlight of the weekend was viewing the Full Moon and Jupiter with its four largest moons, called the Galilean moons (Io, Europa, Ganymede and Callisto), through the telescope brought by David Allan of Brisbane. David is a retired scientist and amateur astronomer.

Astrologer Nicky Bassett from Brisbane, presented on ‘Planetary Cycles Impacting Humanity’ and how the natal chart is a snapshot of the heavens showing the position of each planet and constellations at the moment of an infant taking its first breath. Astrologically, the transits of the various planets through the Zodiac marked certain points in the life of a person. For example, the transits of Jupiter, a 12-year cycle, marks the Rites of Passage; transits of Saturn, a 29.5-year cycle, emphasizes the Cycle of Responsibility.



Simon O’Rourke, Education Coordinator of the TS in Australia, focused on the Theosophical perspective on astrology and astronomy based on the *Secret Doctrine*. H.P. Blavatsky had pointed out that there were 17 planets in our Solar System and that not all of them were visible, and that the Sun and planets were living beings or intelligences. Astrology indicated the journey of the personality taking place on behalf of the soul.

Astronomer Kevin Davey from Adelaide, introduced us to the many aspects of our Solar System and beyond. The invention of the telescope

in the 1600s had helped in advancing our understanding of Earth’s place in the cosmos. Kevin also presented on ‘Reflections on some Astronomers named in the Secret Doctrine’ such as William Herschel who discovered Uranus and infrared radiation and his son John Herschel; Sir William Crookes, who was also a member of the Theosophical Society; and many others. The final session by Nicky Bassett on ‘Portal to Pluto’s Aquarian Transformation’ highlighted Pluto’s transit into Aquarius this year, which happens every 248 years, and how we can navigate through the dramatic transformation in the next 20 years in the world and our own lives.

In the late afternoon, we had time for questions and answers, and an outdoor activity facilitated by Kevin to help us understand the vast distances between the Sun and the planets. This simple exercise helped us delve deeper into the subject.

It was a memorable weekend that expanded the worldview of the participants to include not only the Earth and our humanity but also the wider universe.



## Annual Index

Annual Convention Business Meeting Agenda	151	National President's Annual Report, 2023	122
Annual Membership Analysis	141	National President, from the	2, 38, 74, 114
Architecture and the Economic Impasse: Walter Burley-Griffin	91	News & Notes	31, 106, 156
Astronomy and Astrology: What We Observe and What We Experience – An Event at Springbrook Report	153	Nicholas Roerich – A short biographical sketch: Michael Breen	18
Awakening Spiritual Consciousness for a New Zealander at the School of Theosophy, Springbrook 2023: Joe Swami	100	Position of National Secretary – Seeking applicants	63
Brief look at some Theosophical artists in Australia: Walter Mason	22	Report on New Zealand School of Theosophy April 2023: Michael Svoronos	60
Call for Nominations – National President	26	Section Directory	35, 71, 111, 159
Call for Nominations – State Representative for South Australia/Northern Territory and Queensland	61	Self – An Illusion or the Reflection of a Deeper Unity – Part 1: Richard Silberstein	78
Coordinator Report, 2023	152	Self – An Illusion or the Reflection of a Deeper Unity – Part 2: Richard Silberstein	115
International President, from the	4, 76	Some Interesting Gems from the Theosophical Society: Tinh Van	55
Krishnamurti: Did the Coming Go Wrong?: Dr. Ian Ellis-Jones	85	Theosophical Order of Service	67
Let Us be Like the Sky: Phillipa Rooke	49	Theosophical work of John Algeo – The Pilgrim and the Path: Living Theosophy “Evolution in the Light of the Wisdom Tradition” A personal Reflection: Gunnel Watkins	96
Minutes of the 2023 Annual Convention Business Meeting	147	Thich Nhat Hanh's “The Path of Emancipation”: Walter Mason	101
Namaste Series 4:34: Helen Lambert	34	Traditional Knowledges and Ageless Wisdom: Olga Gostin	40
National Calendar of Events	30, 64, 103, 142	Universal themes in world culture: Charles Hulley	10
National Convention – Adelaide, January 2023	69		

## News and Notes

### 148TH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION

*The Convention of 2023-2024 will be in-person at Adyar.*

*Main programs are broadcasted online.*

Members of the Society are welcome to attend as delegates.

Non-members are welcome to attend but accommodation at the campus is not possible due to the limit of beds.

#### **Program:**

Lectures, talks, panel discussions, workshops, exhibitions.

#### **Venue:**

International Headquarters Adyar, Chennai, India.

