

Annual Report to AGM
Melbourne Bearbrass Probus
March 14th 2023

How quickly a year passes. This time last year many of us were still feeling a great deal of trepidation about opening up.

The committee were pretty confident of a good year and happily members soon embraced the planned events and activities with zeal.

A great year of fun and friendship was the result. Optimism was our passport out of the darkness and the hardships of the past two years.

Face to face meetings were back, along with lunches, dinners, and our program of activities.

We were able to hold all of our general meetings in this venue with attendance slowly increasing over the course of the year as members became more confident with mixing in larger groups.

The past 12 months has seen the club hold many events which have been memorable:

The speaker program organised by Jill de Araugo has been varied and stimulating. We heard from writers, archaeologists, a librarian, an astronomer, a priest, an environmentalist along with member presentations. A special thanks to Tony Thomas, Mike and Ingrid Brophy and Susan Bower who jumped in at short notice and gave superb travel talks when our original speaker came down with Covid.

Our annual trip last year was to Apollo Bay. 14 members and guests enjoyed a three night stay on the Otway coast. Again, our event officer Jan Stewart excelled herself and a good time was had by all.

The Guess Who Is Coming to Dinner event was a big hit with everyone keen for a repeat win the future.

Trips such as the Frankston Art Trail, Picasso at the NGV, The Art of Botanical Illustration, The Melbourne Observatory, Lightscape at the Botanic Gardens, The Melbourne Synchrotron and The Morning Discovery tour were all great additions to the 2022 calendar.

Lunches and dinners are always a big hit. Christmas in July, our Christmas party, lunches at The Melbourne Cellar Door, The Wayside Inn and The Clarendon Hotel have been well attended along with our Festive Picnic in later December.

Twice during the year, some members have taken Luv A Duck cooking lessons with great enthusiasm.

The Wine Tasting group continues to thrive under Jill de Araugo, meeting the fourth Friday of the month and sampling a collection of wines, sometimes in the meeting room at Clarendon Towers and others at a restaurant or wine bar. Later this month they are off to taste the delights of Heathcote dry grown wines.

The walking group under the leadership of Mel Gray has had some excellent outings, walking Royal Park and Botanic Gardens as well as to Port Melbourne, Williamstown, Flemington and along the

Maribyrnong River. Participants are asked to share the planning load by suggesting and leading their own walk throughout the year.

Terry O'Keeffe has done an excellent job of leading the Book Group. The group has met monthly on the third Monday at The Malthouse café enjoying lively discussion on a range of stimulating texts such as The Lincoln Highway, Bodies of Light, Hamlet and the Good Wife of Bath

The coffee group has meet at least monthly across many venues in Docklands and the CBD. Dymocks' Café has been a popular venue for many meetings as it is quiet enough to ensure good conversation and the coffee is great as well. The coffee morning has also proved to be a great entrée to the club for prospective members as well. Thanks to Allison Hislop for helping me out with that group.

The two movie groups, ably led by Cate Thompson and Susan Bower have continued strongly, meeting once a month to see a movie and share a meal afterwards. Movies across a wide range of genres have been on the agenda: From innovative movies such as Everything, Everywhere all at Once, Confronting films such as Tar and light delights such as: Mrs Harris Goes to Paris,

In the past 12 months we have added to our activity groups:

Coral Lee Keep leads the Workshop at Makerspace group which meets here at the Library at the Dock on the third Monday of the month. working on craft activities individually or together.

Shane Mason came into club in August and has made a big impact with setting up a Table Tennis group along with a Cards group, both of which meet fortnightly. Shane has also started up a footy tipping comp which will take off next week.

Cheryl Markham has been responsible for the club entering weekly trivia event at the Nixon Hotel. We are up to three tables entering the event every week, thanks to Cheryl's efforts.

Last week saw the first Mahjong meet up. We had over 16 participants which was great for the kick off for this group which will meet fortnightly at the Mission to Seafarers as does the card group.

