



## **BrisLETS Restructuring**

A proposal by the President, Simon Cole

(In collaboration with Andrew Gaydon)

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## **Summary**

The purpose of this document is to take BrisLETS from hobby status to professional community service level. It was first conceived in 2018 following considerable observation and participation as a member since 2010 and as President since 2016. Many members and even non-members have contributed to the ideas in it. It has and will continue to be shared and debated with the membership. Constructive criticism has and will be absorbed to modify and improve it, even simplify it. Central to the proposal is a systematic method for remunerating volunteers in the organisation's 'currency', as any non-profit business does. A budget for this has been developed for both management committee members and other 'volunteers'. Ancillary to this document is a Jobs Description and Administrative Structure document, also available to all members. Both these documents provide direction and guidance for running the organisation effectively in numerous capacities for the benefit of users of the exchange. This includes those who want to simply trade, those who want a community and those who want to participate in supporting and running the organisation. Finally, a proposal in development as I write, (Stage 3) is that two membership options be made available, which reflects the motivations and wishes of those attracted to BrisLETS - Passive (Users) and Active (participating Members). It is my wish that this record will establish some traditions that future committees can rely on and protocols that they can continue to alter as circumstances change.

## Background

I've been involved with BrisLETS for more than 10 years. In that time, I have come to value the concept of mutual credit more than ever, and the community of people it has connected me with. It is my heartfelt wish that this alternative to money achieve its full potential. Opinions differ as to what that potential is, and this proposal will bring those views out in the open, if nothing else. My own view is along the lines of Matthew Slater's [Credit Commons](#); that the different mutual credit systems such as LETS, Time Bank and CES could merge to possibly form a genuine alternative to conventional currency, including cryptocurrency. This is a high-end view of the potential of mutual credit. I am not naïve to the multiple challenges such a lofty goal faces; technical and social, to name a few. However, I believe if we don't try, we will remain where we are. Some members are content with the status quo. Over the years, I have watched BrisLETS trundle along more or less as a hobby interest, relying on a small group of volunteers, sometimes happily, sometimes not so much. Each AGM is a near-death experience attempting to find a Management Committee (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer). Other more fun jobs are easier to fill. As President for the past two years (almost), I have seen from the centre so many ways in which BrisLETS could work more effectively, if only it supported committed people to implement them. This, and to a lesser extent a shortage of materials, seems to hold BrisLETS back. I believe we need to get past this sense of 'just surviving' and 'running on thin air'. We have a system of credit that has real value that can be more fully used to support our volunteers. Other than an annual, ad hoc token payment of stipends, the key people have been expected to operate in the gift economy. If they're able to do that and want to, all well and good, but many aren't, as the dollar economy fails people or becomes less rewarding to work for. This can make volunteering appealing, but not necessarily financially practical for some. If we want to attract people with the skills that are needed (IT, management), we need to create a rewarding, supportive and enjoyable environment for them to work in. The core committee jobs are always difficult to fill, and a Unit incentive is not the whole answer, but it can be part of creating a more attractive centre of fun, enthusiastic people who share the jobs around.<sup>6</sup>

The problem with the status quo is, as I have been told umpteen times by members and non-members, there's not enough available of real value in the LETS marketplace. Even for those of us who are wedded to the idea of mutual credit, the reality is our exchange is, in a sense, in competition with the dollar economy. For this reason, this proposal aims to redress the problem by seeking a way to increase the amount of trading and the variety and value of goods and services available.

I'm putting this Proposal to members to discuss and debate before voting on a final version at this year's AGM. Andrew has had some input in refining some concepts with a proposed restructure, along with discussions from other members on Facebook and our online collaborative tool 'Slack'. This has been ongoing with lots of opinions for about a month. I first raised it at a meeting at the April central Trading Day and will present it again at the May and June Trading Days.

