



Annual General Meeting

12 September 2020

President's Report

Carol Ride

This report covers the time since the last AGM in November 2019 till now.

At the last AGM we made a decision to explore “the possibility of amending the constitution in relation to membership. This was in order to reflect the operations of the committee and the association. The attendees sought further work be done by the committee before the next AGM.”

Indeed we have done a lot of work on membership, plans to engage members, the constitution and the workings of the organisation.

The momentum for this work was driven by that discussion around membership at the AGM, plus the decision of the committee to explore a major restructure of the organisation to prepare the way for the employment of staff to expand the work of the organisation, and to provide security into the future.

We had expected to have a break in January after a busy year before we began work on these requests. Instead, we had bushfires in Victoria and NSW. We were flooded with requests for support for those witnessing the infernos and the much feared demonstration of climate collapse. Bron responded by beginning writing a handbook of support material. I joined in and before long we had a wonderful resource much used across the country by climate activists and their friends. We all missed a good rest in summer.

In mid February we held an event as part of the Sustainable Living Festival with US climate emergency leader Margaret Salamon Klein in a panel discussion hosted by us. Panellists were: Charles, Sally Gillespie, author of *Climate Crisis and Consciousness: Reimagining our world and ourselves* from Sydney Climate Wellbeing Network and Susie Burke a supporter of PSC. It was a very successful event.

We then embarked on a huge project. In late February we engaged a consultant to help us consider the limitations of the present structure and the process for change to an Advisory Board in place of our Organisational Committee, plus the employment of an Executive Director.

Following that consultation, an enormous amount of momentum was created, that engaged existing OC members into the formation of working groups to develop:

- a new Organisational Structure plan
- a process for engaging in exploration of our workshop and talk offerings, including evaluation
- exploration of whether we develop new programs, and if so what this requires
- fundraising to make provision for this huge change in financial demand and the need for security
- the use of SLACK as an organising tools for our communication, rather than emails
- use of What'sapp to provide for social connections
- a fortnightly Saturday meetup to maintain connections between people
- working towards a role for members to become active in our work

The overarching paradoxical event that helped give momentum to these developments was the Covid 19 crisis. This stymied our plans for a follow up to the day with the consultant by having us cancel a lovely planning weekend at Wye River at Charles's house.

Instead we started meetings of the various newly formed working groups - on zoom – and we found them tiring, but very productive. We found we could meet more often than ever before because we only had to travel to our computers. We found small groups working on zoom was a very productive and engaging process. We got used to SLACK and DRIVE and screen sharing, and became very modern! We developed the capacity to run workshops on zoom too - and found they worked. So while we began the year running the Tathra workshop face to face supporting people following bushfires, and face to face workshop in Newcastle for BZE, we ended the financial year doing online climate grief workshops for the community and researchers.

I personally felt we had never been so engaged as an organisation, nor had I ever felt so exhausted by the work! But there was an excitement that we were striving towards a goal. We also realised that by using zoom we could fulfil a desire to find a way to connect with psychologists, therapists and helping professionals across Australia. Maybe we could find a way to work together and also include keen people out of Melbourne in our work? We could learn about their work, and also look at ways to engage them in the importance of climate engagement in the consulting room.

The fundraising working group with Beth's leadership immersed itself in a fundraising drive by applying for grants and by doing a crowd funding campaign. Libby, Bron, Rosemary, Beth, Charles and even Bron's sister, as well as supporters Sally Gillespie, Ann Sanson, Susie Burke, and Bianca Crapis, moved way out of their comfort zones by offering to set themselves up as a fundraiser, with a funding goal, a public page on the Give Now website, and most challenging of all – an email to friends asking them to donate. This was so courageous and supportive – it showed how much the organisation means to you, for which we are all very very grateful. The grant writing and the crowdfunder were both instrumental in finding new potential large donors - an outcome we could only dream about a few months ago. As well we raised over \$27,000 and still counting. We are changing our constitution hopefully in a vote today, so we can apply for tax deductibility of donations.

In the next month I expect we will have the newly appointed Advisory Board meet to make decisions about appointing staff to begin work next year. This will be in addition to the admin work already undertaken by Beth – but coming to a temporary halt in October- and temporary paid work by Bron.

Thanks to Bron we have a Strategic Plan almost ready to go to with the grant applications, and this will be a great help to the new Board as well. Rosemary has written a budget for the current and next financial years - a new tool for our organisation - to assist with decision making, grant applications and planning for the future.

Thank you to you all, for hanging in there and contributing so generously in a difficult time. I especially want to thank Charles for all he has contributed in discussion and thinking about our work, and to Beth for her imaginative and supportive work – way beyond the definition of an admin assistant – in the last year. We will miss her as she starts a new and exciting phase of her life. I am sure she will throw herself into motherhood with love and creativity. We will miss that here in PSC while she is away. But she will be back.

For me this has been an amazing few months. I know we have all missed the deep emotional connection we have as group. Zoom is certainly no substitute for face to face and body to body connecting. It makes work more heavy and tedious at times and can make for misunderstandings. And there is no lovely cake provided by Charles at face to face planning days. It has been the most extraordinary time dealing with the challenges and uncertainty of the covid crisis. And we are not out of it yet. But it has also been a time when the Chinese meaning of crisis as an opportunity has never been more true for us. I hope we can continue to work through the challenges and differences that no doubt lie ahead in a fruitful and productive way for the wellbeing of the organisation in its new phase.

We have such a such a lot of work still to do – supporting people to face the climate reality. And remembering that facing reality, challenging as it is, is good for mental health.