

*The following is a letter that has been circulated by members who are opposed to proposed reforms of the BSWA that were blocked at the AGM.*

*The text below that is dark blue is the letter that was originally circulated by those opposed to change.*

*The text in maroon red is the response by Ajahn Brahm.*

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### **BSWA 2018 AGM**

Constitutional change to allow Society Members outside the Committee to be appointed to BSWA subcommittees (amend 11.6 of Constitution).

I believe that in the first instance changes to the Constitution should only take place in extreme circumstances and I do not believe this proposal falls into that category. The proposal as it stands is potentially harmful as it abdicates responsibility from the elected committee to an unelected and largely unknown body for reasons which have not been adequately explained.

### **Ajahn Brahm's Reply**

The extreme circumstance is that Ajahn Brahm and several committee members have experienced such a heavy workload, which is increasing every year, that some help is urgently needed. Ajahn Brahm has had to sit through committee meetings where he has had to endure arguments on how we can extend the Treasurer's office (which was agreed to but not even started yet) and the building of a gate between Dhammaloka and 37 Milford Way, and how to keep on top of cleanliness issues at Dhammaloka (deferred because the committee ran out of time). Then, there are the arguments on whether to use MYOB or some other acronym for IT stuff which Ajahn Brahm can make absolutely no sense of. All that should be given over to a subcommittee to give the main committee more time to address major issues. Such as: our Meditation (Dhamma) Hall currently sits on the boundary between two properties, which is illegal, but the committee has been too busy to give this anything more than a promise of "Further investigation". The ATO is currently investigating our eligibility to continue receiving DGR, meaning donors receiving tax credits for donations to buildings, and we may lose this incentive. These are serious matters that our committee would have more time to deal with once subcommittees are allowed to look after more minor issues. Having attended committee meetings continuously for 35 years, Ajahn Brahm pleads for change.

An argument has been put that the process of is already in place at the monasteries and Jhana Grove so why should it not work at Dhammaloka. Well, there is one very

significant difference. In the former 3 situations the Sangha have direct control (and veto) over issues that affect the monasteries and Jhana Grove and from my experience, use it. However, at Dhammaloka this is much less in evidence and it is the BSWA committee that exercises management control. So what is now being proposed is to dilute this authority to un-elected persons who will have control of a budget and are free to appoint contractors and tradespeople as they deem fit with no defined committee control.

Ajahn Brahm, if he ever returns as the Spiritual Director, has veto power over the committee's decisions. It is my opinion that the BSWA committee has not been able to adequately manage the facilities at Dhammaloka due to overwork. Another example, when I have come to the monks' quarters at Dhammaloka on a Friday afternoon, the rooms were not cleaned, and the beds not made. The proposal is not to dilute authority but to DELEGATE authority, just as other organisations successfully do. Those who want to continue the status quo want the committee to micro manage Dhammaloka facilities, something that has not worked.

It is misleading, in Ajahn Brahm's opinion, to claim that this will give authority *"to un-elected persons who will have control of a budget and are free to appoint contractors and tradespeople as they deem fit with no defined committee control."* A subcommittee may only be elected by the existing committee, with the Spiritual Director holding veto power over the selection of volunteers. All subcommittees are given rules of what they can or cannot do. They are given budgets. They are unable to make any payments except with the authorisation of two committee members. They can be fired by the committee. The committee holds the final authority. This is why subcommittees, Delegated Authority, are standard practise, not something new or dangerous.

The proposal will likely include authority to spend up to \$5000 for each transaction, which is a significant amount and could **tie** the BSWA into long term contracts that may be difficult to cancel, should that necessity arise. It may include direct debit arrangements that may also prove problematical in terms of monitoring and cancelling.

Ajahn Brahm regards this as unsubstantiated fear-mongering. Rules are given to subcommittees. They cannot do what they want. Again, only two of the authorised signatories can initiate and confirm payments and these signatories are drawn from the committee.

I urge members to vote against this motion at this AGM on the basis that it has not been adequately explained, is unconstitutional and is of dubious value to the BSWA.

I urge members to approve this motion at the SGM. It has been explained, it is constitutional to amend the Constitution, and its value is to stop burnout of our volunteer committee, to serve the Dhamma better, and to ensure the continued service of Ajahn Brahm.

Ajahn Brahm, Bodhinyana Monastery, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2018