

AFA Forum Report

Annual General Meeting 2016

Overview

The Forum Year In Summary

2015/16 may be described as a further year of “positive consolidation” for the AFA Forum, where we continued the relative stability and “organic” development noted from the previous year.

The Moderation and Admin Teams are operating cohesively and consistently, and there was zero turnover of Forum personnel during the year. I’m proud 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.

Forum Culture

This remained largely unchanged from the previous year, which is itself a positive. The trend that was commenced towards “self-moderation” by users has been maintained. As was the willingness of Forum members to voluntarily support worthy causes and assist other members in need, including financially. The material support to these efforts provided by the CoM also cannot be underestimated, and it is much appreciated.

A once-off jump in members was noted as a group of 12-15 (approx) who were core members of other atheist/sceptical communities became disenchanted with the culture and management of those fora, and decamped to the AFA Forum. As they are all active and well-known within the “atheosphere” and known to key AFA Forum members and staff, efforts were made to accommodate them. As a result, the overwhelming majority of them continue to frequent and contribute positively to our online community. In fact, they have expressed that they consider our Forum management and moderation to constitute a model for how to do it well.

Forum Processes

Structurally, the Forum is largely unchanged from the previous year’s report, with the exception of one new sub forum added to accommodate an influx of disaffected members from other fora (see above). These processes and systems have served the Forum well during the 2015/16 year.

The Forum Infraction system has continued to be extremely robust, and like 2014/15, 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 maintained and regular maintenance and upgrades remain ongoing.

Forum Promotion

Efforts continue 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.

The regular AFA Forum Report on the AtheistAus (AFA) podcast continues to be an excellent update on Forum matters, brought to a wider audience.

Forum Membership

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.

Date	Members
At 18 March 2015	5323
At 8 March 2016	5801
Increase in Membership	8.97%