

MINUTES

Australian Fabian Society - Victoria Branch Annual General Meeting

When and where:

Wednesday 28th April 2021 at 7:30pm via Zoom.

Meeting ID: 868 5929 4836

Passcode: 465153

1. Welcome by Chair

The meeting was opened at 7:33pm by the Acting Chair, Jeff McCracken-Hewson, with an Acknowledgement of Country and welcome to all attendees.

2. Attendance

Zoom Host: Billie Colless, Fabians National Chair

Fabians Branch Members:

Austin Byard, Blain canning, Brian Howe, Claire Duffy (proxy), Dave Davies, David Hall, David Redfearn, Diana Huggins, Drew Lindsay, Elspeth McCracken-Hewson, Fernanda Trecenti, Helen Hill, Ivana CSAR O.A.M., Jack Halliday, James Talbett, Jeff McCracken-Hewson, John McKay, John Thompson, Julia Thornton, Ken Coghill, Matthew Coote, Max Dumais, Megan Poad, neil renschaw, Patsy O'Dowd, Paul Sandringham, peter Moylan, Peter Norden, Rob Gerrard, Roger Byrne, Russell Byard, Sarah Howe, Sharon Meredith, Stephen Whale, Wendy Morris and Keith Morris,

3. Apologies

Ralph Catts.

4. Confirmation of Minutes for 2020 Annual General Meeting

Minutes for the 2020 AGM were circulated to all members by email prior to the meeting. No comments or amendments to the minutes were made by the attendees.

Motion: That the minutes for the 2020 AGM be accepted.

Moved by Max Dumais. Seconded by David Redfearn.

CARRIED

5. Reports

Chair

Julia Thornton gave her outgoing report of the 5 years she has been chair, clarifying that she has stood down at the end of 2020 due to health issues, when she handed of the position to Jeff McCracken-Hewson.

A copy of her report is at Attachment A.

Acting Chair

Jeff McCracken-Hewson gave a report on the 2020/2021 activities.

A copy of his report is at Attachment B.

Treasurer

David Redfearn reported that the past year was an unusual one, without fund raising events (except for the virtual annual dinner) due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, the Fabians Victoria Branch maintained a stable financial position, having a bank balance of \$28,341.14. His report is at Attachment C.

Motion: That the Chair's and Treasurer's reports for 2020/2021 be accepted.

Moved by Jack Halliday. Seconded by Megan Poad.

CARRIED

6. Election of 2021 Officers

Jeff McCracken-Hewson, as outgoing acting chair, declared all positions vacant and handed the meeting to the Returning Officer, Max Dumais.

Office bearer positions:

Each of the four office bearer positions has attracted one nomination by closure of nominations, so the Returning Officer declared them all duly elected.

The confirmed nominations were:

Chair: Jeff McCracken-Hewson

Deputy Chair: Fernanda Trecenti

Secretary: Julia Thornton

Treasurer: David Redfearn

Representative to the National Board:

The Returning Officer clarified that the Representative to the National Board will be appointed at the first executive meeting.

Committee Positions:

There are six committee positions and there were seven nominations by closure of nominations.

Candidates are: Megan Poad, Robyn Saltmarsh, Drew Lindsey, Paul Sandringham, Cano Ergun, Sarah Howe, Santino Raftellis.

The candidates were asked to make their statements before attendees proceeded to vote.

Results:

Megan Poad, 29 votes.

Robyn Saltmarsh, 25 votes.

Drew Lindsey, 28 votes.

Paul Sandringham, 26 votes.

Cano Ergun, 15 votes.

Sarah Howe, 27 votes.

Santino Raftellis, 20 votes.

On these results, the Returning Officer declared Megan Poad, Robyn Saltmarsh, Drew Lindsey, Paul Sandringham, Sarah Howe, Santino Raftellis elected for the Committee.

Motion: That the Returning Officers report be received:

Moved: Rob Gerrard. Seconded: Sharon Meredith.

CARRIED

7. Appointment of Returning Officer for 2022

The Returning Officer returned the chairing of the meeting to the elected Chair, Jeff McCracken-Hewson.

Jeff McCracken-Hewson thanked the Returning Officer and proposed that he continue as Returning Officer for 2022.

Motion: That Max Dumais be appointed to the position of returning officer for 2022.

Moved: Jack Halliday. Seconded by Rob Gerrard.

CARRIED

8. Chair's Closing

Congratulations to all elected members.

Thank you to all for attending.

Everybody was invited to join an open discussion on ideas and feedback about the Fabians activities.

Meeting Closed at 8:21pm.

.../Attachments

Attachment A.

Outgoing Chair Report 28 04 2021 – Julia Thornton

After five years in the Chair of the Victorian Branch of Australian Fabians I am now stepping down as Chair. I stood down at the end of 2020 as I knew I had a number of bouts of surgery coming up, and handed over to Jeff McCracken Hewson to become Acting Chair.

