

Order of the Eastern Star

The largest
fraternal
Organisation in
the world for
women and
master masons



Origins

The origin of the Order is believed to be France, around the middle of the 18th century, with its rites and rituals spreading rapidly and extensively throughout the rest of Europe.

The Order of the Eastern Star as we know it today, was founded by Dr. Robert Morris in the mid 1800's. As a Master Mason, Dr. Morris had the idea that it would be wonderful to have a way for female relatives of Master Masons to share the benefits of knowledge and self-improvement that Freemasonry made available to men, and to have a place in the Masonic Family that would allow men and women to participate together.

Dr. Morris and his wife Charlotte worked on this idea of a Masonic Fraternal Order for Master Masons and their female relatives for many years. In 1850, Dr. Morris selected Biblical heroines who each had a story that reminded members of the lessons and values of the Order. He established the poetry around each of the heroines, the colours and emblems appropriate to each, and how they connect to the Masonic themes. The first ceremonial book for the Order was compiled and published in 1865 under the title of "[The Rosary of the Eastern Star](#)"¹."

In 1866, Dr. Morris became associated with Mr. Robert Macoy, who took over the planning and organisation of the Order of the Eastern Star. Mr Macoy was a prominent Freemason in the United States, and in 1867/1868, Mr. Macoy compiled and published a Ritual using Dr. Morris' Rosary as a guide. This was the beginning of the international organisation. The Ritual is used with little modification to this day across the world. Mr Macoy is recognised as being instrumental in founding the Order of the Amaranth and the creation of Chapters of the Order of the Eastern Star. He also founded what could be the largest Masonic publishing, regalia and supply house in the United States which is active to this day - *Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Company*.

From the work of both Dr. Morris and Mr. Macoy, the Order began to flourish, with its aims and purpose of promoting the welfare and wellbeing of others, particularly those of the Widow and Orphan, and those less fortunate.

¹ "The Rosary of the Eastern Star", Brown University Library (online), item bdr:411520.

Symbolism

The centre piece in every Chapter Room is an Altar. When the Chapter is in session, an open Bible rests on top. The Bible is open at Chapter 2 in the Book of Matthew in the Christian Bible. This Chapter relates the story of the first Christmas and the 3 wise men who travelled to meet and worship the baby Jesus. In that narrative, the wise men followed a bright star in the sky to help them find the birthplace of the baby Jesus. That bright star is called the Eastern Star, and represents the inspiration for the name of our Order.

The Altar rests in the middle of a 5 Pointed Star. Each Point of the Star has a story, a colour, and a special meaning for all members. Emblematic Symbols for each Point remind members of that story and what values they should aspire to in their lives.

Adah



Adah is the first Point in the Star. Its colour is blue and its message is of Loyalty and Commitment. The story is of a man called Jephthah and his only child, his daughter. Jephthah was a Jewish ruler and had to go off to war to fight those who would see the Jewish race destroyed. Before he left, he prayed to his God and asked that he be victorious. He made a promise to his God that if he was victorious, he would offer up to the Lord the first thing that came to meet him on his return. Jephthah carried his sword into battle, he was victorious, but on his return, the first thing that came to meet him was his only child, his daughter. As you can imagine, Jephthah was distraught when he remembered the promise he had made to his God. He told his daughter of his promise, but her immediate reaction came through her loyalty to her Father and what he believed in. She told him that he should keep the vow he made, but asked that she be allowed to go away for 2 months to prepare herself, then she would return so that he could carry out his promise.

Jephthah kept his commitment to his God. The emblem of Adah is the Sword and Veil – the sword represents the concept that it may sometimes be taken up in the defence of right and in the performance of duty. The veil is symbolic of revelation, and also of modesty and fearlessness.

The story also reminds us of the loyalty and commitment we should have to our family and friends, and what they believe in. There is danger in making promises – commitments – that are hard to keep. We should all be mindful of what we agree to do, as the promises we make should be considered a binding commitment.

Ruth



Ruth is the second Point of the Star. Its colour is yellow and its message is Devotion to our family and our friends. The story is of Naomi and her daughter-in-law Ruth. Ruth gave up her life, her people and her God to care for the ageing Naomi. The words *"Whether though goest, I shall go. Whether though lodgest, I will lodge. Thy people will be my people, and Thy God, my God"* were spoken by Ruth to Naomi, when Naomi wanted Ruth to leave her and return to her people. Ruth was devoted to Naomi's welfare regardless of what the consequences of what that meant to herself.

