



GAA

Gemmological Association of Australia

Victorian Division

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Venue: Gemmology House, 380-382 Spencer Street, West Melbourne 3003

Date: Thursday 15th April 2021

Attendees

Laura Brehaut	Michael Oboler
Katherine Kovacs	David Heiderich
Lynne Cunningham	Ian Dun
Grant Hamid	Cheryl Paton
Stacey Lim	Angela Beach
Katrina Marchioni	Vicken Nackashian
Carina Tucci	Jacinta Mainstone
Jennifer Wu	Aimee Page

Apologies

Ronnie Bauer, Chris Holdsworth, Greg John, Kate Wyatt, Debbie Hamid

Proxies

None.

Meeting Opened: 6.08pm

Motion: The minutes of last AGM of GAA (Vic) held on 25th of June, 2020 be accepted.

Moved: Michael Oboler **Seconded:** Katrina Marchioni

Passed: Unanimous

Confirmation of Minutes and Signature of the Chairman

Business arising from Minutes

None.



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT – *Laura Brehaut FGAA DipDT*

Another year is over, and to be honest, most of us are glad it is behind us. It is hard not to discuss the events of the last year without Covid featuring prominently in any discussion.

2020 started like any other. The academic year starts annually around the beginning of February and Victoria had 18 students enrolled in Gem1 In-House, 4 students enrolled in Gem1 Flexi, and 13 students enrolled in Gem2. In addition, the diamond courses were fully subscribed with 12 students for PDG, and 5 in APDG. By the time March rolled around 4 weeks later, COVID-19 was dominating the news and there was much uncertainty about how the world was going to respond, and scepticism as to how serious this pandemic was going to be. GAA started discussions about contingency plans should there be any disruptions to education, and members of the management committees at both Federal and state were trying to get quality information and understand the news coming from the government. By the end of March, to everyone's disappointment, all face-to-face classes were officially cancelled.

Many students had expressed frustration that their classes were being suspended, and a large majority responded favourably to surveys about moving theory classes online. With the spirit of interstate co-operation, members of Victoria and Queensland got together to test out Google Meet as a suitable platform for holding virtual classes. Bobbi O'Riley, David Heiderich, Adele Stachiw and myself, together with Steve Dobos (QLD President & ESO) trialled this system, and staged a number of virtual meets over a few weeks to iron out the subtleties of navigating this new online space.

Gem1 students across Australia were invited to continue their theory study online with live lectures, while the prac classes would be postponed until face-to-face classes would be permissible under government regulations.

Unfortunately, Gem2 classes were deferred entirely until 2021 owing to the importance of prac and gemstone testing in Gem2, the increased class hours in Gem2 and concerns about students eventually getting enough time in the lab.

By the time we got to the end of July, Victoria had 3 students who were valiantly battling on with their studies, and due to the second wave in Victoria, these students completed their final end of year theory exams (supervised online) before they had the opportunity to participate in any more classes face-to-face in the lab. We are very pleased to announce that all 3 students passed with fantastic grades and are now in Gem2.

To move theory classes wholly online was a considerable change, and one that took time to adjust to. My thanks go to Bobbi O'Riley, our Webmistress and Google administrator whose assistance was invaluable, and to Adele Stachiw, a recent Gem2 Graduate, and Geoff Tombs Medal recipient from 2019 who sat through every class online, and assisted with running online tutorials for the Victorian students to revise and discuss the theory content.

As classes had ceased, a large portion of the income of the association also ceased. The Victorian Division was eligible to receive jobkeeper payments for our office staff, and the cash payments from the state government. Thanks go to Chris Holdsworth, who kept up to date with the various communications from the government and submitted all paperwork to receive all the financial

assistance that was on offer.

The Roof

While the state government was announcing restrictions regarding sectors of the economy to be shut down during the second lockdown, our Treasurer Chris Holdsworth had the foresight to push through and get the contract for the replacement of the roof at our building on Spencer St signed so that our job would be included as a permissible activity as an active project. Shortly after signing on 3rd August 2020, the government announced that builders would not be able to take on any new projects during the Covid shutdown, and no new contracts could be signed. We were hopeful that our project would begin within a month or two and be finalised in time for practical classes to return after lockdown. However, restrictions of staff numbers on building sites caused delays, and our job was eventually started late December with the keys being handed over on 19th December 2020. The roof was finalised by late January of 2021, in time for classes to begin this year.

The final cost to the Association was \$131,565.75

For the better part of a decade, the roof at GAA house has been a persistent and significant problem. After the contract falling through in 2019, the committee of management are very excited to be able to cross this major project off the list, and we will turn our attention to planning and saving for the next building upgrade in order to maintain our most important asset for future generations of gemmologists to enjoy.

2020 Postponed

Covid kept all members of our association apart for most of the year, as very few activities were considered permissible events. Almost all planned events during 2020 were cancelled or postponed. Some events were rescheduled multiple times. A planned trade seminar with Grant Hamid was postponed till 2021, the annual conference to be held in Perth was cancelled, with official annual meetings of the association moved online. Our annual Trivia night was not able to be held, a working bee to clean up GAA house was cancelled and the graduation of the class of 2019 was rescheduled in excess of 5 times before finally being able to go ahead in March of this year. The monthly council meetings were also moved online, with the councillors getting accustomed to using Google Meet for this purpose. In the long periods of absence from each other, the use of video conferencing was welcomed by many and it was good to meet virtually and see each other's faces. Restrictions eased enough to allow a small socially distanced outdoor gathering in December for our annual Christmas party, which was held at the local lawn bowls club at Flagstaff Gardens. Thanks go to Cheryl Paton for all her hard work and dedication in regularly communicating with both the venue and the attendees of the graduation and the Christmas party to organise and coordinate these events, and to Angela Beach and Vick Nackashian for their assistance to Cheryl.

