

30th Annual General Meeting
Gemmological Association of Australia (NSW Division)
21st June 2021

Presidents Report

Since March 2020 all our lives have been impacted by the restrictions necessary to combat the spread of Covid-19. This has also significantly impacted the NSW Division both in our education functions and with how we have used our facility over the past year. Many planned activities to grow and develop the NSW Division had to be placed on hold, however we continued to progress our projects and position our division for the second half of 2021.

Facilities Project

Earlier this year it was my great pleasure to announce that the Gemmological Association of Australia NSW Division has found a new home!

After the successful sale of our Surry Hills facility, we spent several months searching for a new home for the NSW Division which would meet our dual goals of a fit for purpose facility within the Sydney CBD fringe and ensuring the best return on investment for future of our organisation. Our new home is 128 Terry St Rozelle which is located in the inner west, only 4 kilometres from the Sydney CBD. The building has 3 levels with a total of floor space of 599m² which gives us ample room for our current activities as well as space to grow into the future. We purchased Terry St for \$3,200,000 ex gst and this allows us a reasonable budget for renovations.

Our initial plan was to be into our new facility before the start of the 2021 teaching year but our search for a new home took longer than we hoped. Also the renovations that were necessary to convert the current floor plan from open plan office and warehouse spaces to be suitable for our needs required significant planning. The initial timeline was set aside to give us more time to future proof the plans and ensure the decisions made now allowed sufficient flexibility for the NSW Division for years to come. In addition, the modifications of the fire stairs to bring them up to code, along with modifications to the entry and installation of a lift for disabled access, required a more intensive development application approval process than initially expected. The renovation work that can be completed prior to the DA approvals are almost complete but the final modifications and lift installation cannot be scheduled until the DA approval is received. Fortunately, when negotiating the sale of the Surry Hills facility we planned for renting and remaining in our current facility for six months and we were able to negotiate a delay in settlement which gave us an additional four month's rent free. This means that while we are now paying rent to stay in the Surry Hills facility we are still currently within the expected overall rental expense for the transition between buildings.

I would like to acknowledge the extensive work put in by Management Committee Secretary Leo Hyde in managing the entire renovation process. Leo was ably assisted by many on the Management Committee throughout the various stages but his extensive experience in this area has been invaluable to the NSW Division and his time commitment has been significant.

Thank you also to our members who provided feedback on what they would like to see in our new facility and our teachers who critiqued the first draft of our floor plans.

In preparation for our facility move the Management Committee has been working on sorting through 50 years of collected items identifying what to keep and what is no longer useful or historically significant to NSW Division. This process is complete and we are now in a holding pattern awaiting the date of our final move. Thank you again to the members who have attended the many clean up days.

Our cataloguing project is also now complete pending moving into our new home. Once there the project team will begin phase 2 which is a longer term project including additional gemmological data such as listing all the inclusions and adding photographs.

Education

In consultation with GAA Federal, and in compliance with restriction guidelines, all onsite classes were ceased for 2020 and we did not undertake our normal diploma and short course teaching face to face during this time. With the support of the Victorian Division we were able to continue with the first year of the diploma in Gemmology via a hybrid online / flexi format and on behalf of the NSW Division I would like to thank the Victorian Division and in particular Gem 1 lecturer Laura Brehaut for allowing other divisions to access the Victorian online live theory lectures. Teaching is slowly returning to normal for the diplomas and short courses have been scheduled and run again in the last few months. We expect to be fully back to normal as we transition into our new facility.

Further details of this year's educational endeavours will be included in the Vice Presidents report on Education.

On behalf of the NSW Division Management Committee, I would like to acknowledge our teachers and students, who have been impacted the most by these challenges, and thank them for their understanding and patience as we have navigated the impact of Covid-19 this year.

The implementation of the new short courses developed in 2019 to increase our educational reach to large jewellery brands and prospecting and lapidary communities was also delayed. We continue to be committed to developing and offering new short courses to our members, industry and gemmology enthusiasts and we see these as being of critical

importance to remaining relevant to our target students and securing our financial future. We hope to be offering these courses in our new facility in the second half of 2021.

Our usual activities to reach gemmology enthusiasts via attendance at Gem Fairs and Expos were also curtailed but during this time an excellent demonstration kit was designed by Management Committee member Cheryl Murdoch which allows us to showcase the benefits of the skills we teach using sample gemstones and transportable lab equipment. This was a big hit at the first major Sydney Gem Expo of 2021 in Windsor in April!

Earlier this year the GAA NSW Division welcomed a new Education Support Officer Damien Gardiner. Damien's background is in educational support for courses at a tertiary level and he is a keen supporter of short course learning formats as well. He is settling into the role and working hard to support our lecturers and students to get the most out of our courses.

Distinguished Service Awards

In December 2020 I had the pleasure of sending out the Gemmological Association of Australia Distinguished Service Awards to well deserving members of the NSW Division. Congratulations to the recipients!

The Distinguished Service Award recognises the contribution that members have made to the Gemmological Association of Australia through many years of service to the organisation. As a not-for-profit organisation, fulfilling our mission statement of 'passionately educating the industry and consumers in gemstones' is made possible through the good will of volunteers and I would like to personally thank each of our Distinguished Service Awardees for lending their expertise to the organisation.

Member Services

The reinvigorated schedule of free in person members education talks which commenced in late 2019 were also halted as a result of Covid-19, but we were pleased to be able to share the sessions we had planned for 2020 for inclusion in an extensive program of online sessions organised by GAA Federally. Our goal is to return to providing in person talks and activities once we open our new building in mid-2021, however the wide variety of topics and the online format of the GAA Federal education talks have been very well received by members and we plan to continue to support this online program into the future.

The Gem Review, our GAA NSW Division newsletter, continues to be published quarterly through the hard work of Management Committee member Cheryl Murdoch in sourcing a mix of educational articles and interesting local division news for our members.

Financial Report

This year's financial report is complex due to the financial impact of the sale of our old building and the purchase of our new building. This is additionally complicated by the GST payment dates falling in different audit periods. Please read the Treasurer's report for the explanatory notes which help make clear our true financial position. The GAA NSW educational income was significantly impacted throughout 2020 due to reduced student numbers and we would be in a difficult financial position if we had not made the facilities transition. This reinforces that the decision made by members to undertake this move was the right one for GAA NSW.

On behalf of the 2020 Management Committee I would like to thank members for your trust in us to guide NSW Division through this time of transition.

I would also like to personally thank the NSW Management Committee for the massive time commitment that each committee member has put into the projects we have worked on over the past two years. Your efforts on behalf of the members are greatly appreciated! I am excited for the future of GAA NSW Division and am confident that the work undertaken by this committee has set in place strong foundations for our future.

In accordance with our constitution, which requires a rest year from serving on the committee every 4 years, I am not eligible to nominate for the committee this year but I look forward to continuing to serve GAA NSW in other ways.

Deborah Hudson
President
GAA NSW Division