In addition to reminding us of the importance of devotion to others, the emblem of this Point is a sheaf of wheat. Ruth gathered grain from the fields to sustain herself and Naomi. The sheaf also reminds us that we should go through life gathering here a little, and there a little, in order to prepare for our ageing years.

Esther



Esther is the third Point of the Star. Its colour is white and its message is of Duty and Responsibility. It is the story of a Jewish woman, Esther, who became the Queen of Persia, but kept secret the fact that she was of Jewish descent. It was her responsibility as Queen, to serve the King even though he was not aware of her heritage. One day, Queen Esther heard that enemies of the Jews had convinced the King to issue a Royal edict to destroy the Hebrew Race. Even though she had duties to uphold as the Queen of Persia, she could not stand by and let her own people die.

The emblem of Esther is a united crown and sceptre. Our duties and responsibilities will sometimes ask us to make sacrifices for others. We should do this, by remembering to be faithful to our obligations, and in doing that, we will have courage towards fighting for what is right.

Martha



The fourth Point of the Star is called **Martha**. Its colour is green and its message is about Faith and Hope. It is the story of Martha, her family and her meeting with Jesus. Martha's brother Lazarus had taken ill and died. Martha, having faith in Jesus, sought him out in order to ask that he would bring Lazarus back from the dead. Her faith gave her hope. Hope makes us strive and reach for something higher. It doesn't mean that what we strive for, will always be successful, but Hope lets us start again.

The emblem of this Point is a broken column. This reminds us that human life can be cut short and at any time. With faith and hope, we can remain optimistic and confident in times of distress and despair. It doesn't matter what faith you have, as long as you have it. With hope and faith comes the confidence and courage that are needed to get through the trials of life.

Electa



The fifth and final Point of the Star is **Electa**. Its colour is red and its message is of Love, Charity and Hospitality. The story is not about 1 person, but the many women in history who have been persecuted for what they believe in. In Biblical times, this persecution came because these women had chosen to follow a particular religion and God. They were often asked to denounce their faith, and sometimes with the threat of death, but that made them stronger and they continued to care for those around them who needed food, shelter or simply a helping hand.

The emblem of Electa is a cup of charity. We must be brave and true to what we believe in. We must devote ourselves to giving to those in poverty or distress and regardless of any persecution we may receive. We should always hold out the cup of charity, and we should always, Love one another.

Charity Work

A key part of belonging to the Order of the Eastern Star is giving back to the community and enriching the lives of ourselves and of others. We take great pride in our charitable work with donations to various organisations and assistance given to the victims of State and National disasters over the years.

Each year, in some of our Chapters, the Worthy Matron nominates a Charity which benefits from fund raising activities during her Term of Office. Other Chapters choose to support the



Figure 1 - Donation from the members to 'Hearts for Kids'

community as various needs arise. The raising of monies for Charity, and the distribution of it, is bound by each State or Territory's gaming legislation and regulations as set out for Not-for-Profit Organisations. Fundraising activities are fun and varied. Examples include:

- ★ Luncheons, Afternoon Teas, Picnics, Sausage Sizzles, Balls/Dances;
- ★ Games Afternoons/Evenings (Bingo, Trivia, Cards);
- ★ Charity Stalls/Trading Tables;
- ★ Competitions (Raffles, Guessing Competitions);
- ★ Harvest Festivals (the giving of food to those in need); and
- ★ Craftwork (Knitting, Crochet, Greeting Cards, etc), for local Hospitals and Charities to sell or use.

In addition to the raising of funds, many Chapters provide support in other ways. for example:

- ★ Some Chapters in Queensland support patients receiving treatment for Cancer with visits and caps and rugs for warmth.
- ★ The Laurels at Clemtom Park in Sydney, is owned by the Grand Chapter of NSW & ACT, and provides valuable services for the community with our dedicated member support.
- ★ Chapter Members have knitted squares to make rugs for "WRAPS with Love", and in any two year period, the group can knit 28, 40 x 70 cm snuggle rugs. These rugs are sent to the underprivileged in far off places overseas.



Membership

To become a member of the Order in Australia, candidates must have a belief in the existence of a 'Supreme Being'. The Order itself is not a religion and membership is open to all faiths.

A new member takes an Obligation at an Altar which is the centrepiece of a Chapter room. The Chapter room is not a place of worship, and the Altar is symbolic of a faith that a member has, and the belief in a 'higher power'. When taking a membership Obligation candidates are asked to hold a holy book which represents for them, the commitment of a binding promise to their Supreme Being.