## The PROBLEM

### Within BrisLETS

- Limited range and quality of goods and services
  - In the last six months, 96 members out of about 270 'active' members have accessed their accounts online
- Limited activity by traders. Uncertainty about Unit value
- Limited material resources (revenue, both Units and \$s)
  - marketing material, venue costs, support materials such as event equipment, Drop off Point facilities
- Limited committee capacity (time) to work on bolstering the exchange; e.g. tasks & initiatives that have been dormant (on Slack and email, etc.) for more than a month:
  - purchase of a video projector; purchase of a PayPal Card Reader; website upgrade quote approval; call for new Secretary, Membership Secretary, BrisLETS Website Administrator & Trading Facilitator; Tim & Anita Diamond Lawrence's request to split shared account; ABN address update; debate on raising Unit revenue for Admin (Trans fee vs Annual fee); debate about raising \$s through fundraising; debate about accepting \$ donations and bequests; planning for our 30-year anniversary; transitioning the newsletter to website-based news; Drop Off Point network development.

## The VISION

Achieving these goals would be a steady, incremental process over an indefinite period of time.

1/ 'Soft professionalisation' of committee work (see SOLUTION below)

2/ Activating and educating

- Maintaining and improving contact; regular but limited emails of Event Updates, Os & Ws and News driving members to a more active and interesting website
- A membership drive calling tree and survey
- Buddying up members who need help learning the system
- Annual Unit fee – this may keep membership active
- Education by Admin sign-posting/demonstrating the value of Units (Admin to lead by example): Use Units by default. Don't encroach on the gift economy. Value Units (vs \$) based on:
  - 1) the value of goods and services on the exchange
  - 2) the size of the exchange (no. of active members)
  - 3) social fairness inherent in a cashless system
  - 4) convertibility/acceptance of Units nationally and globally to other exchanges, whilst also keeping wealth local
  - 5) social utility of bringing accounting to favours; rewarding unrecognised 'work' (without encroaching on the gift economy; this is tricky, but can help financially strapped people)

3/ Increasing the membership through a higher public profile

- Low-cost marketing; word of mouth, marketing materials (more local hub events supported with banners, brochures), house signs for every member, DoPH placards, Email images/Units accepted images for off-LETS advertising

4/ Bringing more value to the exchange and emphasising the value of Units

- Emphasising investment in our mutual credit system. E.g. Unit-only trades with a \$ cost are an injection of value into the exchange system. Charge \$ transaction fee for \$ trades (honour system). The more members trade in Units, the more Admin can do in Units.
- Admin soliciting \$s from government grants represent a conversion of \$ value into the exchange. Preference for \$ investment from the wider system, not members (e.g. fundraising), but be ready to accept \$ donations and bequests (for high-end costs, e.g. property assets)
- Lifetime view of accounts; balancing accounts as members' needs and capacity change.

E.g. High needs in early life, high capacity mid-life, high needs late life? Deposits from family and friends at end of life to close at zero? Community Chest support for sudden illnesses.

- Protecting the value of Units:

5/ Easier to trade.

- Continuing to improve the user-friendliness of the online system
- Encouraging localisation and social connectedness
- Developing the DoP network
- Providing regular Trading and Services Salon Days with appealing themes and activities

## **A SOLUTION**

It is not proposed this is a 'Magic Bullet' that will solve all of the issues mentioned in previous sections of this document. No doubt other measures can and should be taken in conjunction with the following proposal. It is meant to facilitate the achievement of goals of the organisation, to be a 'means to an end' not a total solution. It is a work in progress.

### **There are THREE stages to this Proposal.**

1. Re-organise the manner in which the Management committee (Team) is remunerated.

Previously, stipends have been awarded informally for a guesstimate of time spent working and within a 'guesstimated budget' around the time of the AGM and paid regardless of the financial year end. For example:

- 2014/15 - 950u paid in July for previous financial year, 1,600u in May for the current financial year
- 2015/16 - 1,550u paid in May for current financial year
- 2016/17 - 900u paid in May for current financial year

2. Re-organise (and rename) the various Sub-committees into teams; 'Management Committee Support Team', 'Promotions Team' and 'Trading Support Team' and establish a Volunteer Rewards Program, to remunerate these 'Teams' and any other persons wishing to volunteer their services.