#### **When:**

31st December 2023 (opening at 8.30 am) - 4th January 2024 (closing at 6 pm)

You are suggested to arrive on 30 December and leave on 5th January.

#### **Register:**

<https://convention.ts-adyar.org>



### THE SCHOOL OF THE WISDOM

**LOVE and DEATH in Great Spiritual Traditions**

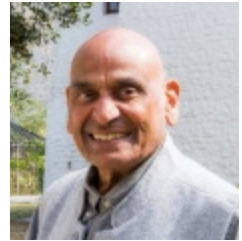
*Jan 16 2024 to Jan 26 2024*

#### **Venue:**

Blavatsky Bungalow, TS Campus, Adyar

#### **Facilitator:**

Prof. Emeritus Ravi Ravindra is a life member of the Theosophical Society. He has taught many



courses in the School of the Wisdom in Adyar and in the Krotona School of Theosophy in Ojai, California. He is Professor Emeritus at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Canada, where he had taught in three departments-- Physics, Philosophy and Comparative Religion. [www.ravindra.ca](http://www.ravindra.ca)

#### **Cost:**

Free for members. Non-members to pay a fee.

#### **Registration:**

[www.ts-adyar.org/event/love-and-death](http://www.ts-adyar.org/event/love-and-death)

Also see the website for more events at the SOW.

## RESULT OF STATE REPRESENTATIVE BALLOTS -

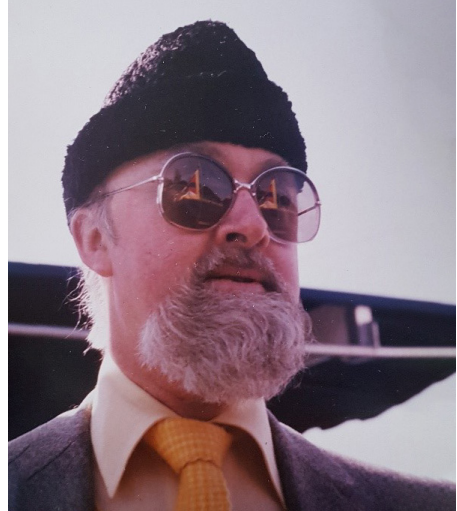
### South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland

There was only one candidate for the position of State Representative for South Australia/Northern Territory, Kevin Davey. In accordance with Rule 21.6 no ballot was carried out and I declare **Kevin Davey** elected for a term of two years.

Due to the IT systems problems experienced at the National Headquarters recently, the ballot for the State Representative for Queensland had to be extended. Therefore, the closing date for the receipt of voting papers was set at 17 November 2023. There were two nominations for the position, Christine Gwinn and Bruce Cassidy. The result of the ballot was 23 votes for Bruce and 18 for Christine. I therefore declare **Bruce Cassidy** elected as State Representative for Queensland for a term of two years.

**Walter Mason**  
*Returning Officer*

## TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL BREEN



Michael emigrated to Australia from England in 1960. In Sydney he lodged with Len and Kathleen Wade (Isis Lodge) and soon joined the TS. He immersed himself deeply in the study of the Secret Doctrine. Throughout the Sixties, Michael was very active in our weekly Young Theosophists group.

He was a friend of the well-known ABC broadcaster, Don Ingram-Smith, who always travelled to India tape-recording Krishnamurti's talks there. Michael had copies made and we spent many evenings together at Celia Novy's home listening to those precious talks.

Michael was gifted with a special British sense of humour. I specially remember him in his role as the

‘Mikado’ in a performance at the Katoomba Convention in about 1973.

During the Seventies, when the TS was located in Walker Street, North Sydney, in a building with a theatrette on the ground floor, he organised regular film screenings for the public of special documentaries on art and culture which he borrowed from the film library of the NSW government archives.

Michael had a great love of nature - particularly of mountains -, of classical music and sublime art. This eventually led him to make a unique personal contribution: he devoted his life to the dissemination of the works of the great Russian spiritual artist Nicholas Roerich, the ‘Master of the Mountains’. A successful stockbroker by trade, Michael retired early to travel the world multiple times taking photographs of Roerich’s paintings in numerous countries such as Russia, Latvia, Finland, the US, Brazil, India, etc., in museums and private collections - forming a compilation of this great artist’s work.

For this task he had purchased the very best cameras and equipment for reproduction. He was a most generous person. In due course he presented many slide shows and produced a DVD.

He felt privileged to have become a close friend of Nicholas Roerich’s

son, Svjatoslav, living in India, and consequently he also became interested in ‘Agni Yoga’, the spiritual teachings of Helena Roerich.