To be eligible to join the OES, females must be of good moral character and males must be Master Masons. In international jurisdictions, membership qualifications exist that require females to be related to a Freemason.

All members pay annual Dues to their Chapter which is used to assist in its running expenses. Various fund raising activities for Charity are held on a regular basis and members are able to contribute as much as they wish. One key difference the Order has to other associated organisations is how Charity funds are raised. Various social events/functions or raffles are held for members to get together socially, have fun, and raise money for Charity at the same time. These activities create lasting friendships with members sharing their love of serving and supporting the community while having fun together.



Figure 2 - Typical Chapter Room Layout with the Altar as the centrepiece

Meetings

All regular Chapters have a monthly meeting at which the business of the Chapter is conducted. The Initiation Ceremony – when a new member to the Order undertakes a membership Obligation – is only held in a regular Chapter and cannot be conducted at a Supervisory level.

Chapters have designated committees to assist in the administration of the Chapter. A General Committee meets monthly and other committees meet as required.



Figure 3 - A Chapter Birthday celebration with a visit from a Grand Chapter

To attend a regular meeting, all members must follow the 'dress code' of the Order. Sisters wear a white long dress or a white top/blouse with a long white skirt. Brothers wear a black dress suit. The requirement to follow the dress code at monthly regular meetings has led to the term 'white meeting' being used to describe regular meetings. Smart casual dress is appropriate for committee meetings.

Supervisory levels do not meet each month. District Grand Committees do not have 'white' meetings. Grand Chapters generally have two white meetings in a 12 month term ie. an Annual and Installation meeting, and a half-yearly meeting.

At The United Grand Chapter, white meetings occur every 2 years in the month of June. The location of the 'Biennial Sessions' of The UGCA are rotational with each being held in the State of the incoming Most Worthy Grand Matron. The Sessions are held over a few days to incorporate committee meetings and various engagements with representatives from overseas jurisdictions.

Governance

Structure

The Order in Australia is governed by The United Grand Chapter of Australia (UGCA) with assistance from Supervisory entities at either a local or state level. In recent years, District Grand Chapters, which required 19 office-bearers, were replaced with District Grand Committees. DG Committees do not require a full board of officers and are made up of regular Chapter representatives in that particular jurisdiction.



Figure 4 - Distinguished Members of The UGCA and Grand Chapter of NSW & ACT

In some states, there are not enough regular Chapters to form or maintain a Supervisory level. These regular Chapters report directly to another level.