The golf group once again tried to get started, thanks to Heather Ablett, unfortunately we did not receive enough interest for a regular meet up.

Our membership growth over the year has been steady with a big increase recently. We have inducted 12 new members over the course of the year and we are now at 75 members with at least three more members to join us in the next month. The committee has continued to work towards a gender balance that reflects our age demographic.

Every new Probus year (which starts on April 1) we lose a few members due to changed circumstances and I expect that again this year, but the indicators are that the club is continuing to grow and thrive.

Over this past year and the years before we have endeavoured to ensure that members are kept well informed of upcoming events and activities via email. This remains our main source of communication along with our website which we try to ensure stays up to date and fresh with reports of recent outings and activities. This works best when we receive photos and texts from members and convenors. Your contributions have been very welcome.

We continue to enjoy good club publicity thanks to our indefatigable life member, Tony Thomas. Despite retiring from the committee last year, Tony has continued in the role of club publicity officer

and has ensured that stories of club members and club events are included in Melbourne-centric, Probus and Senior publications on a regular basis.

Our annual survey continued last year thanks to the huge efforts of Jill de Araugo. The survey gives the committee a lot of feedback on meetings, events and activity groups, member satisfaction along with member ideas for future activities. The information gained in the 2022 survey to which we had a 66% member-completion rate, guided the Management Committee in the aforementioned aspects of planning for the year. I urge all of you here to participate in the survey as it your chance to have a say in the future of your club.

Despite the good news including the return to near-normal life after Covid and the recent membership boon we have enjoyed, there exists one aspect of our club which is concerning. This is the load sharing. Everyone sitting here today could do the job I have done this past year or that of one of the committee members. Everyone here today has good ideas and organisation skills and could therefore propose and lead an outing or activity group. I urge you to find an opportunity to contribute in one of those ways, you will be amazed at the intrinsic rewards you will gain.

Your 2022/23 committee has done an amazing job and it's not time for me to thank our retiring committee members Allison Hislop and Greg Jeffrey who have served as membership officer and website officer respectively. I spoke about our website earlier and Greg has been behind the scenes ensuring the site functions well and meets member and visitor needs. He has also run training session for members and convenors on our club management program Club Runner. Thankfully Greg has agreed to continue that work from outside the committee. Allison has done a great job as the club membership officer and we look forward to her continued involvement in the club. Greg and Allison could you please step forward and receive this small appreciation of your hard work.

I want to say a word about a committee member who is not retiring but continues to serve, like the energiser bunny. Mel Gray stepped into the role of President in 2020 after our initial president was unable to continue. Mel brought a high level of skills and knowledge to the role but I don't think at that stage he knew he was signing up for a two year stint, but that's what happened. After a year, the club was still in its formative stage, struggling with remaining relevant during and in between lock downs. Having Mel fill the role of President for a second year gave us all a chance to consolidate the club processes and start to plan for the future. Mel continued, on the committee this year as Immediate Past President and Secretary. He has been an indispensable back up for me in these roles. In addition he has ensured that all our club records are perfectly filed and accessible on Club Runner. On behalf of myself and the entire club, Mel please accept this gift from us as an acknowledgement of your contributions.

Our meetings would not run as smoothly as they have without the contributions of Gaylene and Ray Duncan and Jean Houston who has organised our morning tea refreshments for three years. Thank you so much for your efforts, Ray, Gaylene and Jean.

Can I ask Jean to step forward to receive a gift of appreciation for her quiet and competent work over the past three years.

Huge thanks also to Julie Cookson for her behind the scenes work with ensuring we all have a seat at lunch after the meetings and for helping our with other lunch and dinner events over the past year.

In finishing, I would like to thank you all for your support and encouragement over the past year, most especially my husband Jim. I stepped into this role when Anne Fairhall had to unfortunately

withdraw and have received only encouragement and sage advice. I have found to my surprise that I have really enjoyed the role. It honestly has been a real pleasure.

I am certain that the club will continue to thrive under the leadership of our next president Jill de Araugo.

Sue Hoile

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