

Araluen Annual Report 2020

Chair Report from Bruce Martyn



What an incredible year we have had! Who would have predicted 2020 turning out like it did?

At last year's AGM we celebrated the changed leadership model for Araluen with Tamara Cattach taking over as interim CEO in December 2019. All was calm at that time but that soon changed. Fire emergencies in the early part of 2020, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, let alone all of the many other things that occurred during that time. What an incredible effort Tamara has made in keeping Araluen COVID safe and being able to galvanise the organisation to keep it running. When many organisations just shut their doors, Araluen kept going. Yes, we have fantastic leaders that have the ability to 'Imagine Better'. But it's also about our frontline and administration staff who have worked passionately and tirelessly to offer supports to participants, families and colleagues during this difficult and unsettling time. We truly thank you for your outstanding efforts throughout this difficult year.

Foremost in our minds was keeping staff and participants safe. An unbelievable amount of work went into setting up protocols and processes. Thanks to the dedication and incredible organisation undertaken throughout the lockdowns and also for the commitment of all staff to adhere to the protocols. This meant that our residences, participants and staff were kept safe.

While some will look back at how difficult 2020 has been, the year has actually taught us a great deal about how we faced uncertainty. Resilience, strength, determination, character, innovation and a real can-do attitude. Out of the adversity there have been many successes at Araluen that we can look back on with

admiration and pride.

COVID-19 necessitated the introduction of novel ways of engaging with our community. The range of creative programs that staff thought through and implemented was remarkable. These included virtual dinners, art programs, cooking or exercise classes, online chats or the telephone calls to check on participants and families on how they were going and what help we might have been able to provide. This was inspirational.

The restrictions surrounding COVID-19 however did test our financial capacity. JobKeeper also provided us with support to keep going. Having a strong balance sheet combined with strict cash controls certainly helped us through.

In the midst of the COVID-19 lock down Araluen had an Accreditation Audit conducted by the NDIA. This was the first audit of our operations against the NDIS standards. Doing this virtually by remote means was difficult enough, but importantly we successfully achieved accreditation. Again, the effort by staff in preparing for the audit and your commitment to achieving a great outcome, during a particularly tough lockdown in Melbourne, was a great accomplishment.

A new NDIA pricing schedule was received in mid-June for implementation by 1 July 2020. Primarily this related to reduced financial support for group activities. Not only was the communication poorly executed by the NDIA, the lack of consultation was particularly worrying and causing considerable angst for most service providers. While there has been a

Araluen Annual Report 2020

Chair Report from Bruce Martyn

ARALUEN

imagining and achieving better lives

change of the implementation date, the NDIA again quietly introduced new pricing arrangement for residential participants. It does indicate a worrying trend by NDIA where pricing can quickly change, and of course this may affect the way we deliver our services.

The NDIA pricing decision bought forward our planned Services Review. This is helping us understand the ever-changing operating environment we are part of. This will inform us how best we can continue to provide a range of quality services that help participants achieve their long-term goals.

There is much to do as we 'restart' in 2021. The five pillars of our Strategic Plan will still guide us as we work through the complexities of a post-COVID way of life. Our goals to provide quality supports, maximise our reach and impact, provide diverse housing options, strengthen our position as an employer of choice and build a sustainable and thriving organisation are as relevant today and into the future as they were when they were developed in 2019. This gives us much to build upon as we confidently look to the future.

I am looking forward to 2021 with the hope that the year ahead is more settled than this year. And there is no reason that this shouldn't occur. We have a very dedicated Board that is highly committed to seeing Araluen thrive well into the future. Of course, the Board could not be prouder of the incredible staff that have worked so tirelessly over the year. The support the Senior Leadership Team, with fantastic guidance by Tamara, in making this all happen has been outstanding.

"Portrait of Bruce with Adam"
by Kylie Gentle - 2020

This is my last year as Chairperson to the Board. I have decided not to seek re-election, however, I have offered my services to the Board to contribute in whatever way the Directors see fit. Taking over from me will be Larissa Roeske. While new to Araluen, Larissa has a wealth of experience in governance and strategic thinking (as a Board member for Royal Australian College of General Practitioners), a GP, vast experience in the disability field as well as a very dynamic attitude. I am sure your support for Larissa will be as strong for her as it has been for me.

To all of the Araluen community, thank you for your ongoing support over the past year. There is still much to do in the coming years as we look forward to the resumption of 'normal' services.

Many thanks to you all and very best wishes,



Bruce Martyn