For several decades, Michael was an important worker and supporter of the McIntyre Centre for Senior Citizens, together with his close friends Len and Kathleen Wade, Gerda and Ziggy Vanags, Win McKenzie and many others.

He became very interested in Buddhism and also joined the Tibetan Friendship Society.

The photo (below) was taken around 1982 when we joined His Holiness the Dalai Lama on a Sydney Harbour Cruise organised by that Society. You can see the Tibetan flag reflected in his glasses.

Michael died peacefully on 1st June 2023, not long before his 90th birthday.

We thank him for his remarkable dedicated service to Theosophy, the TS and the upliftment and inner advancement of humanity. And we will miss his quiet pensive manner and truly unique ‘quirky’ sense of humour. He will continue on his upward path - as the ‘spiritual mountaineer’ that he was.

**By Isolde Sueltemeyer**



## 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

Email: [tshq@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:tshq@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

Web: [theosophicalsociety.org.au](http://theosophicalsociety.org.au)

Campbell Theosophical Research Library:

Email: [catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:catalogue@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

Facebook: [@TheTheosophicalSocietyInAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/TheTheosophicalSocietyInAustralia)

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

#### **Canberra Group, Certified 16/11/2019**

Meet: Friends Meeting House, Crn. Bent and  
Condamine Streets, Turner.

2- 4 pm, 3rd Saturday of the month

Coordinator: Gordon Herbert

Tel: 0466 464 064

Email: [canberratheosophicalsociety@gmail.com](mailto:canberratheosophicalsociety@gmail.com)

Secretary: Barbara Harrod

Tel: 0417 298 869

### NEW SOUTH WALES

#### **Blavatsky Lodge, Chartered 22/5/1922:**

Postal Address: PO Box 319, St Leonards NSW 1590

Meet: Suite 8, 599 Pacific Highway, St. Leonards

NSW 2065 (entrance in Albany Street)

Study Groups & talk on Wednesdays

(Program of all activities on website)

Telephone: Reception: 02 9267 6955

Email: [adyar@tssydney.org.au](mailto:adyar@tssydney.org.au)

Web: [sydney.theosophicalsociety.org.au/](http://sydney.theosophicalsociety.org.au/)

Acting President: Dr Wendy Dixon

Secretary: Pamela Peterson

Office Hours: 10am-4pm Wed to Fri

#### **Newcastle Lodge, Chartered 3/12/1941:**

Meet: Wallsend Railway Goods Shed

(now Wallsend Enterprise Centre),

76 Cowper Road, Wallsend

1pm on third Saturday of the month.

President: Patricia Bolsover

0421 699 631, [pat\\_bolsover@optusnet.com.au](mailto:pat_bolsover@optusnet.com.au)

Secretary: Jane Wilson

[zoisite888@gmail.com](mailto:zoisite888@gmail.com)

Web: [newcastle.theosophicalsociety.org.au/](http://newcastle.theosophicalsociety.org.au/)

#### **Blue Mountains Group, Certified 13/5/1997:**

Meet: Members' Lounge, Blue Mountains

Cultural Centre, 30 Parke Street (above Coles),  
Katoomba NSW 2780

Meet first Wednesday of the month, 11am - 1pm.

Acting Coordinator: Stephen McDonald

Email: [pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au](mailto:pres@theosophicalsociety.org.au)

#### **Gosford Group, Certified 11/11/1997**

Meet: The Narara Community Centre,

Pandala Road, Narara NSW 2250

8.00pm 2nd Tuesday of the month

Coordinator: Mariette Blackmore

Tel: 0402 483 317

Email: [all4mariette@hotmail.com](mailto:all4mariette@hotmail.com)

Secretary: Roni Ostergaard

Telephone: 02 4358 1413

#### **Northern Beaches Group, Certified 2/4/1996:**

Postal address and meeting address:

c/- 31 Riviera Street, Avalon NSW 2107

1.30 pm 1st Saturday of the month

Please email to confirm meetings

Coordinator: Nila Chambers

Email: [nilachambers@bigpond.com](mailto:nilachambers@bigpond.com)

### QUEENSLAND

#### **Brisbane Lodge, Chartered 21/1/1895:**

355 Wickham Terrace, Brisbane QLD 4000

Tel: 07 3839 1453

Meet: 7.30 pm Wednesdays, bookshop and library

open Monday and Friday 10.30 am - 2.30 pm and

Wednesdays 6 - 7.15 pm (see website for other events)

President: Bruce Cassidy

Secretary: Russell Preston

Email: [brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au](mailto:brisbanelodge@theosophyqld.org.au)

Web: [brisbane.theosophicalsociety.org.au](http://brisbane.theosophicalsociety.org.au)

Facebook: [@brisbanetheosophicalsociety](https://www.facebook.com/brisbanetheosophicalsociety)

#### **Logan Group, Certified 9/4/2019:**

Meet: Logan Hyperdome Library (meeting room

downstairs) 66 -70 Mandew St, Shailer Park.

