

## President's Report at the AGM 2014

It has been a great privilege to guide and lead the Over 45 Social Canoe Club, Inc., in another busy year of activity through 2014. Once again it has been a full year, on the water locally, at the various camps and on the world wide adventure travel scene. This has been evidenced by the four seasons of Club Paddle Programme comprising the paddling opportunities available for 50 weeks of the year which have included seven additional alternative venues to accommodate the wishes of members preferring to opt out of the main programmed outing. Attendance at club paddles has been consistent throughout the year, ranging from through the twenties to a high around the mid-thirties. While the level of support is quite pleasing it is evident that a majority of members are choosing not to join in this Club's core activity. I wonder why it is that less than 50% of members are consistently on the water with us. Is this something the Committee should be addressing in its future deliberations?

During the past two years there were flurries of recruitment of new members, and also a falling off of activity of those recently granted membership. I wonder whether we expect too much in the way of enthusiasm from the newer members. There are exceptions though as we welcome Denise Delpero and Brian Griffiths into the second year of their membership within the Club, and we are pleased to welcome back Frank Williams to the fold. His application to rejoin after several years absence is ready for submission at the first meeting of committee in 2015.

We also experienced an unusual number of resignations; Neryl Stevenson, and Norm Heath decided that the demands of our activity were becoming a burden, and opted for a less demanding alternative. Two other members, both advocates of sea kayaking, did not renew their membership, perhaps because our Club did not meet their needs.

There was sadness too at the passing of Club members. Mal Johnston, who was active with the Club in its early days, visited our group at lunchtime during the past year, very pleased with his renewed health after heart surgery. We hadn't seen or heard from him for around ten years, however he passed away a few months later.

Helen Cooksey passed away after a long and thoroughly debilitating illness. Helen has paddled with our Club on many occasions, and was always a bright spark on the water and at camp.

Wolf Schwarz finally surrendered to his illness despite years of cheerful struggle against the odds, and most tragically of all Ralph Herd, who went through our training process with his partner Pamela English, became a Club member and passed away suddenly without even clocking up a single Club paddle. It was a year heavy with sadnesses.

Your committee elected at last year's AGM has worked diligently through the year to make all our Club services happen. Amongst the prime movers have been those whose assignments are spread throughout the year:

the Programme Officer, Blair Stevens, who has juggled his way through the days of the year, season by season, producing the written co-ordinated programmes for Paddling, Camping, and Social activity for distribution to members by email and snail mail as appropriate;

the Social Officers, Alan Reith and Pam Stevens. A great deal of effort goes into the organisation of camps, accommodation, sausage sizzles, travel arrangements, bookings for travel and halls, and accounting for deposits and full payments, and for the Anniversary and Christmas functions, together with co-ordination with the Club Treasurer in relation to Club subsidies and e-payments through the Club bank account;

the Publicity Officer, Alan Meyer has done us proud recalling the events of Club outings throughout the year, regaling us with merriment via some of the tall tales he has offered in his columns, as well as reminding us of coming events;

the Welfare Officer, Anne Garrity, who has provided contact with members and members' family in cases of ill health, passing on best wishes from the committee and membership.. She has also been a supportive link to several needing a shoulder to lean on, and a comforting hand to hold in passing through their period of distress;

the Equipment Officer, Mary Johnson, who has kept track of property owned by the Club and distributed among members for safe keeping.

During the time spent in committee meetings much of the effort has been spent in two areas, the creation of an improved management system able to cope with the flow of data in a vastly expanded membership of the club, and in trying to improve the management of Safety in the Club's core area of recreational paddling.

In the case of membership data management, discontent with the existing system was centred on existence of various sub systems, individually created and managed by their creators without any attempt of coordination. Of course this led to much confusion and distrust of the data. The solution adopted was to create a single record of data, managed by one

person, with the ability of being operated by several users to facilitate communications across the whole of the Club's activities.

For the creation of this marvellous management system we are indebted to Blair Stevens' expertise with computers and in particular to his knowledge of the capability of the *Excel* spreadsheet software. Now many of our members can achieve reliable transmission of information across the whole of the membership easily and accurately, knowing that the data they are using is the latest available and is up-to-date.

In the area of Safety within the Club it became clear that while many aspects were being addressed there was dissent over responsibilities for safety and the procedures that were in place. It was seen that Club procedures should place the emphasis on personal responsibility for safety, and should be revised to achieve that goal. It was during stalled discussions to achieve this that the club lost the services of its Safety Officer, through resignation, ostensibly at frustration at not being heard. While the agreement on the new procedures has since been reached it has not yet been possible to arrive at an appointment of a replacement Safety Officer. In my experience over the years it has been seen to be a thankless task, though without doubt an important one.

Despite the anguish experienced at committee our Club's safety record has been impressive, but each year we seem to run into a few unexpected near calamities, which somehow we must seek to mitigate. In this past year on two separate occasions, in the same location and stretch of river members were surprised by the very rapid and severe deterioration of conditions, resulting in one case to abandonment of watercraft and a long walk back to the launch area, and the other case near abject despair about making it back to base, but with determination achieving it.

The lesson learnt from these two incidents is that if the risk of severe weather is known then the adjustment to the proposed activity, by the group leader, should occur earlier rather than later, to minimise the risk of disaster.

New documentation has now been introduced in respect of Guest Paddler Indemnity, Application for Membership, and Safety Rules and Procedures which will provide data into the new management system. Again we are indebted to Blair for the hours of work in creating the documentation.

There is outstanding work to be carried out to ensure compatibility with The Bylaws document.

On a more cheerful note, at the recent Christmas function at Jettys, at Hillaries I was called upon to present achievement awards to Club members. The awards come in the form of a Certificate of Achievement, and a corresponding badge for the member's kayak. The award recognises the accumulation of points for attending a club paddle on a Friday. The awards are for Bronze 100 paddles, Silver 200 paddles, Gold 300 paddles. Noting that there 50 Friday paddles in a year these awards recognise the equivalent of full time attendance for two years, four years, and six years respectively. The Club's highest recognition award is capped at 500 paddles.

I was honoured to present the following awards.

Bronze 100 paddles - Jan Cameron, Anne & Neville Garrity, Andy Long, Ken Low & Warren Iremonger

Silver 200 paddles - Judy Bain, Geoff Chantler, Alan Hurst & Moray Ross

Gold 300 paddles - David Johnson & Sue Walker, and this year's Paddler of the Year Terry McCartney.

There are many more members who deserve to be recognised for their efforts in making this club run so effectively, so smoothly, and so agreeably. All committee members I thank you for your contributions, and your consideration in times of dissent; without you this past year would not have happened. Then there are those members who are not on the committee but when asked are happy to take on that extra bit of duty, providing great relief when things get busy. I won't mention names but you all know who you are, and I thank you now.

I think the past year has been a success, I hope you do too. I know that next year's committee will be as keen to succeed in helping achieve another great year for this magnificent Senior's Club.

*Les Chi*

Les Chidgey,

President, retiring.

Over 45 Social Canoe Club, Inc.,

10 December 2014

