

Proposal for District Restructure for Survival.

Preamble.

In my role as Dist GDC it became obvious to me that despite all the encouragement from the Board and Development teams, that actually, little of real consequence was happening.

A deeper look at each lodge as I went about my job slowly revealed that the most fundamental cause of the present malaise affecting the craft is a loss of energy due to aged brethren, by individual Lodge management.

The cause, that no one wants to admit, is that the majority of Lodge officers are older/elderly who have been there and done that, and now are still there doing it, but have become tired, and only remain to keep the Lodge going. The drive and energy of 20 years ago has mostly gone.

Most lodges actually only have a very few truly active members with energy, the rest just along for the ride, and reminisce about the old days.

However, and this is the difficult bit; they still cling white knuckled to management of the lodge affairs, thus creating a behind the scenes environment that is not appealing or attractive to newer members who are a little obstructed in achieving anything.

Some lodge newer members have moved around the roadblocks, however those roadblocks have found that they are mobile, thus keep popping up ahead. So the newer members simply stop attending as the atmosphere has become unattractive.

The following concept I have been mulling over for quite a long time. It has been mentioned before, however the atmosphere was not welcoming on the basis of we are just fine thanks!

I freely acknowledge that W Bro Russell Pratt's [Opinion Piece](#) on the Divisional Website was the prompt to put pen to paper. Yes, I subscribe to the Website and read it regularly.

The Broad concept.

As I see it, following is a fairly complete structure that would keep the organisation alive for quite a long time to come. It would almost eliminate the administration at existing lodge level.

The District would become the primary lodge of the district. For the sake of clarity, I will use the district that I am familiar with, Bay of Plenty District 7.

Thus, a "new" lodge would be formed, which could use a name like "Freemasons of Bay of Plenty Lodge No 7."

The District Grand Master would be the Master.

On a prescribed day, ALL of the brethren of the district lodges would become members of the new lodge, and all the charters of the district lodges would be suspended for reallocation.

The new lodge would be substantially an administration organisation with a secretariat that would look after all the meeting records, notice papers, treasury work, newsletters, etc, thus relieve the individual lodges of all administrative work.

One good notice paper/newsletter could be produced each month from the secretariat, to all district members, thus district communication would be greatly improved. Forward work planning, membership enquiries, dues, etc would all be managed from one central office.

It would be contentious in some quarters, that even property management could come under the wing of the district, using appropriately qualified members to administer them.

Charity projects, almoners, and the like all managed from the district office.

Yes, a team would be needed to operate the secretariat.

The District Grand Master, who would become Master of the new District Lodge No 7 would also need all the usual officers of a lodge and operate with all the due ceremony as at present. That team would be chosen in much the same way as Grand officer appointments are made now. Officers would not need to be Grand officers, just properly qualified for the office to which they are to be invested. However that would need consideration so that a flow of new grand officers can continue. The District Master, I expect would be an existing Grand officer with appropriate qualifications and experience, chosen by the same process District Grand Masters are selected now.

Logically, the main Lodge would be in a convenient main centre.

The District Grand Master and the District Lodge would also assume responsibility to conduct some installations, primarily in the lodges that survive the restructures. The surviving district lodges still have an annual installation. For clarity of Administration, they could keep their charter and number on the Roll of Grand Lodge.

Annual installations is a subject arising as I write, and it may be that as part of such a restructure, that lodges may extend their tenure of officers to 2 years, with installation as a biennial event.

Under the control of the new district lodge, a collection of subsidiary lodges would be formed.

ie, two or three "Operative" lodges whose role would be ceremonial work, such as working degrees and the like. These operative lodges would have all the usual officers on the floor of the lodge, however instead of a secretary, treasurer etc, all the administrative work has been done by the main district lodge. The only administrative function would be maintenance of an attendance book, and, for want of a better name, a recorder, who simply records what took place. That report then sent to the secretariat for processing for returns to GL office, and perhaps extracts for the district newsletter. The "Operative" Lodge would have officers who CAN do the work to the highest standards. And high standards would be expected. The lodge may meet at various locations as appropriate.

The Research lodge would continue much as it does, and as above, all the administrative work is done by the district lodge secretariat.

There would be a couple of Philosophical lodges that simply like to discuss general items of interest to freemasons, with perhaps presentations from learned brethren. These Lodges may deliver the Tracing boards.

A couple of Social lodges that have social meetings, cater for wives, partners and families.

It is expected also that a couple of daylight lodges be part of the mix. Daylight Lodges would be likely to welcome the above, as they are the most vulnerable to failing energy, thus causing their demise.

In this regard this concept may be attractive to The Meridian Lodge who are struggling to stay afloat, and it is likely under these proposals, Geyserland Daylight would likely still be going.

Postscript.

As said in the beginning, these concepts have been quietly evolving for quite a long time, however it is only now that I think the Craft is ready to open its mind to alternative arrangements.

I have no doubt that the tall poppy cutters will quickly sharpen their knives, however, until some serious thought is given to methods of allowing a wide cross section of new members to participate in a way with which they are comfortable, then we remain vulnerable.

Not every new member that comes in the door wants to be an officer, in the same way not every person who joins any organisation wants to be on the committee.

I have seen too many good men and true, pushed into wearing a collar that they did not want, but of too generous disposition to say no. Then be criticised by the senior members for not meeting some mystical standard they think should be maintained, only to see the new man quietly walk away.

Yes, it's quite a significant change, but with a little goodwill could be achieved. In the meantime sadly more lodges will fail.

We are but transient custodians of the Craft; to that extent, we have failed.

Kind regards,

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PM, Lodge Whangarei 102, and Lodge Apanui 395.

Past Dist GDC. Bay of Plenty District 7.

30th March 2017.