

ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2020

The Report for 2020 is placed within the ongoing Covid19 pandemic environment and also the 150th Anniversary of the Royal Children's Hospital.

The Executive recognised early in the pandemic that the activities of the Alumni Association would need to be substantially adjusted for possibly the whole year and this has been the case.

The goal was to maintain social connection between members and engagement of members with the Alumni activities they enjoy. Executive and Member meetings were re-formatted to the Zoom platform and for many this required the rapid acquisition of new digital skills.

The Executive met these challenges with enthusiasm, skill, great team work and good will. I would like to thank each person for their contributions and their support to the Committee as a whole and to myself.

Jim Wilkinson - Vice President, Treasurer, Member Data Base and Website management

Garry Warne - Secretary, Membership Officer and Editor of Aluminations (Newsletter)

Caroline Clark - Assistant Secretary and Zoom Coordinator

Kevin Collins - Vernon Collins Oration, Historical Society, RCH 150 Representative

Tony Cull - retired

Bronwyn Hewitt - Curator of Alumni Archives and Aluminations 'Reflections' Series.

Hugo Gold – retired. Past President 2018-2019.

Peter MacDougall - Meeting Presentations

Christine Unsworth - Social Events Coordinator

Gigi Williams - Digital Support

We were sorry that circumstances led to the resignation of Hugo and Tony from the Committee. Hugo was a member of the Executive for 4 years and is the Immediate Past President. In multiple ways he has supported the development of the Association to its present form. We have missed Tony and Hugo and record our appreciation of their contributions to the Alumni.

This AGM marks the retirement of Garry Warne as Secretary of the Alumni Association, a position he has held for the last seven years. On behalf of all members, past and present, I thank him for his dedication, vision and constant attention to the intricacies of the role. Garry has made a significant and generous contribution to the Association so underpinning the vibrant and energised organisation of 2020.

Garry has also nurtured the Newsletter, now called Aluminations and managed the Membership process.

In 2021 Garry will continue as Aluminations editor and with Membership administration.

MEMBERSHIP

During this year 28 new members were welcomed with Don Robertson registering as the 200th member on the Active data base. Currently there are 209 members, with 31 interstate

members and 19 overseas members. The new members for 2020 include 15 medical, 7 allied health, 1 dental surgeon, 1 nurse, 2 former Board Members and 2 management staff. There are one hundred and twenty six male members and eighty three female members. A challenge has been to find effective ways to engage retiring and resigning staff with the Alumni Association and the Executive are addressing this.

Sadly several honoured and revered members died during this year. Mrs Margaret Barnett AO, Mr Robert Dickens, Dr Ian Hopkins OAM, Professor Andrew Kemp AM who was President of the Alumni 2014- 2015 and Professor Margot Prior AO who was a member of the Executive 2016-2017. Each will be fondly remembered by us.

Three members received the Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in the Queen's Birthday Honours, Mr Alex Auldish, Professor Graeme Barnes and Professor George Werther. We congratulate them on the recognition of their contributions to paediatric medicine.

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES.

Details of the events and activities of the Association for this year have been recorded in Aluminations and also on the website.

With the advent of COVID 19 only the March Lunch gathering was able to take place at RCH with the remainder of the 2020 programme happening via Zoom and rebranded Aluminars.

Lunchtime Meetings

On 3rd March Dr Knowles Kerry AAM introduced us to the history, beauty and challenges of the Antarctic and inspired many to seriously consider visiting the Territory. The Covid19 isolation requirements came shortly after in mid-March and those dreams were destined to remain as dreams for the foreseeable future.

This was the only in-person meeting for the year.

Aluminars (the name given to our meetings via Zoom)

On 24th June A/Professor Lou Irving kindly agreed to transfer his planned in-person Lunch Meeting presentation to our first and experimental Zoom meeting. The topic was timely, 'COVID 19 and How to Stay Safe'. It paired well with the 8th July presentation by Professor David Vaux 'Researchers Behaving Badly'. The subjects and presentations were welcomed and most appreciated.

Our next Zoom gathering on 10th September was also highly topical, '22 Years in China - a Dynamic View of the Australian Chinese Relationship' with Ed Smith reflecting his insights and experiences and broadening our understanding of some of the challenges currently in play.

The final Aluminar for 2020 on 28th October was presented by Professor Lynn Gillam on the topic: 'Should Children be told about their Medical condition - Always?' Professor Gillam challenged the large Zoom gathering of over 100 people with issues for comment and opinion. The thoughtful responses drew out the nuances and complexities inherent in this issue in a discussion that could have continued well into the afternoon.

We would like to thank each speaker for their generosity of time and their thoughtfulness in the selection of their subject. Members have appreciated the opportunity to participate in thinking and research on highly current and pertinent issues.

