



THE WIRELESS INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA

OPEN FORUM, CANBERRA, 7 May 2005

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Michael Owen, VK3KI
President, on behalf of the Board

1. Introduction

This report is submitted to the Open Forum to be held immediately following the formal Annual General Meeting on 7 May 2005, and outlines the activities of the WIA since 16 May 2004, and is submitted on behalf of all the directors. It does not repeat the formal matters set out in the Directors Report submitted with the Annual Accounts to the AGM, but has been prepared in consultation with all of the directors.

It is convenient to commence at the time that the former Federal Council, the representatives of all of the then members of the WIA, passed the Special Resolution adopting a new Constitution and creating the single, national body.

It is also convenient to bring this report up to date, and go beyond the period covered by the accounts ending 31 December last.

I report briefly on some matters the subject of separate reports to be submitted to the Open Forum.

2. People

In the last 7 months the WIA lost 3 staunch supporters, leaving gaps that are very hard to fill.

Last October we lost Henry Andersson, VK8HA, national Intruder Watch Coordinator until shortly before his death.

In January we lost Peter Naish, VK2BPN, WIA secretary, a former Federal President and Chairman of Directors of IARU Region 3.

In late April this year we lost Ron Smith, VK4AGS, national Education Coordinator.

The role of national Intruder Watch Coordinator is currently being undertaken by director Glenn Dunstan, VK4DU, as we look for a suitable replacement.

Chris Jones, VK2ZDD is currently filling the role of secretary.

June Fox, the cheerful voice of the WIA for nearly 18 years will retire for health reasons within a few weeks, though I am sure that she will remain available to help us with her incredible knowledge of the WIA.

I cannot tell you how much I have valued her cheerful assistance and unbelievable commitment to the WIA.

We have engaged Ms Judith Oliver to take over that position, and who is currently working with June to learn as much as she can.

Judith comes with a teaching and charitable organisation background, and has much experience that will be very useful for us.

In November 2004, Vice President Ernie Hocking resigned from the Board, and Robert Broomhead, VK3KRB was appointed director to fill the vacancy thereby created.

Ewan McLeod, VK4ERM was appointed Vice President.

3. Board

Since 16 May 2004 the Board has met in person twice, communicated continuously by phone and email, and has formally adopted 64 resolutions outside the face to face meetings by written resolution signed by all directors, of which 38 dealt with the admission of new members and 14 related to the affiliation of clubs.

4. Office

The office continues to manage the membership applications and renewals, and from that the mailing lists for AR as well as the WIA Exam System and the very many other activities associated with the WIA.

Initially I was the only director or officer in Melbourne, so I took particular responsibility for the office, and with the appointment of Robert Broomhead as a director, some of that responsibility has been (thankfully) shared.

In the last 11 months we have addressed and are addressing a number of issues associated with the office.

Shortly after the restructure a new but inexpensive laser printer and a new facsimile machine were purchased, and with the help of a small number of people a great deal of rubbish and old and unused equipment was sent to the tip and the office cleaned up.

Priority of tasks were established so that banking is done at least every second day, more routines have been established, so that certain tasks are performed on the same day every week.

In all, new efficiencies have been found, though we recognise that we still have some way to go. The need for efficiency has been very obvious over the last period, as from the adoption of the new Constitution new pressures immediately developed. Renewals were delayed, then a new form had to be developed, letters written to accompany the renewal notices, signatures required and many questions answered.

Then, membership certificates and welcoming letters were printed and with help of a group from EMDRC, posted.

In short, the restructure has led to many new tasks, and will continue to do as we establish new procedures, for example to deal with the new QSL obligations.

The Board has set aside funds this year to update the basic membership software, so that we can have access to information more flexibly, and various requirements can be met automatically. In addition, sums have been set aside to acquire new hardware, including new PCs and a replacement photocopier multi tray printer. A further sum has been set aside to allow some office refurbishment and new equipment.

We are extremely lucky that we have had assistance at least one day each week, and more often when we have got into trouble, from Brenda Edmonds.

5. Clubs

We have repeatedly stressed the importance of the clubs as the natural and synergistic means of attracting new amateurs, training new amateurs, assessing competency of new amateurs and providing the social centre for local amateurs and the source of opinion on matters that the WIA should consider.

The Board has developed the criteria for affiliation as required by the Constitution, and finally, immediately before Christmas we were able to write to each club that we knew to invite affiliation and to tell them of the liability insurance that we had arranged to cover the WIA and its affiliated clubs.

52 clubs have now become Affiliated Clubs of the WIA.

Two of the directors have had a close association with their own clubs, we have conducted a clubs conference in Sydney, attended a conference of clubs in Melbourne and many directors have visited clubs, and in the past 11 months I have visited clubs in Townsville, Rockhampton, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Newcastle, Mildura, Ballarat, Melbourne, Adelaide, Darwin and Alice Springs.

My lasting impression is of genuine interest, genuine goodwill and a concern for the future of amateur radio.

