

## **THE BOWER REPAIR & REUSE CO-OPERATIVE**

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 30 NOVEMBER 2019**

The meeting is held at 2:15 pm at the Flight Path Theatre, Addison Road Community Centre, Marrickville.

**PRESENT:** Suzan Campbell, Steve Clarke, Helen Cooper, Bruce Diekman, Brian Driver, Grace Lech, Miles Lochhead, Terry O'Donnell, Bob Potter, Michelle Sheather, Guido Verbist

**OBSERVER/S:** Chris Lisha

**APOLOGIES:** Lena Aahlby, Ruth Catlin, Stuart Grigg, Motra Hayward, Uma Pillia, Marcelle Psaila, Michael Sarrof, Margy Vary

**Proxies & Proxy Holders:** Lena Aahlby (Guido Verbist); Stuart Grigg (Brian Driver); Michael Sarrof (Terry O'Donnell); Margy Vary (Michelle Sheather)

**Chair:** Miles Lochhead

**Minutes:** Michelle Sheather

**Returning Officer:** Steve Clarke

#### **AGENDA**

##### **1. Welcome and Apologies**

Apologies and proxies noted.

##### **2. Adoption of minutes of the 2018 AGM**

**Motion:** That the 2018 AGM minutes be adopted.

Moved: Guido Verbist

Seconded: Bruce Diekman

**CARRIED unanimously**

##### **3. The Bower Annual Report 2019**

The Annual Report was tabled and distributed to attendees.

#### **3.1 Chairperson's Report – Miles Lochhead**

It has been a challenging year in many respects though things are now moving ahead. We have just signed the deed of release and settlement for a two-year lease with ARCCO. We acknowledge the support of legal advisers Justin Doyle and Ingrid King, and our solicitors.

We can now plan for the future and our role in the emerging circular economy.

Key events to note over the past year include:

- Banga Shed electrical repair shed opening at Zetland (Green Square)
- 'Right to Repair' campaign launch
- The Parra Pickers initiative
- The Women's Shed
- The 'ART from TRASH' exhibition
- Tiny House courses, and
- Working with 21 Councils and millions of Sydney residents.

Thanks to Guido Verbist as Co-operative Manager, all of the staff, volunteers, supporting organisations, and The Bower Board.

Special thanks to Board members:

- Terry O'Donnell for his dedication and guidance throughout his six-year term as Treasurer;
- Marcelle Psaila (Independent Director) – we look forward to working with her in her future EPA role;
- Margy Vary in her role as Secretary ;
- Tony Turri who is taking over as Treasurer; and
- Michelle Sheather as Deputy Chairperson.

### **3.2 Treasurer's Report – Terry O'Donnell**

The Treasurer's Report for 2018/19 was tabled.

Overall, although we forecast a break-even budget, we had some challenges this year including our eviction for two weeks in November/December 2018 which impacted our sales well into the new year. In the end we were able to report a \$20,265 surplus for 2018/19.

The Bower has a diversified income stream and has seen exponential growth over the past couple of years. Our financial practices are in very good shape, and the future looks more assured.

**Motion:** That the Treasurer's Report be adopted

Moved: Terry O'Donnell

Seconded: Guido Verbist

**CARRIED unanimously**

The meeting thanked Treasurer, Terry O'Donnell, and Accountant, David Mansfield,

### **3.3 Manager's Report – Guido Verbist**

The report is written with the future in mind. In the next several years we hope to see beneficial legislative changes, and ongoing community behavioural change, that will positively impact what we do.

The 'Green Globe Awards' were held this week for the winners of the last 20 years, one of which was The Bower.

Our 'Right to Repair' campaign will be very important for the future. People are becoming more aware of our activities and the goal of environmental sustainability. It is important to donate goods to an organisation such as The Bower – the behavioural change needed is fewer short-term consumer goods being produced and bought. We are now taking clothing at The Bower stores for on-sale and reuse in Africa. In some ways we are becoming more mainstream with our repair cafes and skill sharing events. There are other avenues for promotion in the years ahead.

