

A'van Club of Australia Inc.

President's Annual report

Denmark WA Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 2nd May, 2017

It is with much pleasure that I now present to you the 18th Annual Report of the A'van Club of Australia Inc., and my first report as your President.

Our last National Gathering/AGM was at Renmark where we had quite a high number of 270 vans in attendance. I know many of you were at Renmark and enjoyed the wonderful hospitality of that town – the highlight for many was the beautiful riverside campsites, and the local food and wine was also enjoyed by many. This year the tyranny of distance and time has seen numbers down to around 185 registrations, still a good attendance, and I note an increased participation from the WA contingent – there are around 45 vans here from WA, with many members providing volunteer assistance at this gathering.

To say that it has been a busy year since Renmark would probably be an understatement. Whilst the Club has continued to flourish and provide great activities for the membership, a lot of “behind the scenes” work has been taking place.

There are two main areas that your Committee works on, namely the general administration of the Club, and secondly the planning and arrangements for national gatherings and AGMs such as this one.

In the general administration area, we have now had our first year without a **Brendon or Joan Smith** on Committee, and so have had to distribute their workload to others and maintain proper continuity in many areas. Brendon and Joan have of course continued their dedication to the Club, and I thank them for their ongoing support.

I am indebted to the hard work of all Committee members in taking on this significant change in arrangements, in particular our new Secretary, **Rick Houghton** who has been plunged into the deep end, but has certainly risen to the task in this important role. He has been ably assisted by new Committee member **Martin Hodgson** who has taken on the Records Officer role previously done by Rick, and also **Carole Brun** who has been busily processing new memberships. Fortunately one area where continuity has been less of a problem has been the Treasurer role which **John Bromley** has continued to perform with his usual dedication and good humour, and you will hear his report shortly.

With the AGM planning area, for a couple of years now we have had a sub-committee headed by the Vice President look after this. Bear in mind that it is not just the current AGM that is being worked on, but usually at least the next one, or two. This year **Vickie Teague**, took on this task and has done a sterling job in getting things together for this gathering in particular. I would point out that Vickie and her husband Greg actually made the trek to Denmark to assess facilities back in 2015 after Longreach, and it has proved vital to have checked things out first hand at that

early stage. Vickie has been well assisted in her task by Committee members **David Wilkinson**, and **John Critchley** – our first ever WA Committee member. At this point I would like to make mention of a most important contribution to this gathering by **Colin Brown** from WA. John Critchley was unfortunately taken ill at a critical time, and Colin took over his role, which included travelling to Melbourne last January for our final planning meeting for Denmark with the full Committee. Whilst Colin took this on, John continued to keep up to date and contribute where possible and I cannot emphasise enough, the importance of having such willing and enthusiastic people working with the Committee. I should also point out that John and Colin enlisted a huge band of volunteers to assist in all sorts of areas with this AGM and you will have already met many of them at registration and other events. A big thank you to the WA contingent!

Other Committee members have continued to contribute and perform important tasks. **Cliff Hicks**, our immediate past President has been a great help to me since taking over from him. Cliff is always willing to advise and assist wherever needed, and as well as regular Committee tasks, has worked on various website matters. Since he has been on the Committee for some fourteen years, Cliff provides a good level of knowledge and continuity. Thanks Cliff.

Bruce Gibbs cannot be with us at this gathering, but he has continued to work on various projects, including the A'van badges, banners, and with his involvement with the Justices Association, has always been a guiding hand with meeting processes and protocol. He has promised to be back for the Chef's Challenge next year!

Jean and Ian Blencowe also cannot be here today due to Ian's ill health. Ian and Jean have been on the Committee for some 15 years, and have been great contributors to the Club's activities in many areas. Many of you will have attended their bush dances - . It is unfortunate that health problems prevent them from continuing with their Committee positions and I thank them for their valued contribution over the years.

Before moving away from the Committee matters, I would like to mention a group of unsung heroes who not only support the Committee members, but also do various jobs with them, including many tasks at these National gatherings – these people of course are the wives, husbands, partners of Committee members, affectionately known as “the roadies”. So to my wife Lily, Greg Teague, June Hicks, Noelene Houghton, Ray Brun, Jane Winkler, Jan Wilkinson, Jan Hodgson, Leanne Critchley, and Margaret Brown, thank you for your great support and help.