We are now addressing what we believe to be the needs of clubs: we have developed and are lending posters, we have made available the Callbook for clubs to sell, to the best of our ability we have listed each club and (to the extent we have been able to extract it) relevant information about the clubs in both the Callbook and on the website. We are developing better pages of information and the ability to post information by clubs for clubs on our website.

Unashamedly, we are asking the clubs for their support and for them to work with us to encourage more members, and to make sure that their members are also members of the WIA.

I know that we must provide a service to clubs as well as to members of the WIA to justify their support. We have sought to identify the needs of the clubs at the various meetings we have attended, and are now working to meet those needs.

6. Club Grant Scheme

The Board has decided, subject to budget constraints, to offer a small number of grants to qualifying Affiliated Clubs in the 2006 financial year, following the previous VK4 model, where clubs are invited to make submissions for assistance for particular projects.

Full details will be published later.

7. The Henry Andersson bequest

Henry Andersson, VK8HA, who had become a life member of the National Body as soon as he could, left the WIA his house and land at Humpty Doo NT.

The Estate is still being finalised, and the Board has decided to sell the property at the first available opportunity.

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of local amateurs in dealing with this matter, particularly Garry Woods, VK8GW, and Karl Warchot, VK8CAW.

Garry is acting on the WIA's behalf in organising the clean up of the property, the placement of insurance and the like, and liaising with the agents. Karl undertook the task of identifying radio equipment of value for the Trustee, arranging for its sale and accounting to the Trustee.

8. Publications

Since May last year we have attempted to achieve a much closer integration with the Publications Committee, with director Ted Thrift taking special responsibility for Publications and the Callbook.

Ted by phone, and myself in person, have attended as many Publications Committee meetings as possible.

I believe that we should all be grateful to those who contribute to and put together a magazine that I think has improved significantly over the last period. In particular, I thank Colwyn Low, Editor of AR and Brenda Edmonds, who makes the Callbook happen.

7. Broadcasts

At the end of July 2004 the Q-News team led by Graham Kemp, VK4BB, became the national WIANews team, providing ever since a totally professional weekly broadcast, replacing the state based divisional broadcasts.

The only criticism I have heard is that it is too professional! However, it seems that most do not regard that as a failing.

Thanks to the many who make these broadcasts so wide ranging and interesting, and particularly Graham Kemp, VK4BB.

8. WIA Website

The WIA website is extensively used, with all releases and as much other information as possible being found there. It has been the primary tool for providing information in a timely way.

Perhaps it has grown a little too quickly, and currently we are investigation making it a little more user friendly, and a little easier to find things.

Particular thanks to Colin Thompson, VK2TRC, who we seem to approach on an almost daily basis.

9. WIA Information

Through the website, broadcasts and AR, the Board has sought to ensure that as much information as possible in relation to what the WIA is doing is made available as quickly as possible.

Particular thanks go to Chris Jones, who has really done his best to ensure that as much information as possible is posted on the site just as quickly as possible.

10. Representation

The WIA, through various officers, groups and individuals represents the amateur service to various authorities.

In August the WIA sought changes to the Australian Spectrum Plan, and in the result the 3776-3800 kHz “DX window” was added to the Plan, and the band 1825-1875 kHz was allocated primary status.

Also in August, the WIA made submissions that were ultimately successful in relation to the 5.6 GHz band.

The WIA is represented on the Preparatory Groups working on WRC-07, and Australia now proposes a table entry, rather than a footnote, to allocate the band 135.7 – 137.8 kHz to the amateur service on a secondary basis.

The WIA has made submission to the ACA in respect of the allocation of spot frequencies around 5MHz, as has been done in the USA among others. To date, these submissions have been rejected, and the Board is considering its position.

A major issue has been the restructuring of the amateur service, proposed by the ACA in its Outcomes paper, published last May, and of particular interest is the Foundation Licence.

A specialist group has prepared draft syllabi for all levels, and the WIA has proposed what it argues is a better assessment system, with the accreditation of assessors.

Against this background, it is really disappointing that the implementation of these proposals, originally promised for March, still remain at some undefined time in the future.

In addition, the WIA has, from time to time, made submissions on various aspects of the restructure, or in response to invitations from the ACA to comment.

BPL interference has emerged as a major global issue, and the group led by director Phil Wait has continually released information. Now the ACA has released its discussion paper, and the task is to provide a reasoned and reasonable response to that.

With the death of Peter Naish, and the emergence of standards as becoming potentially relevant to the fight against BPL interference, we have restructured our representation on the various committees of Standards Australia, with David Wardlaw in Melbourne, John Bishop in Sydney and Gilbert Hughes in Canberra.

There is no doubt that the WIA has, in its first year restructured as a national body, faced more challenges and threats than anyone believed possible at the start of the year. I believe that the organisation, thanks to the help of so many individuals with backgrounds, skills and experience built over many years,

responded competently and I hope is becoming perceived as the responsible voice of amateur radio.

We can only thank those who give of their time and skill, often with very little public recognition to these tasks.

11. Marketing, Image

The Board has agreed that new and more up to date material including posters and brochures promoting amateur radio and the WIA are needed.

