

SYDNEY HIGH SCHOOL OLD BOYS' UNION INC

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Annual General Meeting, 27 May 2008

This year has been one of renewed activity for the Sydney High School Old Boys' Union and has witnessed a number of important developments.

The Union has two broad areas of activity (with some overlap):

- It keeps old boys in touch; in touch with each other, their old school and the other GPS old boys.
- It provides input into school governance.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

First of all, we have reactivated the *e-Bulletin*. Since March 2007 we have been sending *e-Bulletins* on at least a monthly basis. These regular bulletins advise old boys of school news as well as social functions and reunions being conducted by groups of High old boys and the GPS OBU.

The *High Bulletin* is once again a quarterly publication. Thanks to **Will Clegg** (2005) who has taken on the role as editor of this publication as well as the school's colour half yearly publication, *The High Flyer*.

We have also revamped the OBU website. Thanks to **Neerav Bhatt** (1999) our webmaster for guiding us through the process.

I am particularly pleased to be able to report that, after a thorough review led by former president, **Bruce Pyke** (1947), the Executive Council has agreed to retain the system whereby the families of students pay for life membership of the Union by instalments over their six years at school. In 2008, instalments are \$44 per year, and, from 2009, this sum will increase annually by the CPI.

The scheme, which was first introduced in the early 1990s, has now ensured that the majority of members on the books have left the School since the late 1990s. This younger profile presents some interesting challenges for the OBU as we seek to engage the entire membership and offer services that will be attractive to boys who are now passing through the school. I hope to see developments in the coming year in organising sporting fixtures for old boys and we are also considering the possibility of networking functions for old boys seeking to enter the professions.

We have had some success with geographically based reunions. I want to recognise especially **Barry Jakeman's** (1969) successful Brisbane dinner in September 2007 and **Chris Fong's** (1997) successful quarterly meetings of the New York group. With the assistance of **Viv Littlewood** (1953) we have also revived the reunion for old boys from

the Defence forces in conjunction with the School's Anzac Commemoration. At next year's Anzac Commemoration, the School will be dedicating a suitable memorial for old boys who have seen active service since 1945.

We have also been happy to assist with contacting old boys for both year and sport-based reunions. In this regard, we are looking to develop our network through each leaving year. Thanks to **Mark Fischer** (1969) and **Bill Avery** (1955) who have, so far, volunteered to be year secretaries for their respective years.

The connection with our fellow GPS schools is maintained by membership of the GPS OBU. **John Goddard** (1953) has once again acted as our delegate to the GPS OBU Council. He and I have represented the OBU at the dinners and lunches of the other GPS OBUs.

The GPS Gold Challenge has also been reactivated this year. I would like to recognise the efforts of fellow Council members **Mark Livingston** (1969) and **Bill Russo** (1969) as well as the year organisers **Paul Veltman** (1975) and **Richard Luxford** (1976). Hopefully we will see some good results in September.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Old Boys play an important role in supporting the operations of the school in both a formal and informal capacity.

Formal participation has been through the return of delegates to the Foundation, School Council and related bodies.

I would like to record my appreciation to the Foundation delegates **Terry Pullinger**, **Lee Ruth** (1951) and **Ken Clemens** (1955) for their commitment to the work of the Foundation over many years and also to the alternate delegates **Terry Meakin** (1953), **John Pointing** (1962) and **Mark Livingston** (1969) who have filled the breach on the rare occasions when one of the delegates has been unable to attend a meeting. I also recognise the contribution of **Graeme Anderson** (1979) on the Foundation's Outterside Centre Management Committee.

The School's policy and advisory forum, the School Council has continued its work thanks to our delegates **Dennis Briggs** (1967) and **Will Clegg** (2005) and **Viv Littlewood** (1952) our alternate delegate. Dennis has taken on the role of President of that body.

Around 100 old boys assist in various tasks around the School in both a paid and unpaid capacity. I wish to draw particular attention to those members of the OBU who have offered assistance in response to requests in the *e-Bulletin* and *High Bulletin*, in particular **Mark Livingston** (1969) and **James Solomons** (1998) for joining the joint committee to plan the School's 125th anniversary celebrations with the Sydney Girls' High School; **Yaron Finklestein** (1988) for volunteering to produce a draft Public Affairs Plan for the Development Committee; **Alec Tzannes** (1969) for providing advice on the School's relationship with the Centennial Parklands and the two old boys who responded to the

call for expertise in project management and DA applications with the Department of Education for the School's new library, **Peter Edwards** (1961) and **John Taylor** (1967).

COMINGS AND GOINGS

There have been some significant changes in personnel over the past year.

It is with sadness that I note the passing, on 28 July 2007, of Major General **James William Norrie**, AO, OBE. Jim, who left High in 1940, was president of the OBU, 1993-1999 and Patron from 2002. His funeral service, with military honours, was held at St Mark's Anglican Church, Darling Point. The Governor-General was among the mourners present. Jim's forthright, no-nonsense contribution to the OBU and other organisations within the School community was without parallel.

Two old boys of international stature, Professor Lord **Robert May** (1952), AC, OM, FRS, who was until recently the Chief Scientific Advisor to the UK government and President of the Royal Society, and Mr **James Wolfensohn** (1949), AO, KBE, who was until recently president of the World Bank, have both been delighted to accept the invitation to be Patrons of the OBU.

Lee Ruth (1951), **Terry Pullinger** and **John Goddard** (1953) are not seeking re-election to the committee this year. Their valuable contributions over many years to both the school and the OBU have been enormous. I wish them well in their retirement from Sydney High affairs.

CONCLUSION

We have much to be pleased with when we look back over the past year of activities. However, we still have a lot more to do. The Committee has started to look at other ways to engage with the membership. **John Pointing** (1962) and **Mark Livingston** (1969) have prepared a useful discussion paper to start the process off. The Committee will be considering this paper and other suggestions as the year progresses.

In closing I would like to make two observations. First, in order to continue our work, we must improve our cash flows through membership subscriptions and other activities. Secondly, we must establish an adequate succession plan to make sure that the gains we have achieved in the past year are not lost by the departure of key personnel. I would encourage all members to consider what role they can play in ensuring a strong and relevant Old Boys' Union into the future.

Joseph Waugh

President