

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2019-20

As we head towards our 2020 Annual General Meeting, it is appropriate to reflect on what has been an extraordinary year for the Pearl Beach Progress Association (and for most other people on our little blue planet).

One year ago we were heading into another summer which promised to be, and certainly was, devastating for so many communities, although Pearl Beach was thankfully spared the ravages of bushfire. Ironically, the major storms in February that extinguished some of the fires resulted in some damage to property in Pearl Beach (including the rear of our Hall), not to mention the loss of so many trees and other flora, but thankfully with no loss of life or serious injury.

As the days grow longer and warmer, our thoughts once again to the warm weather ahead. I urge all of you to make yourselves aware of the **Neighbour Alert** system developed by the Pearl Beach Safety advisory Group for alerting the community about the impending danger posed by bush fire, and to prepare your own Bushfire Survival Plans.

One year ago we had of course no inkling of the **COVID 19 pandemic** that would change all of our lives. The shutdown imposed in response to the pandemic that started in March has caused the cancellation of most of our regular activities such as the Easter Book Fair, Art Trail, Food and Wine Fair, Scholarship Concerts, Trivia Night, Christmas in July, June Long Weekend Music Festival concerts, Anzac Day ceremony, Jazz in the Arboretum and the Glee Club concerts, as well as exciting new initiatives such as a Bush Dance and the much anticipated *Dead Men Talking* (Henry Lawson and Banjo Patterson in conversation) performance. Some of these events can be rescheduled (for example the Art Trail has been rescheduled to Saturday October 3), however the impacts of the COVID 19 restrictions seem likely to continue for the foreseeable future. A group of creative locals did however utilise the wonders of modern technology to create a virtual ANZAC Day at Pearl Beach. Thank you to Rachel Shea, Andrew Frost, Russell Grove and Greg McPhee for putting together this wonderful initiative.

The loss of these popular activities affects not just the cultural life of Pearl Beach, but our financial health as well. The cancellation of the Easter Book Fair was of particular significance, as this usually generates more than \$8,000 of net income, which is a critical contribution to the ongoing care and maintenance of the Pearl Beach Hall. However, typical of our 'can do' community, we started up a number of innovative fundraising initiatives to support the Hall upgrade project, for which we received a grant of \$66,000 from the Central Coast Council Community Infrastructure program, but need to supplement this with a cash contribution of up to \$24,000. To date our **GoFundMe** page, **Auction of Promises**, **Gourmet Raffle**, **Promenade for a Purpose** and online sales of books have raised around \$22,000, which is an extraordinary result given the circumstances.

Thank you to all who participated, especially Alison Phillips, Gary Phillips, Lynne Lillico, Russell Grove, Vic Clarke, Jackie Bridel and Greg McPhee (I know I will have left someone out, so apologies). Thanks also to Pearl Beach Real Estate, Pearl Beach Blinds, Russell and Frances Grove and the others who provided the prizes for the raffle, and to those who contributed to the *Auction of Promises* and the *Promenade for a Purpose*. It is heartening to know that some of the most generous donors to the GoFundMe page have been people who are not full time residents, or in some cases not even members of the Association, but who obviously care enough about our village and community to contribute. We are keeping the GoFundMe page running, so if you have not yet donated, please consider doing so. It will make a difference.

Although the COVID 19 restrictions required the suspension of our regular General Meetings, the **Executive Committee** has continued to meet using video conferencing (thanks to the IT expertise of Gary Phillips). Although some of us struggle with the technology, we managed to work through a range of matters that can be progressed despite the circumstances. These matters included measures to encourage more people to become members of the Association, reviewing our insurance policies, repairing the Hall after the damage caused by the recent storms, upgrading the Hall hire website facility, developing the Pearl Beach Buddies initiative and progressing the project to upgrade the rear of the Hall.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the opening of the **Pearl Beach Hall**, and we were planning some appropriate activities to acknowledge this important milestone, now of course on hold. Members will be very aware of the pivotal role that the Hall plays in the life of our community. It was first opened in 1950 and has been enlarged and upgraded several times. However, as noted above, we have embarked on a program of upgrade works to enhance the functionality of the rear of the Hall, including a larger deck and roof, as well as a new storeroom. The works are being staged, and the new roof over the rear deck is in place, with the construction of the new storeroom is likely to be the next stage in the project.

Our numerous community groups continued their important work of providing the members of the Association with a diverse range of activities from which to choose, including the **Arboretum, Bush Care, Dune Care, Tennis and Bowls, Plodders, the Aboriginal History Group, Ma Jong** and the **Craft Group**. To varying degrees, these activities have been affected by the COVID 19 shutdown, but most have now resumed, albeit restricted by mandatory 'social distancing'. Thanks is due to the dedicated organisers who quietly manage these activities to the ongoing benefit of the community.

The residents of Pearl Beach continue to be grateful for the wonderful work of the men and women the **Rural Fire Brigade**, who during the summer worked tirelessly to respond to calls for assistance, both within and well beyond Pearl Beach. Whatever anxieties we might have experienced over recent months would no doubt have been significantly exacerbated had we not had the confidence that we have in these brave men and women. The fact that our community and many grateful visitors have raised over \$30,000 for the RFS at a number of fundraising events is clear evidence of our appreciation.

