



# ***Atheist Foundation of Australia Inc*** Established 1970

*Promoting scientifically credible & factually reliable evidence*

## **AFA AGM 2015 - Forum Report**

2014/15 may be described as a year of “positive consolidation” for the AFA Forum. While the previous year (to March 2014) saw a comprehensive overhaul of procedures, structures and staffing, this year brought relative stability and “organic” development.

The Moderation and Admin Teams are operating cohesively and consistently, and there was little turnover of Forum personnel during 2014/15. On a personal note, it is both a pleasure and privilege to be working with such a dedicated and talented group of volunteers, who are united in their commitment to advancing the AFA’s Forum community and social media presence. Several Forum staff and members also assist with other AFA social media areas, including FaceBook and twitter. Their continuing and dedicated efforts deserve the sincere appreciation and gratitude of all AFA members.

One key development has been the fostering of an improved Forum culture, for instance where users tend to “self-moderate” and/or call out any poor behaviour by other users, rather than formal sanction being the first “port of call”. This indicates an increased sense of community spirit, ownership and belonging. From this, we have seen examples of Forum members supporting worthy causes and assisting other member(s) experiencing real-life problems (occasionally including financial assistance). The AFA Committee has also kindly lent support to these efforts where warranted.

The majority of the procedures and processes that were put in place over the previous 12 months were also maintained, and incrementally refined. A significant change was the restructuring and expansion of the “Belief” area of the Forum to facilitate better management of problematic behaviours.



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The Forum Infraction system has proven to be extremely robust, and like 2014, the number of dispute escalations traversing all escalation points (ie: up to Committee level) remained at zero.

Technical stability gains (of the Forum software) have also been achieved and regular maintenance and upgrades remain ongoing.

Recent efforts have been made to cross-promote the AFA's various social media channels, so FaceBook and twitter may refer and link to trending Forum discussions or hot topics, and vice-versa. This has been observed to be an effective strategy, and we expect to maintain and expand this going forward.

In addition, a regular AFA Forum Report is now featured on the new AtheistAus (AFA) podcast, keeping listeners up-to-date and bringing Forum events and discussions to a wider audience.

While membership numbers indicate a reduced rate of growth compared with the previous year, this is against the backdrop of consistently reported **falls** in membership numbers of other benchmarked forums. The Forum remains a valuable resource for AFA members, and we look forward to seeing many more of them online.

**Forum Members @ Mar 18 2014  
4,639**

**Forum Members @ Mar 17 2015  
5,323**

**This is an increase in forum membership of 14.7%**