However, my philosophical reason for finally stepping down at this AGM, is that I think five years is enough for any leader. Since John Howard left office in 2007, no Prime Minister of Australia has lasted more than three years in a term of office. Even Kevin Rudd, serving two non-consecutive terms left him a month short of three years.

So I count myself very lucky to have served for five years and even luckier to have had the luxury of stepping down at a time of my own choosing.

I effectively began leadership of the Victorian Branch in September of 2015 as the Chair at that time took leave of absence to stand for local government election. This 2021 AGM marks the formal end of my chair-ship.

Over the period of time between September 2015 and my standing down in December 2020, the Victorian Branch has;

- reorganised itself internally so that its tasks are now led by various different Board members in a more specialised way
- revamped its Publications arm
- held 59 events, consisting of speaker forums, special presentations by ALP politicians (Andrew Giles and Terri Butler's paper on their tax reform proposals, and Mark Butler on Labor Democracy: Why Party Reform Matters) and our regular Annual Dinners
- had a Fabians stall at each ALP State Conference and also had representatives at Federal Conference
- increased its membership from 307 members in September 2015 to a current 522 members, a 70% increase since September 2015

2020 was a particularly difficult year for us, as it was for so many, because of Covid 19. Our biggest effort was to revolutionise our internal structure from a primarily face to face organisation to a digital and Zoom based organisation in the space of about three weeks in April 2020. While we were very much helped by the expertise of the National Branch of Fabians, this was no mean feat because we needed to re-imagine every aspect of running events and meetings in the new online environment while having about the same amount of experience of this as most other people in voluntary organisations at the time.

It has been an absolute privilege to serve in an office previously held by many well known Labor Party luminaries, but particularly Race Mathews who has never lost his interest in Fabians. Over the period I have served I have personally learned a great deal from many people, about organising, networking and shepherding projects from a good idea to something that actually happens on the ground.

None of the above achievements would be possible without a whole Fabians organisation, State and National, that is becoming increasingly sophisticated in supporting State Branch enterprise and projects through improved organisational design and digital infrastructure.

So I save my final thanks and eternal gratitude for the people who have volunteered to work on the Fabians executive over the time I have been in the chair. The hours of discussion and creative thought that have gone into our events and publications is extraordinary, as is the willingness and dedication of members of the executive to engage in the sometimes unrewarding tasks of administration that are at the heart of Fabians functioning.

A special thanks goes to Jeff McCracken Hewson for taking over the reins when he was needed. The sheer number of matters to track and complete as Chair made it no easy task!

I have made many good friends and had many memorable, informative and impassioned conversations on many subjects over the time I have been in the Victorian Branch Chair, and they will stick with me for the rest of my life. I thank you all for being members, participants and supporters of Fabians and champions of Fabians ideas.

Attachment B.

Chair's Report. Jeff McCracken-Hewson

I took up the position of Acting Chair in January this year after our Chair, Julia Thornton, had to step back for medical reasons

I'd like to start my report by paying a tribute to Julia. Fabians has been on a steady upward trajectory for the last few years and a lot of that is due to Julia's leadership of our Branch, her energy, her commitment and above all, in my mind, the way that she reaches out to people, gets them involved and infects them with her enthusiasm. That energy was put at the service of every aspect of our work during the year and all the success we have had is due in no small part to Julia.

And we did have, I think, a very successful year once again. The simplest indication of that is our membership figures.

2020/21 has been an outstanding year for membership growth for Fabians across Australia, and particularly for Victoria. In the 15 months from the end of 2019 to the end of March 2021, Australian Fabians grew from 1,102 members to 1,625. That is an increase of 47%. During the same period, the Victorian Fabians grew from 334 members to 525, an increase of 57%. Thanks very much to our Membership Secretary, Megan Poad, for looking after membership during the year.

The specific things that draw people into Fabians above all I believe are our Events, our Publications and our Publicity. I think we have had a successful year in all these areas. But we can always do better and we can always do more. So I thank the people that have served on the Executive this year, in both elected and co-opted roles, I thank the people that have put themselves forward for the coming year, including Robynne Saltmarsh who has come forward to be a new member of the executive, and I extend a sincere invitation to all Fabians to work with us in any areas that interest you. Please come forward. Please contact us and we will find a way to involve you and to put you to work! And please stay on for the discussions after the formal meeting to give us your ideas and thoughts.

In our **Events**, we always try to identify big issues that are occupying the minds of the Progressive Movement, to tease out the key questions that need to be asked – and then to find speakers who can help us to answer them.