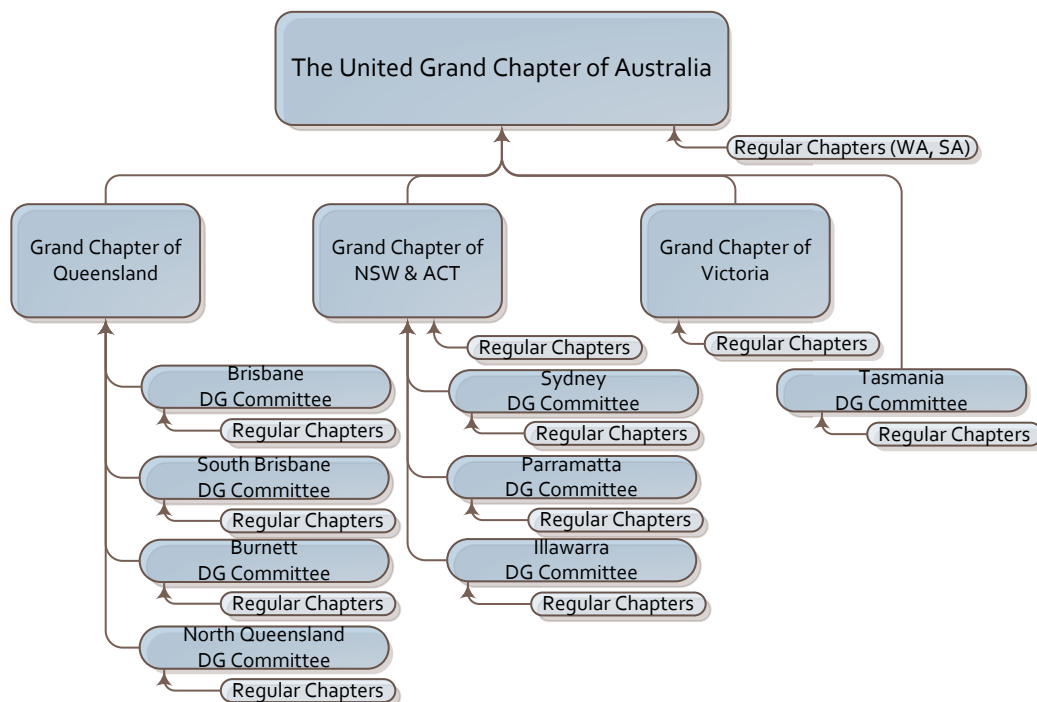


Figure 5 - The structure of the Order in Australia

The term of office for the majority of all Chapters and District Grand Committees is 12 months with the exception of The UGCA which has a 2 year term.

A regular Chapter has 18 Office-bearers with the Chief Office-bearer being the Worthy Matron. Grand Chapters and The UGCA have additional Office-bearers to share the administrative duties within their responsibility.

Office-bearer Title	Duty/Responsibility
Worthy Matron (WM)	A Sister to preside over the Chapter
Worthy Patron (WP)	A Brother to support the WM
Associate Matron	A Sister to support the WM
Associate Patron	A Brother to support the WP
Secretary, Treasurer	Sisters or Brothers conducting the administration affairs of the Chapter
Conductress, Associate Conductress, Marshal	Sisters who support or facilitate the ceremonial duties of the Chapter
Organist, Chaplain	Sisters or Brothers supporting the ceremonial duties of the Chapter
Warder, Sentinel	Sisters or Brothers responsible for the security of the Chapter whilst in session
Adah, Ruth, Esther, Martha, Electa	Sisters representing the 5 Points of the Star, with each Point exemplifying the lessons of an inspiring story. These lessons remind members of their responsibilities to themselves, their families, their friends and the community

At Supervisory levels, Office-bearers with the same duties exist, but with the addition of a prefix depicting their responsibility eg:

- ★ The Chief Office-bearer in The United Grand Chapter is the **Most Worthy Grand Matron** and all other Office-bearers are titled Worthy Grand Secretary, Worthy Grand Treasurer etc.
- ★ The Chief Office-bearer in a Grand Chapter is the **Worthy Grand Matron** and all other Office-bearers are titled Grand Secretary, Grand Treasurer etc.
- ★ The Chief Office-bearer in a District Grand Committee is the **Worthy District Grand Matron**. District Grand Committees have 4 key Office-bearers ie. Worthy District Grand Matron, Worthy District Grand Patron, District Grand Secretary and District Grand Treasurer. Committee membership is provided by elected members of Chapters within the jurisdiction of that Committee.

Growth of the Order - Internationally

The Order was introduced into Scotland in 1868 by Brother Robert Morris when he visited Edinburgh. The first recorded Chapter in Scotland was **Victoria Chapter No 1**, and the date of their Charter was 30th September, 1874. With the growth of Chapters over the following years, the **Supreme Grand Chapter of Scotland** was eventually instituted as the authority for the Order in the United Kingdom. Today, their jurisdiction spans not only Scotland, but to England, Northern Ireland, New Zealand and South Africa.

The first Chapter in the United States, **Queen Esther Chapter No 1**, was instituted on the 1st of December, 1874 in Washington D.C. In 1876, the **General Grand Chapter** was established in the United States as the authority for the Order in that country. Today, their jurisdiction spans to include Canada, Germany, Peru, Aruba, Guam, Philippines, Brazil, Romania, Columbia, Mexico, Taiwan and the non-continental states of Alaska and Hawaii.