3. Membership Types.

Stage One needs to be approved at the AGM, Stages Two and Three can be implemented by the Management Committee.

## Stage One

### MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Under the constitution we require three office bearers, Chair, Secretary and Treasurer who are responsible for the legal requirements of incorporation and our dollar account. Other committee members could include Membership Secretary and a Units Treasurer either within the MC or outside it as a Support Team.

I believe we need to make committee work more appealing and enjoyable by having:

- Job descriptions that are flexible and can be tailored to individuals with training support for all jobs, MC & subcommittees,
- Unit-only rewards based on a better version of the current stipend system, kept within budget and raised as trading increases. Replace the current vague stipend system with set hours per week as a baseline, beyond which is voluntary work. We should have Agreements that; Management Committee members be on simple, 1-year agreements with hand-over & training expectations after a maximum of two terms. Recruit those with who are preferably knowledgeable of currencies and with basic IT skills, but remain supportive of those who are not and have other valuable experience.

### REMUNERATION BUDGET (see Appendix A)

- It is proposed to fund the remuneration of the management committee and that a yearly budget be set. This will be based on the previous financial year's income from transaction levies and annual levy, for example, the revenue that was collected by the 4% transaction fee on every trade and an annual levy\*. Transaction levies alone for the past 4 years have raised a levy income of:
  - 2014/15: 2,314.22\*
  - 2015/16: 2,880.64
  - 2016/17: 3,322.48
  - 2017/18: 4960.58

From this it can be seen that an increase in the number of transactions (trading activity) has increased Admin account revenue.

\* Note; an annual levy of 20u on 172 accounts raised 3,440u in November 2014/15  
Losses from running costs need to be taken into account.

- Payment frequency to be quarterly, according to the example in Appendix A
- The expectation is that MC members attend to their work every week for the time paid (see Appendix A), and an honour system in consultation with the MC determine adjustments, e.g. weeks absent are not paid.

- Pay is for 50 weeks. Weeks start on Sunday and end on Saturday.
- Holidays. The 1st week of January and the 1st week of December are vacation periods.
- The budget would need to be approved by the Management Support Team after the end of each financial year around the time of the MC's AGM. Sufficient funds should be allocated to fund expenses other than stipends that the organisation expects for the current year.
- A Units Treasurer will be appointed to manage the Remuneration Budget.

## APPENDIX A

### Sample Management Committee Stipend Budget

For work done for each financial year, paid in arrears.

Calculation - 50% of previous financial year's transaction levy income, e.g. 2,800u (50% to Teams and Volunteer Reward Fund - see Stage 2 & Appendix B)

Breakdown - 2,800/5 members = 560/12 months = 46.66/month. @ 35U/hour = 20 mins/week. 2 weeks holiday per year; 1st weeks of January and December.

**Table A** - 20 mins per week @ 35U/hour

Committee #	Unit / Month = (20 min x 4w) @ 35U/hr	Unit / Quarter	Yearly (50 weeks) (Cumulative Total)
1	46.66	140	560
2	46.66	140	1120
3	46.66	140	1680
4 (support)	46.66	140	2240
5 (support)	46.66	140	2800

### Sample 2018/2019 MC & Teams Budget

**Table B** - Sample Management Committee Stipend Budget 2018/2019

EXPENDITURE		
Stipend Schedule	5 Members @46.66u per month [20 mins/wk]	2800
Committee Meetings	(5 Members, 1 hr @35u/hr) 4 meetings	700
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>3500</b>

**Table C** - Sample MC & Teams Stipend Budget 2018/2019

	Income	Expenditure	Accumulative Total
Transaction Levy	~2800		2800
Levy 20u / year. (~270 x 20u) (a)	5400		8200

<b>MC - Stipends (Table B)</b>		<b>-3500</b>	<b>4700</b>
<b>Promotions &amp; Trading Teams Fund</b>			
<b>Admin expenses</b>		<b>-1000</b>	<b>3700</b>
<b>Volunteer Rewards</b>		<b>-3700</b>	<b>0</b>

**(a) Proposed levy to raise additional funds.**

~ denotes approximately

## Stage Two

### TEAMS & MEMBERS REWARDS PROGRAM

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT TEAM: Positions include Membership Secretary, Units Treasurer, Planning and Technical Support and 2 Team Representative (e.g. Promotions Coordinator, Trading Facilitator or Events Organiser).