Interestingly, a recent Crowdfunding survey revealed 20% of our e-list respondents have not yet been in a Bower store.

Over the past year 28,885 customers visited our stores; we held 211 workshops; and worked with 120 people on a regular basis. Eighteen people are on our payroll plus 20 are on contract.

We aim to increase our income by grants and workshops, as well as developing our fundraising program more comprehensively.

On January 1, 2018 China's policy to refuse imported waste kicked in, and all the Councils we work with were consequently only able to pay much reduced fees for collection and rehoming. We had to change the concept of working with Councils, and set up a more automated online collection system and database. We also had to lay off one staff member. There has been a consequent slight reduction in our collection of goods, but the system is now reorganised and ready to move forward.

Our 'House to Home' program is donating goods to people in need, such as refugees, and victims of domestic violence. We intend to expand this in the future. It has proven to be a popular and effective initiative.

The 'ART from TRASH' exhibition, a new mid-year initiative, was a positive media story. We have been invited to partner with the City of Ryde for something similar, and to also have a mobile exhibition.

Possible growth areas are bespoke furniture, i.e. new custom built items from scratch, and electronic repairs. We have one teacher who has learned more advanced furniture techniques in the UK.

We have 771 visitors to our website on a daily basis, and have had extensive media coverage from the ABC and Channel 7, to Alan Jones.

Today the Bower is signing a new lease. We have 'given away' our building which has a value of around \$100,000. ARCCO will be responsible for its maintenance. Historically, our Marrickville site was a military barracks which burnt down in the 1970s. In 1998, community volunteers constructed these bespoke premises using reclaimed and recycled materials, thus founding The Bower.

We now have four different locations – Marrickville, Parramatta, Redfern, and Zetland.

On several fronts our future looks promising: a new government initiative 'NSW Circular', on innovation and reuse of materials, has great potential for us; we also have ongoing support from several politicians across major political parties; and, Bank Australia may wish to sponsor us into the future.

I am confident the incoming Board has the requisite governance, legal and fundraising skills to assist our future development.

**Questions:**

Q: It seems we have fewer staff stretched to capacity, e.g. the shop floor is often staffed by one person, which is not sustainable for the long term.

A: A revised budget will be presented to the new Board in December this year. Staff have been consulted in detail. New fundraising is expected to kick in in July 2020. We will need up to \$150,000 to keep essential services running effectively and efficiently.

Staff have accepted considerable hardship over the last year. All the work they do is acknowledged and very much appreciated. I think we can look forward to a brighter future.

**Motion:** That the Manager's Report be adopted

Moved: Michelle Sheather

Seconded: Miles Lochhead

**CARRIED unanimously**

**4. Adoption of Audited Financial statement**

Moved in the Treasurer's Report (3.2 above).

**5. Appointment of Financial Auditor for 2020**

The deed of release with ARCCO has now allowed our 2018/19 audit to be 'unqualified'. The Board can also declare The Bower's solvency.

**Motion:** That Stewart Brown Chartered Accounts be confirmed as our auditors for the next year.

Moved: Terry O'Donnell.

Seconded: Michelle Sheather

**CARRIED unanimously**

**6. Election of Board Members**

Steve Clarke acted as Returning Officer.

Three member directors and one independent director are to be elected for two-year terms.

There is also a casual vacancy for another member director position (for half a term), which can be filled.

Member director nominations have been received from:

Suzan Campbell, Helen Cooper, and Margy Vary\*

*\*Margy Vary's nomination was received after the cut-off period prescribed by the Rules. Other nominations were called from the floor – none were received.*

The above three member directors were therefore declared elected.

There is one vacancy for an Independent Director, nominated by the board. Nominee Linda O'Malley was declared elected.

All new Board members were thanked and congratulated.

In appreciation of their service and contributions, gifts were presented to Terry O'Donnell, who served as Treasurer for three terms, and Miles Lochhead who served as Board Chair for one term.

**MEETING OFFICIALLY CLOSED AT 3:30 PM.**