

Freemasons are attracting younger members thanks to less secrecy and tapping into social media.

The historically "secret society" of the Freemasons has been the subject of many mis-informed conspiracy theories for years, but young Australians are looking past that and choosing to become part of the fraternity.

In the past, the Freemasons' initiation process was highly secretive.

Members had to be approached to join, had to meet certain criteria.

Since declining membership has led to a number of fraternities closing, rules around membership have evolved from being secret and at times discriminatory to being advertised as welcoming people from all walks of life.

Grand lodges in Victoria and New South Wales have pointed to social media campaigns as the success behind recruiting new members.

Several lodges have reported a 10–15 per cent increase in young people aged between 18-30 joining their group.

In the Grand Lodge of South Australia and the Northern Territory, 75 per cent of its 115 new members over the past year were in the 20–30-year-old age bracket.

Finding meaning in a changing world

Port Adelaide Freemason Cooper Andrew Allan, 22, said young people were finding a sense of purpose with the group.

"Things are changing, the world is changing, and I'm looking for some stability and I'm looking for something I can latch onto and find some meaning," he said.

"Inside that lodge room there's no phone, there's no iPad. It's very much like an enlightenment society. It's a time for peace, tranquillity and learning."

Becoming a better man

Freemasonry began in the Middle Ages when masons, or stone builders, were constructing the cathedrals and castles of Europe.

The men passed on their skills to worthy apprentices through secret rituals, and referred to biblical teachings that described the construction of King Solomon's temple.

South Australia's Grand Masonic Lodge director Jack Wolstencroft said any person with a belief in a supreme being who was a good person could join.

He explained the rituals, which were still mostly secret, are about character building.

"Freemasonry teaches lessons of social and moral virtues and is based on the symbols of the trade. Where the building industry is about building a physical structure, freemasonry is building the character of men," he said.

Freemason Ryan Mann was 32 when he joined and feels since then he has become a better person and found a sense of brotherhood.

"There was this vibe, a warm feeling in the [lodge] room, a feeling I hadn't felt in long time. There was just a bunch of good men in the room," he said.

"With a tried and tested system, [it was about] making a good man better."

Mr Mann admitted his initial contact with Freemasonry had involved looking at conspiracy videos on the internet.