The MANAGEMENT SUPPORT TEAM would be responsible for: The day-to-day running of the Trading platform; membership, units income/expenditure, research/development/implementation of the organisation's systems and coordinating the other teams.

PROMOTIONS TEAM: positions would include a Promotions Coordinator, NewsLETS Email Publisher, BrisLETS Website Administration, Social Media Moderator(s), Graphic Artist & Marketing, Fundraising & Grants.

The PROMOTIONS TEAM, would be responsible for: Promotional materials (hard & soft), Special promotions, news releases, maintaining our online presence and sourcing funds.

EVENTS TEAM: Event Coordinator, Online Events, Onsite Events, Events Email Publisher, Special Events Coordinator.

The EVENTS TEAM, would be responsible for: Trading Days, Hub meets, Special Events (+ more) advertising events and writing news about past events

PROPOSAL: That a new TRADING SUPPORT TEAM be created, positions would be Trading Facilitator, Mediator(s), DOPH and Local Area Coordinators, Librarian and the CES Website Administrator/CES Support Team Liaison person.

The TRADING SUPPORT TEAM, would be responsible for: (more)

Note: Any member of the association can help with TEAM JOBS.

### RECRUITMENT & TERMS

It is proposed that the change-over of positions be better prepared for to maintain interest and enthusiasm. This means handing on a job systematically. Each working member finds an appropriate recruit and trains them up before leaving by job-sharing toward the end of their term. Periods of service are negotiable, and 1-2 years is probably ideal. Members can move onto a different job and learn more about the whole system, or take a complete break.

### REMUNERATION

It is proposed that 'volunteers' be remunerated (via the Volunteer Rewards Program) based on

their actual work, some tasks will be on-going and others will be one-off.

A schedule of remuneration should be created to make it clear the amount of 'stipends' on offer for either on-going support or one-off payment.

The budget for stipends will be directly drawn from the "Promotions fund" and approved by the Management Committee.

## APPENDIX B

**Table D**

### Sample Volunteer Rewards Budget 2018/2019

	Yearly Total	Accumulative Total (3700)
Promotions Coordinator (1hr x 35u x 12m)	420	3280
Event Coordinator (Trading Days) (1hr x 35u x 12m)	420	2860
BrisLETS Website Admin (0.5hr x 35u x 12m)	210	2650
Social Media Moderator(s) (3 x 10u x 12m)	360	2290
Mailchimp Email Publisher (40u x 12m)	480	1810
Newsletter Editor (50u x 12m)	600	1210
CES Website Admin and Australian Support Team Liaison person (1hr x 35u x 12m)	420	790
PROMOTION EVENTS (2 people 4hrs @ 35u) 280u per event (4 events per year)	1120	-330
Trading Facilitator (1hr x 35u x 12m)	420	-750
DOPH (20 per month) (20u x 7 x 12m)	1680	-2330
Local Area Coordinators (4 x 20u x 12m)	960	-3390
Mediator(s) (ad-hoc payment)		
Courier Drivers (ad-hoc payment)		
TOTALS	7090 (c)	(3390) (b)

(b) Note: -3390 shortfall = ~12.5u x 270 members

(c) Note: 6 monthly expenditure = 3545u, which is in essence the total yearly annual budget allocated in Table D 3700u. An annual levy of 20u would cover 6 months expenses. 35u would leave 7750u available for the volunteer rewards fund giving a surplus of 660u (based on the above expenditure). This could be spent to top-up the above expenditure or added to general admin expenses in table C.