Memberships

The Victorian division used the shutdown to investigate and move the management of our



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membership database to the cloud with dedicated membership software. A program called membershipworks was chosen, and we are confident that this will assist us to streamline our processes and communications with our members. Cheryl Paton, assisted by Angela Beach and Vick Nackashian, offered to take charge of contacting members regarding their memberships, and to also conduct a survey on their level of satisfaction with GAA. We were pleased that almost all the people Cheryl spoke with had only positive thoughts to share. In response to Covid, the Victorian Division temporarily reduced membership dues as much as possible to assist those members struggling with the fallout from Covid, and we are hopeful that Victoria's membership levels will remain largely resistant to the effects of COVID.

Our members are the backbone of our association, and the Victorian division continues to be blessed with an overly active cohort. Between participation on our management committee, and our teaching staff we have just over 15% of our membership volunteering and actively engaging with us on a monthly basis. There are not many associations who would be so lucky. It is these volunteers who keep our association alive, and to them we owe a debt of gratitude. The Victorian management committee are actively working on new opportunities for our members to connect with us. In 2020, during the COVID lockdown, the Victorian Division ran the first of a series of free monthly webinars for members. The organising and running of these webinars were picked up by Kathryn Wyatt, who ensured they were run at a national level for the benefit of members across Australia. In 2021, there will be further new opportunities for members to participate.

Members we lost

It was with great sadness that we said goodbye to some of our longest serving members of our division. Des Bumpstead, long time Gem1 prac teacher passed away 29th April 2020, Janice Keirnan who taught Gem2 prac for 12years from 1993 passed away on 31st August 2020, and Ed and Pam Richards both passed away in October 2020. Ed repaired and maintained the equipment in the lab, and built many of the instruments that have been in faithful service for most of the last 2 decades.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the hard work put in by David Heiderich on keeping our education running and being a jack of all trades. We would be lost without him. Thanks also to Aimee Page, our office manager and Louise Stott our bookkeeper, who is retiring after just over a decade assisting us with our accounts. Covid meant that all staff members worked from home for an extended period of time, and we are lucky to have resilient and supporting staff.

Laura Brehaut FGAA, DipDT NCIV registered valuer V313

President – Victorian Division



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Motion: Move and record with acclamation the President's report be accepted.

Moved: Ian Dun **Seconded:** Angela Beach

Passed: Unanimous.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Chris Holdsworth FGAA DipDT

Tabled and copies available for members present.

Due to the Treasurer, Chris Holdsworth being an apology, the report was mentioned by Laura Brehaut on Chris's behalf.

Comments mentioned that the date of the report received had an incorrect date and was quickly rectified.

We had a surplus of \$4263, which is a big improvement on the deficit we had last year. We owe the surplus entirely on the assistance we received from the government due to the Covid pandemic. We received \$30,000 in state government grants, federal government cash flow boost and job keeper.

Saved money of building expenses as the building was unoccupied for most of the year.

Cash and cash equivalents down approx. \$55,000 on previous year, due to \$60,000 deposit paid for roof repair.

Michael Oboler poses the question whether any of the other states contributed financially towards costs of the online classes, to which Laura replied no.

Grant Hamid also asks whether the states even thanked us and again the answer was no.

Motion: That the Financial Statements and report be adopted.

Moved: Katherine Kovacs **Seconded:** Vicken Nackashian

Passed: Unanimous

ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS FOR 2022

Nominations received prior to the meeting.

President:

Laura Brehaut

With no other nominations from the floor Laura Brehaut was elected.

Moved: Lynne Cunningham **Seconded:** Katherine Kovacs

Vice-Presidents (2 positions):

Michael Oboler **Moved:** Katrina Marchioni **Seconded:** Angela Beach

Stacey Lim **Moved:** Michael Oboler **Seconded:** Cheryl Paton

With no other nominations from the floor Michael Oboler and Stacey Lim were elected as Vice President.



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Honorary Secretary:

Lynne Cunningham

With no other nominations from the floor Lynne Cunningham was elected as Honorary Secretary.

Moved: Laura Brehaut **Seconded:** Vicken Nackashian

Honorary Treasurer:

Ala Naghshineh was nominated from the floor by Laura Brehaut and all were in favour

With no other nominations from the floor Ala Naghshineh was elected as Honorary Treasurer.

Moved: Laura Brehaut **Seconded:** Katrina Marchioni

Committee Members (10):

5 nominations were received prior to the meeting:

1. Katherine Kovacs **Moved:** Laura Brehaut **Seconded:** Cheryl Paton
2. Ian Dun **Moved:** Laura Brehaut **Seconded:** Grant Hamid
3. Vicken Nackashian **Moved:** Angela Beach **Seconded:** Cheryl Paton
4. David Heiderich **Moved:** Laura Brehaut **Seconded:** Cheryl Paton
5. Angela Beach **Moved:** Cheryl Paton **Seconded:** Vicken Nackashian
6. Cheryl Paton **Moved:** Vicken Nackashian **Seconded:** Angela Beach
7. Carina Tucci **Moved:** Laura Brehaut **Seconded:** Katrina Marchioni
8. Kate Wyatt **Moved:** Kate Wyatt **Seconded:** Lynne Cunningham
9. Grant Hamid **Moved:** Laura Brehaut **Seconded:** Katrina Marchioni
10. Katrina Marchioni **Moved:** Michael Oboler **Seconded:** Angela Beach

All were elected.

Public Officer: Ronnie Bauer **Moved:** Katherine Kovacs **Seconded:** Angela Beach

Close of Meeting: 6.44 p.m.