

ACMHN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday 29th November 2021

CEO's REPORT

A year has passed since my first AGM, and the world is a different place to what we had envisaged more than a year ago. The pandemic continues to affect many facets of our operations, including lockdowns, restrictions on face to face meetings, and the big one, rescheduling of the 2021 International Conference to May 2022. Effectively having two conferences cancelled or delayed has impacted our bottom line, and, operationally, the focus of the College in the Financial Year just past has been to minimise costs, refine processes, and streamline service delivery, while continuing interactions with stakeholders in advocacy and recognition of MHNs. The Board has been busy with strategic planning and governance issues, and I feel, going forward, it is important that we focus on the financial viability of the College. In simple terms, as the finance report will outline, we managed a small surplus in FY2020-21, and we now must have a strong focus on membership and the other income sources underpinning the operations of the College, so that we can expand our advocacy work and delivery of services to members.

At the last AGM, I indicated that stabilisation of the finances and the operations of the College were the goals for the ensuing FY. The stabilisation has largely been achieved, but while a small surplus was achieved last FY, the future continues to be on a knife's edge. Membership has fallen marginally, which, given the pandemic and the reduced resources, is understandable, but not viable in the long term.

We continue with six staff, and the planned increase in staffing has been put on hold with the delay of the Conference. A new Communications team came on board early in 2021, and Julia and Angus have proved to be both versatile and adept at redeveloping the website, recently launched, after a false start before their arrival. Their ability to craft press releases, monitor the media, and synthesise responses, as well as drive both the rebuild of the website, the College's social media presence, advertising, and the fortnightly College Connections Newsletter and separate Events Newsletter have proven winners. Their openness and honesty have been reflected by the positive support and confidence shown in them by the membership, the Board, and our stakeholders. They have juggled requests for assistance from more than 30 Chairs of SIGs and Branches, State Reps, Board members, other staff, and whilst some things take a little longer than hoped for, the reality is that we are working with the resources at hand, and doing what used to be supported by many more staff. We are working to a plan to implement more technical solutions that will automate as much as we can so that all staff can spend more time responding personally to the multitude of requests received daily. That plan involves the launch of the new website, reinstatement of eLists as a step to comply with legislation and to provide a stepping stone to new Forum software to simplify communications to all the active members across the College.

While retaining a headcount of six, Cath came on Board to replace the Membership officer who moved to Victoria to be closer to family in the pandemic. Cath has focussed on cleaning up membership information, automating regular membership processes, answering

membership enquiries, and working with the Comms team to integrate the CRM with the website. She is also working with Ellen in the events space.

Irene is a long-term staff member of the College, and is now Operations Manager, responsible for the day-to-day operations of the office. Her skills as a project manager, as well as her corporate knowledge of the College has proved valuable and a real asset, necessary with the small team we have delivering the raft of services that we do.

Lauren, also with good corporate knowledge, has continued to work with the team managing day to day finances as well as the credentialing process, amongst other responsibilities. Jillian, our external bookkeeper, maintains the accounting system, prepares reports, and ensures we are complying with the various regulations and requirements in the tax and payroll arenas.

Ellen continues to be the face in front of, and driving force behind, the College's events and conferences. Again, a wealth of corporate knowledge combines with a very high level of event organisational skills and a network of contacts in both the College and the events industry has proved essential and exemplary with the move to online and the re-negotiation of the conferences from 2020, 2021, and into 2022 and 2023. Please note the 46th Conference will be in May 2022, and the 47th Conference is planned for November 2022.

All staff have supported the SIGs and Branches, with special mentions to the new Nurse Educator's SIG, reengagement of the Nurse Practitioner SIG, and growth of the Psychotherapy and Clinical Supervision SIGs. The Council of Branches is an active forum, with Queensland now having two branches, with Northern NSW, Northern Territory, Tasmania, and Victoria active, and more in the pipeline. Again, Western Australia is an exemplary branch with an active and dedicated committee.

One of the time-consuming issues of the last FY was a cyber-attack on the College's payment gateway. This was rapidly identified and no information or funds were compromised. However, the security hole exploited related to a combination of the gateway in use and legacy website code, which had been in place for some time. We suspended all offending components and have taken advice and then the time to implement an up-to-date secure gateway with integration to the new version of the website and its backend. Again, nothing was lost or compromised, and with an investment of both time and money, we are implementing the latest in security for the College's online payment gateway.

My own role is a combined jack of all trades with a background in advocacy, health, IT, not-for-profits, and commercial sustainability. I have established strong connections into federal and state governments which I work with regularly, as well as many related organisations. I have also delved into the intricacies of technology, leasing, finances, events, and whatever else has needed addressing across all areas of the College. I do thank the Board, in particular President Mike Hazelton and VP John Hurley, for their endless support when matters have got technical in the mental health nursing space. Their no-nonsense and pragmatic approach has been of great benefit to the College, and to me personally. With their assistance and with the rest of the Board, we have made submissions, delivered responses, and highlighted the Colleges position to Ministers, Public Service Secretaries, other peak bodies, and now have seats on the MBS and Better Access reviews, including

the National Mental Health Workforce Taskforce, which is about to deliver its 10-year plan to government. This is along with representation on many different committees, boards, and advisory panels, where we have worked with interested members to widen the College's reach.

At the last AGM it was mentioned that some assets were being considered for realising, and last year the College completed the sale of the International Journal to the publishers, Wiley. This both cleared a number of outstanding debts and reduced outgoings, while maintaining editorial control, naming rights, and access for all members as part of their membership. The movement to online is an ongoing exercise for Wiley, and more than half their publications are now purely online, with the movement of others to online being accelerated by the pandemic. Thanks to Kim Usher continuing to drive the Journal very effectively.

During the year were also the completion of some Federal Government projects that were finalised by college staff rather than engaging external consultants, and therefore retaining both revenue and knowledge internally. These have been positively received by the commissioners of those projects, and we now look to identify more flexible and consistent revenue streams to expand the college.

For reference, the current revenue streams for the College are:

Membership

Events

Credentialing

Accreditation

Endorsement

Advertising

Membership is the lifeblood of the College, and I as mentioned earlier, we are marginally down in membership on 12 months ago. While some of this is to do with timing of renewals, it is still a drop. While we are keen to increase membership, we have needed both resources and platforms to build upon. Groundwork is underway with stakeholders, higher education, the membership, website and events, and we feel that a focus on membership growth in 2022 will bear fruit.

To support that growth, and with the launch of the new website and success of the College Connections, the College has decided for modest increase to the membership fee, from \$275 to \$299 from 1st January 2022. This represents the first change to memberships fees in nine years.

I would like to recognise the 1st Board that brought me onboard, led by Eimear Muir-Cochrane during very trying times. Thanks then go to the 2nd College Board I worked with, led by Tom Ryan until August 2020, for their pragmatic understanding and recognition of the desperate need for College viability. The 3rd Board from August 2020, led by Mike Hazelton, has a wide range of pertinent skills, combined with enthusiasm and knowledge of the sector. I look forward to a focus on growth through membership and a continuation of the operational stabilisation process, while developing a roadmap for the return to growth of the

College, increasing the value of membership, and implementation of the Board's Strategic Plan, which will be presented later in this AGM.

Some questions were raised in the last AGM regarding the position of the College (a recommendation of a specialist mental health nurse register with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia) from the 2019 AGM. This has been addressed since then and we continue to raise the matter with stakeholders at every opportunity. This question will be further addressed in the other presentations tonight.



Stephen Jackson
CEO