### **Volunteer Rewards Program - Further details**

It is proposed to reward BrisLETS members who volunteer their services with Units. This will be open, transparent and available to all members in the organisation who wish to see the development and growth of the organisation.

PURPOSE: To encourage regular and dependable volunteers so the organisation can fulfill its goals.

There are numerous ways in which the Volunteer Rewards Program can be funded.

1. Through a mandatory 20u annual levy.
2. Through a 'Crowdfunding' model where members donate Units to fund on-going positions or special projects.
3. Through Unit fundraising activities.

### **Crowdfunding option**

A list of 'ongoing' positions include, Social Media Moderator(s), etc.

Special Projects could include 'promotion stalls' at various festivals, etc.

These would be listed on our website along with the funds required/allocated to encourage members to donate Units to fund the activities required.

A 'Promotions admin' account could be created on the CES system to contain 'units' that have been either donated or levied.

AND / OR

A Units Treasurer could record funds into a separate ledger to keep track of donations/levy and expenditure allocations.

## **Stage Three**

### **MEMBERSHIP TYPES**

**From Josephine:**

#### **Setting the cat among the pigeons:**

#### **Further thoughts about the unsustainability of the current model of BrisLETS, ahead of the July 2018 AGM**

Every member of the BrisLETS organisation has joined because they wanted to trade their goods and/or services without actually spending hard cash. It's a lovely idea!

Being an organisation implies that at least some members are carrying out the actual organising.

So BrisLETS has two kinds of members:

1. volunteer organisers, who spend their time and energy for very little reward to make the organisation thrive
2. everyone else, who benefits from these volunteers' generosity without being directly obliged to contribute anything in return.

This system works well ... for a while. Then the volunteer organisers grow tired of carrying the burden of making the organisation thrive. If they were plants, they would wilt and die.

So BrisLETS is facing a crisis of sustainability. Chief symptom is that no one wants to replace the current MC members.

### **Brainstorming possible solutions**

- Reward the current volunteers – also known as the Management Committee and its team members – more significantly than is currently happening.
- Rejig the current model in which new members are recklessly sought **without asking for any commitment from them**. Getting this commitment could simply be via another question on the application form: WHAT TALENTS OR ABILITIES WILL YOU CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABILITY OF BRISLETS? And give a list of desired qualities or skills.
- Also include this quote on the form, from William H Johnson: *If it is to be, it is up to me.*
- Decree that there are two different membership options, for Lifters and Leaners, with an appropriate CASH joining fee reflecting the level of responsibility.
- Make the undertaking of the management committee member finite, say, one or two terms.
- Draw lots for the positions on the management committee.
- Ahead of time, survey the membership to see who COULD take on a committee position, then suggest this to them and groom them for the position. That's what they do in Rotary where the changeover is always at the end of the financial year. In Rotary Carindale, the 2018-2019 President will be inducted this weekend, but they have already tapped the 2019-2020 President on the shoulder and he has accepted.
- Current burnt-out MC members could simply tell themselves that no one should be indispensable, then walk away. Often things only change when a vacuum is created.

So, what do you reckon? Whatever you think, please come along on Sunday 15 July and have your say.

—Josephine Brown, BLCE 1073

### **From Alison:**

About decision-making by the Admin committee - something a little controversial:

LETS/CES is a little different to other community organisations. In the 'Help' on CES it states about Members vs Users: "The CES is a new money system, not a club or organisation. As such those who use the CES are its users, not its members. New users do not 'join' the CES but register to use the system ..."

People might expect that any paid-up BrisLETS member can come to a meeting and vote on

decisions, but management of the system is not always democratic.

There has been lots of discussion about it in other exchanges coming to the acknowledgement that the committee manages a service (trading post) with a specific function that's not completely up for modification by member input. Beginners need time and experience before they can absorb the culture of this fundamentally different economy. The uninitiated sometimes want to vote for policies that don't mesh with mutual credit.

The BrisLETS constitution is based on a model that assumes democratic decision-making. Some decisions are appropriate to open for everyone's input, others are not.

In the end the BrisLETS User Guide states that the Management Committee has the last word ...