

General Secretary Report 2020-2021

My intention here is to give you a brief overview of my role and activity in the 10 months since I was elected.

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude for your confidence in our Australian Anthroposophical Society and in the position of General Secretary.

I understand my role to be four-fold:

1. I have a responsibility to the individual members.
2. I have a responsibility to the National Society (ASinA).
3. I have a responsibility to the General Anthroposophical Society and our world partners
4. And I have a responsibility to the spirit of the times, *Micha-el*.

My investigation this past year has been-how to be a 'Country Representative' and what that means to hold that role. I know I cannot represent you all, but I strive to be as 'present' as I can to you all.

National View

The Anthroposophical Society in Australia (ASinA) is each one of you: you *are* the Society. The Society is not something that lives outside of you; you are part of it, you ensoul it. We are the Society; we are its *thinking, feeling* and *will*. And I am aware that what we say and how we act is reflected into the world.

The challenge is, how do we manage these enormous responsibilities and their complexities as individuals and as a Society? Can we lift ourselves to allow new impulses to emerge? Can we cultivate grace as a contribution?

The past year, I have been unable to travel as previous general secretaries have done. It has been vastly different to 2019 when we (branch reps) were able to meet and work together to identify priorities for the future of the Society and the members.

Since my tenure, I have initiated bi-monthly meetings with branch representatives to enable mutual exchange, with five Zoom meetings so far. Discussion on topics such as membership and financial contributions, website and communications have dominated these meetings. The branch coordinators have also given reports of their local activities and branch work remains very strong.

I have regularly reported on news from the Goetheanum leadership and news of the work of the Management Committee.

I have spoken with many members individually by phone and answered dozens of questions via the website.

International view

I feel the support of the international country representatives, even though I have been unable to meet anyone in person. Our conversations are collegial, and adequate time is allowed for each to share their country's 'soul mood'.

There have been meetings from a diverse range of country representatives, who each add rich experience to the worldview. These countries include Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Estonia, Finland, France, Great Britain, Hawaii, India, Ireland, Israel, Japan, USA, Canada, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, South Africa and Canada.

Together we are building a world picture of east and west and north and south, and linking the regions builds a cosmopolitan society, which is our purposeful goal.

For the first time, this year the General Anthroposophical Society AGM was streamed live to the world and members were able to vote from all the countries.

I have experienced a real move away from a eurocentric view, and this includes embracing the English language and providing translators on calls and at events. A deep interest in the worldview is evident from the leadership at the Goetheanum.

Our regular meetings are via Zoom, which for me often means 5.00 am. Our discussions range from:

- What is a country representative? How do we take up current questions and relate them to the *world soul*, to the human soul?
- How does the Society stand in relation to vicious and slanderous attacks? Do we publicly reject untrue statements and scrutinise our own stand against injustice? What is our contribution to overcoming it? *Anthroposophy World Wide* has included articles addressing the criticisms directed at the Society. A document has been produced to this end: *Anthroposophy and Racism*. The leadership is no longer passive. They are preparing responses that state the truth and, as such, are addressing issues of polarisation and isolation, of extreme inequalities in the world. It is right to question what position anthroposophists take on issues. There continue to be numerous attacks exploiting and alienating anthroposophists and defaming spiritual science.
- Pandemic questions: how can we breathe when social breath is coming to a standstill? To prepare for the esoteric development, human dignity and freedom must be forefront.
- Each country is asked: What are the key cultural issues right now? What unique qualities and issues to the fore in Australia?
- This Micha-el's school is one of the 'will,' where courage is key.
- What should we prioritise as Anthroposophists and what can we learn from others?
- What is membership? And why become a member?

The practice of Anthroposophy is based on cosmopolitan and social commitment.

2021 theme from the Goetheanum

The 2021 theme from the Goetheanum brings a request for deep investigative contemplation:

Self-responsibility.

Saying yes to the world,

Courage to know truth.

These three statements sit so well with our 'bookmark statements,' created collaboratively in 2019 at the Futures meetings of branches:

Work collaboratively, live with warmth of heart, listen deeply, develop trust, practice honesty, have courage to act, be grateful, and realise Spirit.

Here we express a process, a way of working, and an overarching goal.

Management Committee

I have found myself more involved with the work of the committee than I would have imagined so as to orient myself to the structure and address member concerns and requests. As a constituted body, the ASinA have a responsibility to be accountable in the financial and legal world and to all members.

There has been much work internally, we have met often twice a month and only once have we been able to meet face-to-face. We have developed teamwork and clarified our roles. I am so grateful to the committee for their time and wisdom.

We acknowledge our limitations and resources and those of the branches and as a national society and invite a conversation about how we can better share in terms of resources. For wider consultation, we invited members generally to join 'the collaboration and action groups, according to the themes identified as priorities at the futures meetings 2019. These collaborative groups include the constitution circle, the events circle, the membership circle, the cultural and diversity circle, the financial circle, the communications circle, the youth circle, and the agriculture circle.

Our intention is to develop anthroposophy - individually, as a group, as a branch, as a country, and as a world society. Some obstacles to this work include past hurts carried into the 'now' and I believe by addressing these issues and stories from the past, by listening deeply and developing trust, may we bring healing and move forward together.

Changes in M.C membership

I would like to thank Cristina Rubsamen and Mark Gallagher for their fine contributions whilst on the committee and wish them well in their next endeavour.

I am confident that with the new M.C team we will be able to engage the future and enable transparency for members.

Website and webinars

I would like to thank Fiona Campbell for maintaining and upgrading the website, and for her initiative 'Heart's Online'. Fiona has given so much of herself and enabled connection between the members in conversations throughout the pandemic restriction.

Journal and newsletters

The journal and newsletters continue to be published, despite illness and the restricted team involved. A warm thanks to Mark Gallagher and Margaret Bruvell for their years of work in this area and we warmly invite assistance in this area, as part of the 'communication circle' mentioned above.

Membership

I have processed 35 new members since September 2020, and I thank Graham Long, our member registrar, for his impeccable records and guidance.

The future

I am committed to deepening relationship with members and with the School of Spiritual Science and I will continue my worldly and esoteric work as I strive to find salutogenesis: the balance of work, life, and spiritual activity.

Warm regards,

Jane Bradshaw

This is a text version of the report given by Jane Bradshaw at the 2021 AGM in Hobart.