Bimonthly on the first Thursday (4 - 8 pm -

including talk 6:30 - 7:30 pm).

Tel: 0418 755 496

Coordinator: Christine Gwin

Email: [loganthosophy@gmail.com](mailto:loganthosophy@gmail.com)

**Sunshine Coast Lodge, Chartered 14/10/2003:**

*Meet:* Maroochy Community Centre, 4 George Street,  
Maroochydore on first and third Sundays at 2 pm.  
*Email:* theosophy.sunshinecoast@gmail.com  
*President:* Kerry Oldfield  
*Secretary:* Mary Margarit, 0422 878 379  
*Facebook:* @theosophysunshinecoast

**Toowoomba Group, Certified 10/7/2007:**

*Meet:* East Creek Community Centre, 43 Kitchener St,  
Toowoomba QLD 4350, Sunday 2 pm fortnightly  
Annual Springbrook retreat each Spring  
*Co-ordinator:* Anna Robb  
*Tel:* 0427 751 464  
*Email:* nemesisbarry@gmail.com

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA****Adelaide Lodge, Chartered 26/5/1891:**

310 South Terrace, Adelaide SA 5000  
*Tel:* 08 8223 1129  
*Email:* president@tsadelaide.org.au  
*Web:* adelaide.theosophicalsociety.org.au  
*Meet:* 10.30am, 4th Saturday, Science Group, 7-9pm  
every 2nd Thursday.  
(Please contact Lodge for additional meeting dates.)  
*President:* Colin Darcy  
*Facebook:* @adelaidetheos

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

13 Goulburn Street, Hobart TAS 7000  
*Tel:* 03 6294 6195 (please leave message)  
*Web:* hobart.theosophicalsociety.org.au  
*Meet:* 7.30pm Mondays  
*President:* Berry Dunston  
*Secretary:* Grant Dale  
*Facebook:* @theosophyhobart

**Launceston Lodge, Chartered 12/1/1901:**

*Meet:* Room 4, 8 High Street, Launceston 7250  
(School for Seniors building)  
Usually on the 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday of the month,  
commencing at 1.00 pm  
*Web:* launceston.theosophicalsociety.org.au/  
*President:* Denise Frost  
*Tel:* 0400 140 624  
*Secretary:* Ruth Holt  
*Tel:* 0448 397 246  
*Postal address:* Launceston Lodge Secretary,  
c/o 66 Flinders Street, Beauty Point TAS 7270  
*Email:* launcestontheosophicalsociety@gmail.com

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

*Meet:* 1st Flr., 234 Flinders' Lane, Melbourne VIC 3000  
*Tel:* 03 8638 9007  
*Email:* info@melbournetheosophy.org  
*Web:* melbourne.theosophicalsociety.org.au  
*Meetings:* Every Saturday from 1.30 pm  
*Acting President:* Stephen Fiyalko  
*Facebook:* @MelbourneTheosophicalSociety

**Mornington Peninsula Group, Certified 8/2/2000:**

*Meet:* Mornington Community House,  
3/91 Wilsons Rd, Mornington,  
1st Sunday of the month,  
(12.30pm meditation + library - 1.30pm presenter +  
questions and comments)  
*Co-ordinator:* Alice Oppen 0439 563 313

**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  
*Web:* tsp Perth.com  
*Meet:* 7.30pm Tuesdays  
*Library hours:* Tues 6:15 - 7 pm; Fri 1 - 4 pm;  
Sat 10 am - 1 pm.  
*President:* Jean-Robert Hote  
*Secretary:* Mary Hote  
*Facebook:* @TheTheosophicalSocietyInPerth

**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**

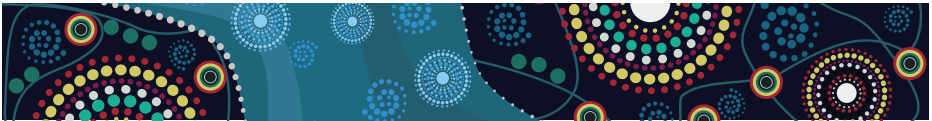
2184 Springbrook Road, Springbrook QLD 4213  
*Tel:* Office/Hall 07 5533 5211  
*Email:* info@tsretreat.com.au  
*Caretaker:* Kay Schiefelbein

## *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)*



## 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.