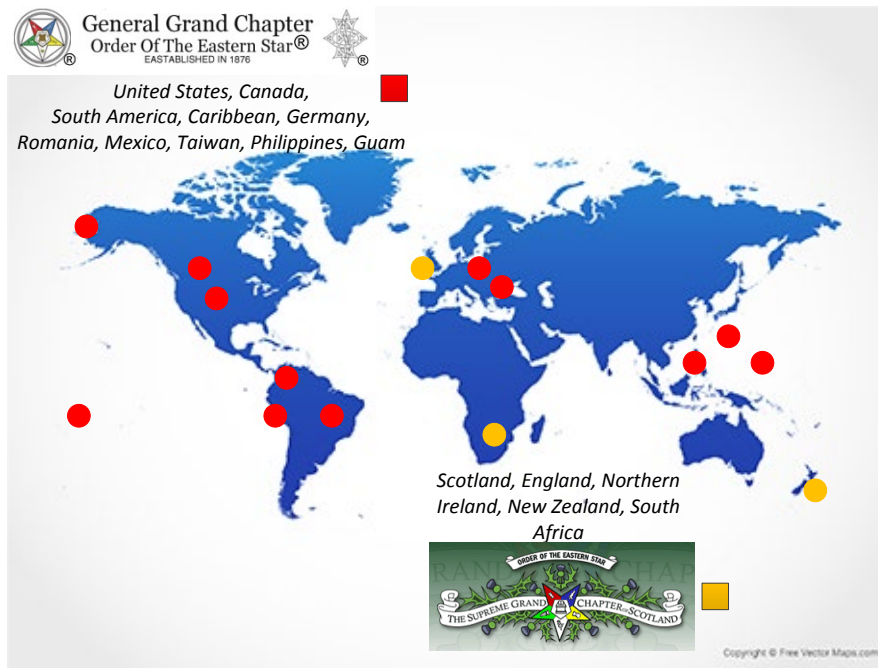


Figure 6 - International Jurisdictions of the OES

Growth of the Order - Australia

Queensland

The OES in Australia was introduced by Brother Stewart Hall and Sister Sarah Hall from the Supreme Grand Chapter of Scotland. Both members had been involved in founding the first few Chapters in Scotland and had come to Australia for health reasons. **Sarah Chapter No 31** was instituted on 13th July, 1912 in the Valley Masonic Hall, Wickham Street, Brisbane (Under the Supreme Grand Chapter of Scotland). Sister Hall was the founding Worthy Matron, and Brother Hall, the founding Worthy Patron.

The growth of Chapters stalled for a few years and it wasn't until 1922 that **Golden Wattle Chapter No 189** and **Hope Chapter No 192** were instituted. Chapters continued to grow and by 1938, Queensland had 27 Chapters, mainly in the Brisbane/South Brisbane area. In 1947, permission was granted to form the **Brisbane District Grand Chapter** and in 1952, **South Brisbane District Grand Chapter** was formed.

Chapters outside of the Brisbane area, and sometimes up to 2000 kilometres from the State Capital, were soon instituted. To support those Chapters, **Burnett District Grand Chapter** was formed in 1964, followed by **Far Northern District Grand Chapter** in 1979, and **North Queensland District Grand Chapter** in 1980.

On Australia Day 1985, and in the same year that The United Grand Chapter of Australia came into existence, the **Grand Chapter of Queensland** was formed with a jurisdiction over the five District Grand Chapters in that State.

New South Wales & the Australian Capital Territory

In May 1912, authority was granted by the Supreme Grand Chapter of Scotland, to a Brother Fred T Pedersen, residing in Lithgow NSW, to confer the degrees and form the first Chapter in NSW. In the end, two petitions for Chapters were approved of and both **Southern Cross Chapter No 33** (in Sydney), and **Hartford Chapter No 34** (in Lithgow) were instituted on 13th March, 1913.

In 1924, the Supreme Grand Chapter approved a petition for **Sydney District Grand Chapter** to be formed, and to have the power to supervise 9 Chapters in NSW and the 'Federal Capital Territory'. By 1946, NSW had 80 Chapters, and in 1946/47, the Sydney District Grand Chapter was divided into a number of Districts to enable more efficient management.

- ★ Illawarra District Grand Chapter (14/12/1946);
- ★ Eastern District Grand Chapter (21/12/1946);
- ★ Parramatta District Grand Chapter (11/1/1947);
- ★ Bankstown District Grand Chapter (1/2/1947);
- ★ Northern District Grand Chapter (22/2/1947); and
- ★ Hunter Valley District Grand Chapter (13/12/1947).

After lengthy negotiations, the **Grand Chapter of New South Wales** was Instituted on the 28th April 1951, as the governing body of the Order in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. The ceremony took place in the Sydney Town Hall with representation from other Australian states, New Zealand and a total of 2,370 members in attendance.

On 15th May 1954, **Western District Grand Chapter** was formed and on 28th September 1985, **Southern District Grand Chapter**. The Grand Chapter was renamed to the Grand Chapter of NSW & ACT Inc. in 2003.