The attendance at Zoom meetings has increased meeting by meeting with members from interstate and overseas participating.

The Vernon Collins Oration was enthusiastically supported by Kevin Collins and the Alumni who were, along with the wider RCH community deeply engaged with the address by Professor Elizabeth Elliott on 'Championing Child Rights Amidst the Chaos of COVID 19'. Kevin introduced the Oration speaking to the legacy of Vernon Collins in whose memory the Oration is presented.

Gala Dinner

As always, the Annual Gala Dinner for 2019 at the beautiful venue of the Kew Golf Club was a great success with the room filled with conversation and indeed much laughter over dinner. Professor Kathryn North enthralled the gathering with her address 'The Brave New World of Precision Medicine' introducing many to the wonders of genomics.

The decision to cancel the 2020 Gala Dinner was taken when it became clear that the COVID 19 social restrictions would prevent such gatherings. However we expect to hold our Gala Dinner once again in November next year.

Aluminations, previously known as the RCH Alumni Newsletter, has been pivotal in the life of the Alumni during COVID19. To date four editions have been published with the fifth edition planned to be online by the end of the year. Members have contributed a wide range of interesting topics, personal anecdotes and experiences including travel stories and photos.

Inspired by the RCH 150 anniversary and the advent of COVID induced changes to our activities, the Executive decided to develop a themed approach to each edition under the heading of 'Reflections'. This has stimulated some extremely interesting papers on 'Infectious Disease and Epidemics', 'Biomedical Engineering and Technological Engineering' in the July and September editions respectively with the theme 'Hospital Life Before and After Computers in the 1980s' for the final edition for 2020.

Under consideration is combining the Reflections articles into a Collection as a record for the Hospital Archives.

The quality of Aluminations and flyers have advanced to a professional standard as a result of engaging Dan Warne to transform them to the digital format.

The Executive have received commendations for Aluminations from within and beyond the Hospital.

The Website which is well accessed, is a source of current and past information about social activities, past editions of Newsletters / Aluminations and member news and profiles. It is another key forum for members to connect.

Alumni Archives

A project initiated this year has been to gather archival material and data on the early years of the Alumni Association and draw it together before it is lost. We aim to establish a system that will enable appropriate current material to be retained and filed. This has proved to be a challenging and time consuming task but is well in progress.

Many members have contributed material they have 'tucked away' that has helped to fill a number of gaps.

RCH 150th Anniversary

For the wider RCH community as well as the Alumni, COVID 19 restrictions derailed plans to mark the 150th anniversary of the Hospital. The Alumni contributed to the Hospital's planning to mark the event via consultation with the Archives and Heritage Committee.

The Foundation generously supported us financially to develop a series of podcasts called 'Turning Points'. They will be completed next year.

The Alumni is also engaged with the Melbourne University Faculty of Medicine project to mark the 150 Anniversary, focussing on some aspects of lived history.

Children's Rights International (CRI)

The conjoint Alumni/CRI Zoom meeting 'Indigenous Child Health, Children's Rights and the Law' planned for August will now take place on Thursday 26th November. This will be another stimulating and topical presentation on a deeply significant issue within our society. Registration is open on the Alumni website.

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOSPITAL

Again this year the active links between the Hospital and the Alumni have continued to evolve. Matt Sabin, as always, supports the Alumni and assists us to negotiate current systems with the Hospital. The Alumni are most appreciative and thank him and RCH staff from a number of departments.

The Foundation is also generous in their support especially making available their delightful meeting rooms for our gatherings and assisting us to ready them for our purpose. Covid restrictions dictated that the March gathering was our only meeting there for 2020 however we are eagerly awaiting a return, hopefully sometime in 2021.

Members have appreciated being able to register to receive automatic weekly notification of Grand Rounds. This year access to the Library and for parking discounts when attending Alumni functions at the Hospital have been made available. Details for these are on the Alumni website.

Recently the Creative Studio web team has assisted us to upgrade capacity on our Website to accommodate larger editions of Aluminations.

The Hospital Staff Newsletter 'Stethoscoop' is forwarded to the Secretary and then onto Members who have expressed their interest in receiving the PDF.

FORWARD PLANNING

As I write this Report our State and Federal leaders are introducing us to the concept of 'COVID normal' for 2021. What this means is as yet unclear.

The current Executive look to continuing Aluminations including the Reflections Project. Aluminars as an online format have been most successful and will probably continue along with in-person gatherings when they become possible.

The Annual Gala Dinner associated with the AGM is scheduled and other social activities continue to be under consideration, the idea having been cancelled for this year.

We look forward to continuing our enriched relationship with the Hospital, to increased applications for membership and to ongoing friendships within the Association.

RUTH WRAITH OAM

President