

President's Report

*The past is behind, learn from it.
The future is ahead, prepare for it.
The present is here, live it.*
Thomas S. Monson

2020 was a year that abruptly and rudely shook us out of our complacency with a life-threatening disease; one that still exists today, but one for which we now have a plan to deal with and therefore can see a future beyond its threat.

As Probus members, our resolve to continue Probus was also tested. I am proud to acknowledge that most Probus clubs took on the task of caring for their members in a far more personal way during the lockdowns and showed that the Probus mantra of fun, fellowship and friendship is indeed strong in our Queensland Probus clubs. This caring and bonding that exists between Probus clubs and their members is the very thing that differentiates Probus from other seniors' organisations.

Your Probus Association of Queensland was also tested during 2020. PAQ had to move into lockdown on the Friday after its AGM. Fortunately, the management committee was able to meet monthly once the initial lockdown restrictions were eased at a meeting place which met Covid restrictions. In March PAQ began releasing its collection of activity sheets, competitions and Covid information for clubs which continued until December.

As the majority of clubs were unable to meet, there was no method to distribute the magazine to members, so PAQ had to cancel the printing of the Queensland Probian. This resulted in a loss of advertising income for PAQ and funds for sustaining PAQ throughout the year. Fortunately, we were able to draw on financial reserves to carry us through. The current \$1/member/year affiliation fee didn't cover the printing and distribution costs of one issue of the Probian but contributes to the usual running costs of the association – those hidden costs of phones, postage, web site fees, travel to meetings, etc. At the AGM in March 2020, I indicated a need to increase the fee to a reasonable amount to allow PAQ to grow and support its activities.

This year, 2021, PAQ will be asking clubs to pay \$2/member/year (not even ½ of the cost of 1 cup of tea or coffee) to help PAQ bring its reserves back up to strength and to support a range of programs PAQ wishes to mount in 2021.

At the September Delegates' meeting, I submitted a survey to those attending and then subsequently sent it to club secretaries for consideration by club management committees. The survey dealt with on-going social activities which had been organised by PAQ in the past; the Ecumenical Services, the Probus Bowls Day, the Probus Rotary Golf Day as well as the hard-copy printing

of the Queensland Probian. The result of that survey can be summarised as follows: very little interest in Ecumenical Services unless they're held locally; little interest or enthusiasm for the Bowls Day as most Probus club members are not interested in that event; a similar lack of interest in the Rotary Probus Golf Day; and an overwhelming (90%) support to keep the Queensland Probian as a digital magazine. Alternative activities for encouraging clubs to meet other clubs were sought with the main suggestion being for "regional" clubs to organise a BBQ or lunch or similar event within their local geographical area.

In 2021, PAQ will be organising a number of Club Management Days to tackle some of the "hard" questions facing clubs today such as increasing member participation in club activities and management committees. These days are to encourage Club Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers, Outings and Activity Officers and other club officers to meet to develop solutions for their clubs to these and other issues affecting their clubs. It has been suggested that these days be "Powerpoint-free"! PAQ has begun planning for these days to happen in various locations and will be sending information out to clubs in late February. PAQ will be looking for club leaders to head up some of these sessions and to ensure that the sessions achieve their goals.

Probus membership in Queensland is disproportionately low by comparison to other states and so, in 2021, PAQ will be looking for opportunities to start new clubs, in conjunction with established clubs. If your club is interested in becoming a mentor to a new club in your area, PAQ would definitely like to hear from you. The continuation of the PAQ program of promotion of Probus is critically important to ensure that club promotional initiatives are also supported. It is significant that Queensland membership levels fell by only 2.6% in 2020 compared to an average of 7% in other states. I believe this is because Queensland clubs are actively marketing their clubs and promoting Probus in their communities.

On a personal level, I'm looking forward to a very productive year for PAQ and its clubs. We need to do some rebuilding of membership levels in some clubs; we need to mentor newly-formed clubs and their committees; we need to establish some new clubs in areas where Probus has been and is no longer, or where the population demographics are right. Above all, we need to promote Probus as the best way to have fun, fellowship and friendship in retirement.

Regards

Rob N