

President's Report 2021-2022



The Geelong Business Club commenced its monthly meetings for the 2021/2022 year with our AGM being held on-line due to Covid-19 restrictions. We continued with online meetings in September – hosting Joseph Healy, CEO of Judo Bank on the banks formation and upcoming IPO and Tamsin Lawrence, Deputy Director of the Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry's Workplace Relations Team on vaccinations in the workplace. Both webinars were well subscribed and insightful for members and guests.

We have been fortunate that we were able to return to dinner formats from November 2021. We have learnt of the opening of the Palais Theatre, the pandemic's impact on mental health from Headspace, the new vision for The Geelong Football Club, with Steve Hocking, the impact of the war in Ukraine with Stefan Romaniw from the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations and John O'Callaghan on his years with the Victorian Defence Council. Mark Neeld, CEO of Geelong United Basketball shared the Club's journey of change and transformation. Jodie Sizer the inaugural CEO of Geelong Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority presented during reconciliation month and we heard her story growing up as an indigenous woman in addition to the Authority's role in Victoria's South West. Last month, we gained a "medical substitute" in Simon Woods, Chief Medical Officer of Barwon Health who debunked pandemic myths.

We have certainly been spoilt with this line-up of special guest speakers this last year.

I have been honoured to preside over the Club as we celebrated our 60th year. The Club's 60th Gala celebration last December was one that will be remembered with our "Diamonds are Forever" theme where we gained complimentary formal photos from member Pam Hutchinson, danced the night away to Bobby Fox from "Jersey Boy" fame and retired with a cocktail and some roulette wheel excitement.

Also, this year we added a Member Portal to our website and created member recognition for our ten- and 20-year members.

In our dinner meetings we learnt more about our history through speaker spotlights with Alec Hand, long time Executive Officer of the Club, Bernadette Uzelac, first female President, Andrew Lawson, one of our 20 year members, and our faithful Executive Officer, Gavin Siedel, was awarded Life Membership.

Behind the scenes the Committee were busy. As we came in and out of lockdowns, the speaker committee in Chair, Geoff Hutchinson and Renee Jovic not only shored up a great speaker line-up, but the committee also had all contingencies mapped for sudden lockdowns or speaker unavailability due to the pandemic. The Club's offering was seamless because of this.

With Denice O'Neill-Schlank chairing reception we streamlined reception activities with online RSVP and prepayments coming into place. This has allowed members to fast track through to the dinner and removed the bottlenecks we once knew.

In our Membership and Communications subcommittee with Chair, Scott Warren, Sharon Hill and myself we ensured members remained engaged with the Club as we congregated online and returned with caution to GMHBA stadium.

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What I am extremely proud of is holding our membership numbers steady throughout the pandemic and coming out. We usually have approximately 20% attrition of members each year. In the 2020/2021 year we recorded 165 members and 21 unpaid (144 fully paid members) and at the end of the 2021/2022 year we recorded 147 members. Our diversity is increasing also. We now have 20% of our members female which has increased from approximately 10% when I joined the Club eight years ago.

We have better governance of the Club today. We established the Risk and Governance Sub-Committee, Chaired by Renee Jovic and with Scott Andersen and Paul Gray we have created:

- The Club's Vision and Values
- A skills matrix for committee members and office bearers
- The Club's Speaker Policy
- A Code of Conduct
- Anti-Harassment Policy and
- A Risk Management Policy

Our Special General Meeting at our November 2021 dinner meeting saw us change the Club's Constitution with a smaller more productive committee size and we added pandemic clauses.

We continue to streamline processes with our esteemed Executive Officer, Angela McDonald. Angela has been creating user friendly nomination forms for new members, a Member Information pack and Club Brochure for prospective members, including the Dinner Calendar. We recognise our former Executive Officer, Emma Jarman who was instrumental in creating our Member Marketing Action Plan, activating our CRM and member database – Tidy HQ - and the work she did to make our Gala Dinner the celebration it was. Having acted in the Executive Officer capacity from January through March I applaud the work and effort of our executive officers in the smooth event management and operation of the Club.

I thank my Office Bearers in Treasurer, Scott Andersen for his budgeting expertise for the Gala Dinner and his oversight as we created and formalised the Club's budget for the 2021/2022 year as well as assisting with the end of financial year reporting and audits. I'd also acknowledge Past President, Denice for her oversight of monthly financial reports and her assistance she provided our Executive Officers leading up to the monthly Committee Meetings.

To my Vice President, Scott Warren, I thank you for being my VP this last year. When you have the support of a steady, committed club member who quietly cheers you on, who is concerned when you're "doing too much" and has your back, you can do wonders. Scott helped me bring my A-Game to each dinner and with his support I truly flourished.

As we look ahead, the Club is in a solid position. Our humble profit sees us financially viable and sustainable; we have an engaged membership and a high performing team in the Committee and Executive Officer.

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The Club is not what it is without our members. I have loved watching you as you have congregated each month, enjoyed each other's company, the dinners, and speakers. Above all you have welcomed and supported me as your President and provided words of encouragement as I served you this last year.

I thank you for the privilege of being President of The Geelong Business Club.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Maree Herath', is positioned below the text. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maree Herath
President 2021-2022