Robert Broomhead is the director accepting primary responsibility for these tasks and he has already produced 4 new posters that attracted favourable comment when displayed at the WIA stand at the Wyong Field Day.

The posters can be made available by way of loan for a club event, or can be purchased by a club.

12. Membership

Renewals due since 1 July 2004 to end April 2005 amounted to 3472. Membership actually renewed amounted to 3151, or about 91%.

In the year previous to the last financial year some 240 new members joined the WIA. In the time since 16 May 2004 there have been 323 new members.

If you add those new members to the members who have renewed, the total is 3494, virtually the same number as the previous year.

So long as we can keep attracting new members and keep our existing members, hopefully the future is bright.

Your Board cannot stress too strongly how important it is to ensure that our membership is not merely static, but growing.

13. Membership categories and subscription rates

The Board has decided to introduce a Family category of membership, available to a second and further persons living at the same address as a Member receiving AR, the Family member not receiving AR, with an annual subscription rate of \$40 per year.

The WIA will also offer a 5-year subscription for all existing categories of membership except Student Membership, costing 5 times the single year rate for each category, less approximately 5%.

14. Advisory Committees

The WIA Constitution requires Advisory Committees, initially the Divisional Councillors of the former Divisions, after 3 years elected, to advise the Board.

We have allowed the Advisory Committees to evolve, as the best way to allow for the differences between the various states.

Now we accept that we must start to use that resource, and the Board has recently resolved to ensure that each Advisory Committee has a WIA Nominee, and through the WIA Nominee in particular, improve the two way information flow with the Advisory Committees by the appointment of an Advisory Committee Liaison Manager. That person will need to be totally familiar with the Board's policies and views, and have the responsibility to receive information and provide information and guidance.

That matter is current.

15. QSL Service

As part of the formal transition from a federal to national structure the WIA promised to provide a QSL service at no cost for WIA members.

Ewan McLeod is the director responsible for implementing that promise, and it has now been decided that the existing inward system would be retained, that the Westlakes Amateur Radio Club would undertake consolidation of all out ward cards, retaining existing reception points, with them forwarding to Westlakes as required.

Information is currently being distributed directly to those involved, and the QSL Bureau Expense Claim Form and instructions as to its use are on the WIA website.

The WIA is now able to say that it is providing a QSL service at no cost for all national WIA members.

16. QSL Curator

Ken Matchett, VK3TL continues to collect the most interesting and most important QSL cards, a function we do not always recognise.

More information about this function will be placed in AR from time to time.

17. Implementation Agreements

The so called "Implementation Agreements" were entered into with each former Division, in the case of the Divisions that were wound up, (Queensland, South Australia and NT, Western Australia and Tasmania) for the benefit of their members, and with the Divisions continuing as an entity, CRARC, ARV and ARNSW, setting out the basic relationship between the former Division and the WIA.

The last of these agreements was entered into just before Christmas last, with the New South Wales Division, now Amateur Radio New South Wales.

While these agreements took a lot of time, hopefully they represent the final step in a process that did not end on 16 May 2004, when the Federal Council, in effect, voted itself out of existence and created the national WIA.

18. Contests

Trevor Quick is the director who takes primary responsibility for Contests and Awards, though Chris Jones has undertaken a number of specific tasks in this area.

The national Contests Co-ordinator is Ian Godsil, VK3JS, who has submitted a report to the Open Forum, and some contests are managed by a separate manager as follows:

Ross Hull Contest: John Martin, VK3KWA

John Moyle Field Day: Dennis Johnston, VK3ZUX

Remembrance Day Contest: Northern Corridors Radio Club, VK6ANC

Oceania DX Contest: Tony Burt, VK3TZ (Conducted alternate years with NZART)

The Board has relied heavily on the expertise of these people and we thank them for their efforts.

19. Awards

Malcolm Johnson, VK6LC is the national Awards Co-ordinator, and has spent much time updating the WIA awards to reflect the new structure, and enhance the WIA awards as described in his report.

We thank Malcolm for his enthusiastic support.

20. Merit Awards

The Board recently reviewed the WIA Merit Awards, Honorary Life Membership being covered by the Constitution, but updating the rules of the G A Taylor Medallion award, the Ron Wilkinson Achievement Award and President's Commendation.

Further announcements relating to the WIA merit awards will be made.

21. Conclusion

I have not covered all of the activities of the WIA in this overview. Most are covered in other reports submitted to the Open Forum.

Each of us who accepted a role on the board of the WIA after the adoption of the new Constitution was very aware of the difficulties that faced us and the importance of somehow doing our best to persuade those who were unconvinced that the WIA could not merely perform as well as it had under its old federal structure, but could perform better.

Whether that has been achieved is for you to judge.

But I can assure you that each of us has devoted a great deal of time and effort into making this “new” WIA meet the expectations of the many who supported it.

I would thank all of the directors, our secretary Chris Jones, and our Treasurer David Pilley for all that each of them has done to make the last year as successful as I believe it has been.

Finally, I would thank all the amateurs, members and non-members, who have given me encouragement.

We now must face the challenge of the next year.

Michael Owen