

Avatar's Abode Trust Report

Celebrating 30 Years of Operation



The new path from Baba's House to the Meeting Hall

History

During Meher Baba's ministry His wishes were to create a series of Trusts to ensure the ongoing tenure and management of Meherabad and Meherazad, as well as Avatar's Abode and Myrtle Beach Centre.

In the early 1980s it became increasingly apparent that the time was right to form a Trust to ensure the ongoing security of Avatars' Abode. A number of Meher Baba lovers throughout Australia began working on the formation of a new Trust Deed for Avatar's Abode with lawyers who were expert in the field. There had been close consultation with Baba's Mandali members Eruch Jessawala, Mani Irani, Bhau Kalchuri and Rano Gayley who helped with the content and wording of the Deed. This input was from the perspective of what Baba would want and what was best for Avatar's Abode. Bhau Kalchuri also had additional input into it as a legal structure; his knowledge and involvement with the Trust in India was very helpful.

In February 1983 the proposed Trust Deed and associated Company details were taken to the Mandali at Meherazad again, and on this occasion Eruch Jessawala chose the names of nine shareholder/directors. At that time the directors and shareholders were the same. They have since been separated so that directors can be appointed or resign and not affect the shareholding.

In April 1984 the Trust Deed and the Company structure required to administer the new Trust were ready to be signed. This was after consultation with the Mandali, extensive work that lasted over 12 months with solicitors and advice from a Queen's Counsel (QC) to make sure it complied with Australian law. The QC also checked that the Trust met the requirements for a 'not for profit' organisation and that it would have significant tax free concessions. With the encouragement of Eruch, Avatar's Abode property was signed across to the new Trust structure. This signified the acceptance of the new Trust by all parties.

What the Trust has achieved over the last 30 years

A Place of Pilgrimage – the property has been maintained as a Place of Pilgrimage and hundreds of pilgrims have come to stay in the provided accommodation or have made a day visit to Avatar's Abode. There has been a marked increase in visitors staying on the Abode in the last 12 months. Many pilgrims comment or send messages saying what a wonderful experience of love and care they felt on the Abode.

Events, Celebrations and Meetings – events including the Anniversary of Baba's visit and the Spring Sahavas are held annually; Baba's Birthday, Amartithi, Silence Day and Mehera's Birthday are celebrated every year; and depending on the numbers of young people, a Youth Sahavas is held most years. Many wonderful overseas guests have been hosted, including Mandali members Bhau Kalchuri, Meheru Irani and Katie Irani. There have also been many guests with a wealth of Baba history and stories



Looking from the Shed towards the Kitchen – the solar system panels can be seen on the Kitchen roof

who have come to stay and give talks or perform.

There are regular weekly Baba-focused meetings and a monthly film night. Various other gatherings are also held, including the more social, where members of the Meher Baba family can express their love for Him through the medium of music, dance, theatre, poetry and art.

Maintenance of the Property and Buildings – over the years many volunteers have put a lot of work into the ongoing care and upkeep of the buildings and surrounding grounds on Avatar's Abode. This includes constant repair to the roads on the property, which become damaged by heavy rains.

New Buildings and Development – the Trust has constructed several new buildings. All have proven to be most useful, and have been built with generous donations and often volunteer labour.

1. **The Reception Centre** is a multi-purpose building. As well as being a reception area it also houses the Francis Brabazon Library, Trust Archive Room, Francis Brabazon Archive Room, a film viewing area and a toilet block at the rear.

2. **The Shed** can seat 300 people (using the undercover verandah). It has been used for many Anniversaries and events saving a lot of funds that had been spent previously on hiring marquees.
3. **The Kitchen** and a storeroom underneath were built a few years ago, and the Kitchen has proved to be a real hub for community activities, meals and social gatherings.
4. **Baba's House Archive Room** presently houses Baba's sadhra, sandals and many precious items associated with Baba; these go on display during special events. The three archive rooms on Avatar's Abode are all air-conditioned and dehumidified and are frequently monitored.
5. An additional **toilet block** has been built between Baba's House and the Shed and includes an extensive septic system.
6. A new **five-kilowatt solar system** has been installed, which feeds back into the grid and significantly reduces the power bills.

What makes it all work

Avatar's Abode Trust Deed – this contains all of the objectives and goals for Avatar's Abode. The Deed has been structured to ensure that Avatar's Abode can never be mortgaged or sold, and will always be maintained as a 'place of pilgrimage'.

Avatar's Abode Pty Ltd – this is the Trustee Company which administers the Trust Deed. Its guidelines and rules of operation are set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association according to Australian Law and the Trust Deed. There are board meetings every second month. Digital copies of the Trust Deed and Memorandum and Articles of Association are available upon request. The Company operates within the framework of its Constitution and ASIC, and the Charities Commission.