Other States

The first Chapter instituted in Victoria was **Melbourne Chapter No 252** on 18th April 1925, soon followed by **Wattle Chapter No 301** in 1928. The **Melbourne District Grand Chapter** was Instituted in 1954 and had jurisdiction over the Chapters in Victoria until 22nd July, 2016, when the **Grand Chapter of Victoria** was Instituted.

The first Chapter instituted in South Australia was **Adelaide Chapter No 324** on 29th October, 1929 but it wasn't until 1936 that the next Chapter, **Unity Chapter No 379** was Instituted. In 1985, the **Deputy Grand Matron's Committee of South Australia** was formed to supervise the Chapters in that jurisdiction.

Around the same time as South Australia instituted their first Chapter, **Perth Chapter No 319** was instituted on 19th October 1929, followed by **Claremont Chapter No 371** in 1935. In 1985, the **Deputy Grand Matron's Committee of Western Australia** was formed to supervise the Chapters in that jurisdiction.

It took a few years for the OES to reach Tasmania. It wasn't until 11th June 1960 that **Tasman Chapter No 593** was instituted, soon followed by **Hobart Chapter No 605** in 1961 and **Tamar Chapter No 637** in 1967. In 1985, the **Deputy Grand Matron's Committee of Tasmania** was formed to supervise the Chapters in that jurisdiction.

The United Grand Chapter of Australia

By the mid-1980s, 265 Chapters had been instituted across Australia including 14 District Grand Chapters and a Grand Chapter, with Queensland and New South Wales achieving most of this growth. Members began to discuss the future direction of the Order in Australia and the possibility of obtaining autonomy from Scotland by establishing a 'Sovereign Body' of the Southern Hemisphere or specifically, Australia.

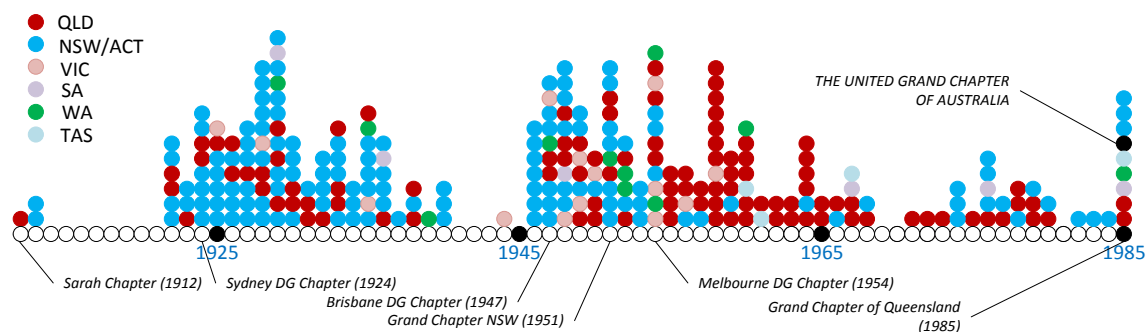


Figure 7 - Growth of Chapters in Australia to 1985

In 1984, a **Joint Planning Committee** was formed to discuss the ramifications of obtaining autonomy from the Supreme Grand Chapter of Scotland. The Chairperson was Mrs Elaine O'Brien (OAM) and the elected members of this committee were as follows:

Elected Member	State
Vera Davidson	Tasmania
Barbara Ashton	South Australia
Ted Phillips	Western Australia
Jack Shearer	Victoria
Elaine O'Brien, Norma Casley, Jean Kimble, Lois Olfen, Irene Thompson	New South Wales
Elsie Reinke, Margaret Tucker, Fran Smith, Aileen Zeith, Frank Robar	Queensland

Following much effort and discussion, **The United Grand Chapter of Australia Order of the Eastern Star** came into being on 8th June, 1985 with *"supreme and exclusive jurisdiction within the confines of the States and Territories of Australia and its dependencies"*.

Do you want to Belong?

Be inspired, belong to a group of likeminded friends. Give back to the community and enrich the lives of others!

The members of the Order of the Eastern Star share beliefs and moral values. We are committed to sharing, learning and community service. We enrich our lives by helping the community and each other. We believe there is a higher purpose for all of us, for all of humanity.

We are a friendly, welcoming and positive organisation. We believe in helping others, being passionate about what we do and most importantly, having fun.

If you have questions about membership or would like to know more, please visit our website, www.oesaustralia.org.au. The 'Contact Us' page on the website has options available to you to request more information.

Finally remember, that in order to Enrich the lives of others, we must first Enrich our own life. The Order of the Eastern Star could be for you too.....



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