The **Pearl Beach Safety Advisory Group (PBSAG)** continues to work with the RFS to coordinate our strategy for alerting the community about the impending danger posed by bush fire, and has also organised a number of other important community safety initiatives, including CPR and defibrillator training and the maintenance of safety equipment. The **Events Sub-committee** and **Hall Building and Maintenance Sub-committee** have also continued to meet and to develop important projects for our community and our Hall, notwithstanding that so many of our regular activities have had to be cancelled. Our appreciation goes to people who quietly undertake these essential tasks.

During the year a number of broader issues were raised that are of concern to the Association, and we have continued to pursue these with the relevant authorities, in particular the amalgamated Central Coast Council. In particular, we have made submissions in regard to a number of development applications that are of concern to many, either because they could be considered overdevelopment or because of associated tree loss. While the Association welcomes new residents and supports their right to upgrade their residential amenity, we are also mindful of the importance of retaining the very values that lead to Pearl Beach being such an attractive place in which to live and/or holiday.

The Association also prepared a comprehensive submission to the Central Coast Council in regard to the draft *Local Strategic Planning Statement: Framework for a Growing Central Coast Region*, and cooperated in the development of a plan of management for the Pearl Beach Lagoon. Thanks are due to Mary Knaggs and Malcolm Davison respectively for undertaking these contributions.

The Gem continues to titillate our members with tales of what is really happening behind the well-mannered façade of Pearl Beach. The editorial team have produced three information packed issues over the year, with a hiatus during the height of the COVID 19 lockdown. Donna Higgins has recently stepped down from the role of Editor, and Margaret Westcott has stepped into the role with a busy Spring edition of *The Gem*. Our thanks to Donna for doing a wonderful job as Editor, and we welcome Margaret's future contribution to the journal. We also recognise the wonderful contribution to our community during the COVID 19 shutdown of *Cooee*, the newsletter put together by Greg McPhee and his many contributors. *Cooee* has become an important source of both information and some gems of ancient humour (luckily many of us have failing memories, so we can laugh at these all over again!).

Recently the **PBPA website** underwent a major revamp, and it now is visually as well as functionally more user friendly, especially for happenings in Pearl Beach and Hall bookings. Thanks to Rebecca Jacobs for overseeing this important upgrade, with critical input from Vic Clarke. Tom Sarti has stepped down from the Hall booking role, and at the March General Meeting the members expressed their appreciation to Tom for his diligence in doing this role over many years. The members also thanked Pim Sarti for her long term dedication to caring for the Hall, including mowing lawns and gardening.

A very positive development during 2019-20 has been the **Pearl Beach Buddies** project, established to support members of our community who might require assistance (remembering that the Buddies group is not a crisis support or counselling service - for this contact Lifeline on 131114). Congratulation to Donna Higgins and her dedicated team for this compassionate initiative.

The financial situation of the Association is reasonably sound given the impacts of the COVID 19 shutdown. At 30 June 2020, our cash assets were approximately \$155,500. However, this included the balance of the Central Coast Council Community Infrastructure grant for the Hall upgrade and some funds that we are holding in trust for return to property owners in Coral Crescent who provided contributions for the preparation of a report for restoration of the beach after severe storms. Our actual disposable cash assets are now probably around \$80,000, which puts us in a reasonably secure financial situation, but as noted earlier in my report, we do expect that income will be diminished over the coming months due to income earning events being cancelled as a result of COVID 19 restrictions. Moreover, our public liability and Hall insurance premiums have increased substantially in 2020, largely because of widespread claims and an increase in the Emergency Services Levy.

Our auditors **Thomas Davis and Co** have certified that our financial management and accountability is compliant with the required standard for community organisation. The Association appreciates the support of the auditors in providing this service on a pro bono basis.

Whilst the public face of the Association is more obvious through its events, other work done on liaison with local and state government, financial, secretarial, Hall management and legal matters is less conspicuous but no less significant. I acknowledge therefore the contribution of a skilled and hardworking Executive team:

Malcolm Davison and Russell Grove	Vice-Presidents
Donna Higgins	Secretary
Gary Phillips	Assistant Secretary
Elizabeth Nelson	Treasurer
Lynne Lillico	Events and Publicity
Beverley Kingston, John Haymes, Rebecca Jacobs	General Members



I do not intend to re-nominate for the role of President, and it is likely that there will be a number of new members elected onto the Executive Committee at the AGM. I wish the new committee well, and I thank all of the members of the current Executive, the members of the various PBPA subcommittees and community groups who have put in so much effort and commitment during the year to keep the myriad activities of the Association on track during such challenging times.

The **Annual General Meeting** of the Association will take place on **Saturday 10 October**. The AGM also marks the end of the terms for the current Executive Committee, including the office holders. Members who are interested in becoming more involved in the management of the Association are invited to nominate to join the Executive Committee, but you will need to submit a nomination form, signed by two financial members. The forms are included in the AGM documentation, and need to be submitted by 2pm on Saturday 3 October. Only current financial members of the Association can nominate, or vote, if there is an election for any of these positions. So if you have not renewed your membership, please do so within the next week or you will not be eligible to do either.

In closing, we need from time to time mark the passing of friends that have been part of our community. We remember Sylvia Fullerton, Grace Walker, Fay Austin, Libby Stewart, Lorna Oliff, Shirley Keers and Dick Sims. We are fortunate to have had friends so committed to our community living amongst us.

Peter Romey

President
September 2020