The success of this Club is really demonstrated in the front line at the various activities that are held around the country. With some 1200 or so members and twelve regional/state groups, there is a lot to cover, and on a quick count in the last A'vanner there were some sixty or so gatherings around the country, plus many lunches and coffee mornings – what a fantastic program! This program would not happen without the dedication of the Co-ordinators and Hosts who put the gatherings together and make sure they happen successfully. I will introduce the various Co-ordinators later in the meeting.

As mentioned, our membership is around 1200 and remains steady with those retiring from the Club closely matched by new memberships. To those new members and first timers to an NG/AGM, I extend a special welcome and hope you enjoy your time in the Club as much as we have.

As well as the people already mentioned, some major tasks are carried out by non Committee people. Notably the excellent preparation of the A'vanner by **Mike Trinick** – thank you Mike, and the ongoing work by our Webmaster, **Ron Stootman**, who you will hear from shortly - it's a big job and I thank Ron for his dedication to this task. Also thanks to **Les Griffiths**, who updates and maintains the website calendar of events, and **Grace Brown**, who helped Ron with some website work until her departure from the Club during this year. **Jan Ross** is again doing a great job with the daily blog of National Gathering activities for the website – this year, following a number of requests, it is in the non-members area so your family and friends can see what a great time you are all having.

Tom McKendrick has continued to be active with the Uke group and regularly turns up at gatherings with a carload of spare ukeleles for new players to try out. Tom and Lyn could not make it to WA this year, but have put the Uke Group into the very capable hands of **Don and Meredith East** – thank you for stepping in to this, Don and Meredith.

During the year a number of members have been very ill and some have passed away. We wish those that are ill a speedy recovery, and pass on condolences to those who have lost loved ones. I would like to make special mention of some long term dedicated members who passed away during the year. Only a matter of a month ago, Lindsay Bradford passed away - Lindsay was the original Co-ordinator of the Wide Bay group and a Club member for many years. Murray Nash - a member for over 16 years and an active member and host, with wife Lyn, for the ACT group and a committee member – his name lives on in the modifications section of the Club website where he has displayed many great ideas for A'van enhancements. Grahame Chapple - also a long term member, who with his wife Barbara commenced the original Queensland group and was Co-ordinator of the SE Queensland group for 13 years, and had attended every AGM up to last year at Renmark.

A couple of important developments have occurred in the past year. In this era of potential litigation, your Committee has reviewed the Club's insurance needs. This work was spearheaded by Martin and David, who both have backgrounds in insurance in their working lives. In summary, we have continued with Public Liability Insurance which protects members for liability for potential injury and/or property damage to others, and we have added Associations Liability Insurance, which indemnifies the Club and its Office Bearers, including Co-ordinators and Hosts, for claims that may arise against them. I must point out that these insurances apply only to financial members of the Club, to documented Club activities, and in the case of Associations Insurance, to named positions within the Club. There is a summary page on the Club website which outlines the principles that apply, and also Martin and David will provide more detail to your Co-ordinators when we meet at the end of the week.

Another item of interest is that we now have a Facebook page! Now if you're like me, you might be on Facebook to keep up with what your children and grandchildren are up to, so now you can join the Club's page. The page was set up, and is managed by Vickie and Carole, who did a great job, and within a couple of weeks we had 100 members join. We now have well in excess of that. The page is a closed group and is strictly for financial members of the Club, hence with Carole as our membership person, this will be carefully monitored. Of course it is not compulsory, and if not on Facebook, you, and all members, will still get your normal communications from the Club. We recognise that Facebook is not for everyone, but for those who are, it a useful means of direct communication with other members. If you would like more information on this, please have a talk to Vickie or Carole, or myself.

As for the future, we would like to move to more paper free operations by making more use of the website and it's potential. You will have seen some signs of this with the option now available to receive *the A'vanner* and very soon, the Membership Directory, electronically - whilst not all will necessarily avail themselves of this, if a significant number take up the option, it will save your Club significant printing and postage costs.

I hope that you will enjoy the remaining activities that we have in store for you here at Denmark. It has been a great honour to serve as you President this year. I have found the role rewarding, challenging, and most of all enjoyable. I have accepted the nomination to continue, and if elected, look forward to the coming year of activities.

I now move that the President's Annual Report be accepted – can I have a seconder please.

Les Lawrenson
President, A'van Club of Australia Inc.
2nd May 2017