In 2020/21 we concluded our series on Socialism, asking whether it was time for Fabians and the Progressive Movement to revisit their socialist roots. We held two "Max Dumais" events on the effect of COVID-19 on the "Pink-Collar Recession", and on the future of Education. We held an event series on the future of Organised Labour and its role in Industrial Action, Industry Planning and Industrial Democracy; and an event series on Privatisation, looking separately at services and Infrastructure. We also held an event on the elections in Poland, and of course our annual dinner.

Attendance at our events continued at very high levels, typically around 100 in attendance and sometimes many more than that. We had a series of outstanding speakers, and question and answer and discussion was always very lively and informative. And our "online pub" was a great experience for those with the stamina to stay on for it.

Events are a team effort, and I particularly want to thank Sarah Howe and Santino Raftellis who each took ownership of an Event during the year, I'd like to mention Fernanda Trecenti

who has been a powerhouse of ideas about Event topics and contributors, Julia who played a major role in supporting events, Max Dumais for running his inimitable “Max Dumais workshops” and other members of the Events team including Megan on publicity, Cano on Twitter and chat monitoring, and Chris Blake on video and Facebook

In **Publications**, our aim is to stimulate informed conversations amongst a wide range of people, and to mobilise these into publications that empower our membership. Publications may be distilled directly from the input of members in discussions, or be penned by our event speakers, often in a way that incorporates event Q&A sessions.

Out of our Max Dumais events, we produced letters synthesizing ideas from the discussion, which were then sent on to Federal and State frontbench MPs and also published on our website as “Letters to Labor”. MP responses showed that our voices are being heard.

Out of our Socialism series, we published Dr Tristan Ewin’s paper ‘On Socialism Today: Planning a Way Forward.’ Out of our event series on worker power, we published a monograph by Professor John McKay, on industry policy in a post- neoliberal and post- coronavirus era.

We published Geoff Gallop’s annual dinner speech on ‘Can Democracy Deliver’, and also a history of the Fabians by Iola Mathews, both as Fabians pamphlets; and Dr Sarah Howe’s report from a University of Adelaide conference, discussing a ‘Green New Deal for Australia’.

We are currently working on a series of publications related to privatisation, out of our most recent event series.

We are also pleased to announce that Fabian’s members can now access online magazine subscriptions with New Community, Arena and Prospect and that the groundwork has been commenced to start a Fabians book group in the next term.

In the course of the year, responsibility for coordinating our publications efforts passed from Sarah Howe to Paul Sandringham. Sarah continues to contribute to the publications team, and we have maintained continuity of approach.

And looking at the general work of the Executive, I’d also like to recognise Drew Lindsey for being a fresh new voice on our Executive and for keeping us in touch with the perspectives of young people and specifically the young Fabians. And finally, the ever dependable David Redfearn for looking after our finances and also our venue management.

In the past year we have also been reexamining our Fabians structure to be sure that it is able to support us as we continue, we hope, to expand and go from strength to strength. I expect that work will continue during the year, leading possibly to some proposed changes in the second half of the year.

Finally, I would like to reflect that what draws people into Fabians is essentially, I believe, our role in helping the progressive movement to develop and clarify its ideas and its arguments, so that it can be more effective in promoting our shared aims of democracy, equality and fairness. That is something for which, I think, there is a great thirst in Australia. We are not aligned with any political party. We aim to be a critical friend of the ALP and also to other parties and organizations that share our aims.

I hope you will all continue to support us in our mission in the coming year.

Attachment C.

2020-21 Financial Report. David Redfearn.

PROFIT AND LOSS STATEMENT

1 JULY 2020- 31 MARCH 2021

Income

Event income

Event Income (Annual Dinner)	\$1627.80
Donations (Annual Dinner)	\$205.00
*Book sales (Annual Dinner)	\$428.87
Try Booking Fee (Annual Dinner)	-\$47.14
Total Event Income	\$2214.53

Other income

Interest Revenue	\$4.31
Total Other Income	\$4.31
Total Income	\$2218.84

Expenditure

Book purchases and postage (Annual Dinner)	\$521.18
Total Expenditure	\$521.18
Net Earnings	\$1697.66

*Still to be entered in the National P/L Statement

Bank balances (as at 31 March 2021)

Victorian Branch Saver:	\$14,449.79
Victorian Transaction:	\$13,891.61
Total:	\$28,341.14

COMMENTS

- This report is based on data for the period July-March as all financial reporting is now for the financial year rather than for the calendar year so it is incomplete due to the AGM being held prior to 30 June
 - This raises issues for the future timing of annual general meetings as reporting should be for the twelve month period prior to the AGM
 - Reduced financial activity for the period is due to all events being on line because of restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Normally our events would raise revenue through door takings and raffles. The only fundraising event for the financial year was our Annual Dinner in November which is reported above
 - Grateful thanks to Victorian Branch Executive Members Jack Halliday and Megan Poad and National Treasurer Danielle Pain for their assistance in the preparation of this report
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