Shareholders of Avatar's Abode Pty Ltd – there are nine shareholders. The shares are held by long term Baba lovers and are of one dollar value. They are not of any financial value to the holder and they revert to the company when a shareholder dies or resigns. At least



The upgraded Circuit Track is now an enjoyable walk and provides fire truck access below all the buildings

six of the remaining shareholders decide who receives any share that becomes available. Eruch Jessawala said, 'Any elections of shareholders and directors should not be open to the general community; a time will come when many people will come to Baba who will not have the same connection with Him'.

Directors of Avatar's Abode Pty Ltd – The Board members actively work to uphold the objectives of the Deed and the Trustee Company and make policy decisions within the scope of the objectives. They receive no financial remuneration. There is a quorum for meetings and the required majority depends on the number present. From time to time the Board has invited experts from the community to observe meetings and make recommendations on more efficient functioning.

There are a number of committees and workgroups:

Management Committee – this committee consists of board and non-board members and meets monthly to carry out day-to-day running of the property. It also

expedites the decisions of the Board of Directors.

The Management committee has several sub-workgroups:

- **Administrative Workgroup** – this consists of three members of the management committee who meet weekly to make sure the urgent things are done and work is carried out as planned, for example engaging electricians, plumbers and extra workers for the Abode.
- **Building Maintenance Group** – this group has had a significant impact on Avatar's Abode and comprises some of the younger generation of Baba lovers who possess building skills. They carry out major repairs and maintenance, including recently replacing the roof on Baba's House.
- **Buildings Grounds Work Group** – this group also does a huge amount of work. It carries out regular work as well as organising working bees.
- **General Grounds and Property Workers** – this group of people does the endless mowing, tree

maintenance, clearing and fire hazard reduction.

Friends of Avatar's Abode

Committee – the aim is for all Baba lovers to be a 'Friend' and support and participate in His Abode. The 'workers' organise funding for the Abode and prepare information for the newsletter 'What has been happening on Avatar's Abode', as well as general information reports. Many interested people live interstate or overseas.

Baba's House Committee – this committee oversees the décor, security and Baba's House and Meeting Hall preservation and maintenance.

Anniversary Committee – this group takes on the complex task of organising guests, preparing and running all aspects of the Anniversaries of Meher Baba's visit to His Abode.

Archive Committee – this is a newly formed committee that looks into all aspects of archiving Baba's precious artefacts and items associated with Him.



The Reception Centre can be seen behind the new sign welcoming visitors to Avatar's Abode

Some other groups or individual volunteers:

The **librarian** maintains and manages the Francis Brabazon library on Avatar's Abode and the supply of books to the pilgrim accommodations.

Website managers have developed a much upgraded website and keep it up to date with current information.

An **Events Calendar workgroup** meets annually to plan the major events timetable on Avatar's Abode for the next twelve months.

Flowers have been placed in Baba's room since His visit in 1958. There is a **roster of people** who arrange and place **fresh flowers in Baba's room** twice a week. Fresh flowers are also put on Baba's Sandals each day.

There are volunteers who **maintain and clean** Baba's House and the Meeting Hall. Also volunteers clean and maintain the Reception Centre, the Kitchen and toilets. Others clean and maintain Judith's cottage, Francis's cabin and the Pilgrim Quarters in readiness for the next pilgrims.

There are **people who arrange pilgrim visits and accommodation** including arranging for day pilgrims to be met and shown around, communicating with pilgrims (often international) who want to stay on the property, and where appropriate, ensuring people are met at transport terminals, taken shopping and introduced to the property.

What really makes it all work is the love, devotion and financial support of lovers of Meher Baba

Finances – Avatar's Abode needs regular donations to keep up the maintenance and running costs, for example rates, insurance, electricity and so on. Shareholders and Directors do not receive any remuneration for their role. The property has a small wages budget to pay occasional hired staff and volunteer staff who do major work which affects their normal income. Most of the voluntary workers do not require any financial return.

When consulting on the Trust Eruch Jessawala advised, 'Don't ever accept donations with strings attached'. However, the Board always welcomes suggestions for the ongoing development and maintenance of Avatar's Abode and always gratefully accepts donations for particular projects that have passed the planning phase. Over the years many generous Baba lovers have financially supported Avatar's Abode. Donations can be made via the Avatar's Abode website, using the Pay Pal option (this is a new facility) <http://www.avatarsabode.com.au/donations.html>.



Copies of a DVD of Eruch Jessawala talking at Meherazad 1983 on the formation of the Trust and his choosing the nine shareholder/directors are available on request – info@avatarsabode.com.au

Avatar's Abode Trust

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