

ACMHN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 21st November 2022

CEO's REPORT

Another year of establishing a base for growth, despite headwinds of pandemics, changed governments, and delayed conferences. However, overall, a balanced and solid year setting the framework for a future of growth, value for members, and recognition of the college as a voice in the mental health arena.

I have now reached retirement age, and am into my 4th year with the College – an engagement originally planned to be 2 months in length. Earlier this year I advised the Board that I was planning to retire later in the year, and I am leaving the College at the end of this calendar year. Reflecting both my own and the Board's wishes, we have worked together to identify a successor and to ensure a smooth transition of leadership. The arrival of a new Federal Government provides a perfect break in advocacy proceedings to bring in a new CEO, and the ability to retain the current Board until the 2023 AGM provides a stable framework for the new CEO. Aligned with both of these is a stable financial situation with growth opportunities and a stable workforce with good corporate knowledge.

My successor is Adrian Armitage, currently the CEO of the Australian Medical Students Association, based in Canberra, and networked extremely well at federal political and bureaucratic levels, as well as the jurisdictional levels. He has exemplary knowledge and experience in building organisations such as the College, and has family in both nursing and psychology. I am very pleased that the process of the Board's CEO Search Committee identified and recruited Adrian. After an EOI for the role was invited from the membership, a formal search was instituted. Many applications were received, a longlist identified, a shortlist interviewed, and a unanimous decision reached. Adrian will officially start with the College in January, and I will finish at the end of this year, although I will be available for consultation in the new year. Adrian and I, plus key staff, are already in discussions about both operations and strategy. I look forward to watching with interest the growth of the College I have no doubt will occur.

The past year has been dominated by the Conferences both being cancelled and successfully run. The Gold Coast Conference was organised and largely prepared for in FY2021/22, with the actual conference delivered in FY2022/23, however I must mention it here as the effort that went into both cancelling, postponing, then renegotiating, and finally preparing for a successful conference was immense. The effects of cancelled conferences, forward payments, negotiations of rates, expended and unexpended expenses, changes in costs, building in contingency and assessing risk factors was a difficult set of factors to reflect in the College's financial system. In effect, there is a College FY which relates to the traditional July to June fiscal year, and the Conference FY, which runs from somewhere September/October for 12

months. This is a sensible arrangement when the conferences go ahead each year, as expenses and costs balance out over the delivered conference and conference being prepared for despite crossing FYs. However, when conferences are delayed or cancelled, that financial equilibrium is disrupted and the financials are difficult to follow. Our auditors are across the situation and have adapted well, and while not delivering a surplus this FY, we have notion success once abnormal unexpected expenses are factored in. Two key expenses not expected were a large increase in insurance costs due to legal action in 2019/20, and a previous Board's requested legal opinions of various matters.

A significant portion of the office's limited resources were expended through internal reviews and governance issues. The Constitution review was put on hold after an external legal opinion was sought, but will be reconsidered in the new year, along with a move to a company structure. The new CEO has a strong governance background and will provide a fresh set of eyes on the matter.

Significant time was spent moving advocacy issues forward with Federal and State governments. Positive responses and genuine interest in the clear identification of qualified Mental Health Nurses is supported, but with the announcements of elections, progress has been difficult. The College has gained seats at various committees and reviews, including Better Access and the MBS reviews, the Federal Mental Health Workforce Taskforce, and other bodies. The College's opinion has been sought during the year, with a focus on the availability of a skilled mental health workforce and the initiatives to address that workforce. The media is now regularly in discussions with the College, and our views and contributions to the MH workforce are highly regarded. My particular thanks to the members of the college that contributed their expertise as, and when, needed.

The focus of the College for the new year needs to be growth and emergence from the pandemic. The opportunities with the new governments are real, and the need to drive advocacy at all levels requires an external focus of both the Board and the office staff. The three major income areas for the college underpinning the delivery of services and advocacy work to and for members are membership, advertising, and events. These are augmented in other diverse revenue streams, but they are the foundation of the College. These must be front and centre going forward.

We have continued with six staff, and the planned increase in staffing has been put on hold with the delay of the Conference, effects on revenue, and continuation of the pandemic. However, the existing staff have leveraged our social media and increased press visibility to improve our reputation and weight in the government spheres. The fortnightly College Connections Newsletter and separate Events Newsletter continue to gain positive reviews and have proven winners. The staff continue to manage many competing interests and have developed strong relationships in the active membership. I am pleased to say we have diversity of staff and our mutual support has proved strong during the difficult times.

Key to the smooth operation of the College is Irene. A long-term staff member of the College, Irene is our 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, as has the people management of the office staff, necessary with the small team we have delivering the raft of services that we do.

Of course, events don't occur without specialist skills in that area, and Ellen continues to be our Events Manager, with a major focus on the conferences, ably supported by the team in the office.

Compliments to the staff for a year well handled, to Sophie, Bethany, Hannah, Lauren, Jillian, and Angus.

All staff have supported the SIGs and Branches, with the Chair of the Branches contributing to the growth and reestablishment of new branches and SIGs, although some committees do need more focus. The Council of Branches is an active forum and will see new leadership after the AGM year. One of the key findings from the conference was the interest in branches and the plethora of special interests awaiting establishment in the wings. Recognition of the ongoing stellar work in the WA, Northern NSW, Qld and NT Branches, and to the new and reconstituted branches being reinvigorated now.

Membership is the lifeblood of the College, and we continue to hold at about 2,500 members with around 1,000 Credentialed. This is a key focus for growth in the new year.

I would like to recognise the 1st Board that brought me to the College in difficult times, led by Eimear Muir-Cochrane. 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, had a wide range of governance skills, combined with knowledge of the sector. The 4th Board, led by John Hurley and Mike Hazelton, being a reconstituted Board through appointments and engagements, is providing a stable base now for the next 12 months and the inducting of the new CEO. Carefully following Constitutional rules on numbers, terms, appointments, and elections, the 2023 AGM will see a full election of both President and Directors, and possibly with the view to convert the College to a company rather than the current Association structure.

On that note, I would like to thank Bernie Stefan-Rasmus for his long time representation of the College as the South Australian Public Officer required by SA Association law. He is stepping down, and a past President, Professor Eimear Muir-Cochrane will take on the role, with the view to moving away from the location based officials required currently.

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. A review of the Strategic Plan in concert with the new CEO is planned and will be invaluable.

Thank you to the members that have supported me, and in particular to Mike and John.



Stephen Jackson
CEO