

## **Sunbury Amateur Swimming Club**

### **2011 Annual General Meeting President's Report**

The 2010/11 swimming season has been an interesting one for our Club.

In 2009/10 we experienced a rather dramatic and worrying decline in our club membership losing a lot of our older swimmers for a various reasons and leaving our club base as a much younger and less experienced group.

We continue to see less emphasis on competition swimming as members seem to be participating in training sessions more to just develop swimming skills and to build on fitness levels to aide them in other sporting pursuits.

This year we have managed to build on member numbers slightly, resulting in a reasonably consistent number of children swimming and attending training sessions on Wednesday and Friday nights. We hope that our new members are enjoying their association with our club and that their skills and enthusiasm continue to grow. Participation in the Club's Short and Long Course competitions were well represented, but despite our best efforts to muster increased interest in Sunday club night events, attendance still remains disappointingly low.

I would like to acknowledge the work of our head coach of more than 10 years, Bernadine Hetherington, and her assistant Jacqui Sims, for their work on pool deck throughout the past year. Without their dedication, coaching knowledge and skills the club would be just be kids and a pool. They are the faces of our club and play a very important role in helping our club grow and develop into the future.

At the 2010 AGM there was very little interest from parents to join the committee. The few, who did volunteer however, did so, solely for the benefit of all of our children. Their devotion and commitment to the everyday running of the club has enabled the club to continue for another year. Without such people the club would cease to exist. I would like to thank the current; soon to be outgoing committee for their time, dedication and effort that each has given to allow our club to run as smoothly as it has during this past year. Thanks too, to those of you who have helped out with Bunning's Sausage sizzles and time keeping duties at club events. Every little bit helps and your assistance has been very much appreciated. It is my hope that more of you will have time and be willing to become involved in this coming year.

This year, along with the everyday running of the club, the committee set out to make our club more visible in our community, obviously with the aim of increasing our membership. We're now in the phone book along with all the other sporting groups in the area. We have a beautiful sign on the wall at the entrance of the centre and information on our notice board poolside both of which advertise our presence in the centre. We have also had advertising in every primary school newsletter three times over the past year and we produced a "Come and Try" flyer which is available in the foyer of the centre. The flyer was also distributed to every primary school family, via the primary schools, twice, once just prior to the commencement of the summer season and again at the height of the interest in swimming while schools are involved in swimming carnivals and competitions.

Communication between the committee and the members was another thing we needed to be better at and we hope that you are all feeling well informed now that we are using email to distribute the newsletter, events and reminders. Diane, Perla and Annette have also been a very approachable and friendly link between members, their families and the committee on Friday nights. I thank them for all their efforts and for making all our new comers feel very welcomed at the club.

We also wanted to tackle the Aquatic centre and Hume city council again, over the lack of support we receive from them regarding the amount of time they allow us for training sessions. We are in competition with the aquatic centres own training programs and Andrea's Aqua Wolves for time in the pool, resulting in a conflict of interest between all three parties.

We are well aware that the restricted session, days and times we offer to current members and any prospective members are inadequate and don't suit everyone. Having another Swimming Club associated with the centre creates confusion for the public too. Having to pay membership and training fees to a swimming club and then more fees to the aquatic centre to have access to additional training sessions, is expensive and off putting to most. We as a club and in fact swimming in Sunbury have lost many members in the past for these very reasons. The pathway into competitive swimming in Sunbury is not simple, clear or smooth, resulting in swimmers choosing to swim elsewhere. The sharing of swimmers between the three entities has depleted the strength of swimming in Sunbury.

Without success past committees have negotiated with the aquatic centre for more time and Aqua Wolves to consider a merging of the two clubs. We had to try again.

We were able to speak with the head coordinator of Sports and Recreation in Hume City Council. We needed to know how to change the status quo and whether the council would even consider our proposal. We were given the green light to make a submission. They were willing to listen, but it had to be in the form of a professional business plan. Perhaps this was to put us off, and it did for a while until we enlisted the advice and were given the support of our governing body, Swimming Victoria. We want the Aquatic centre to provide the facility, coaches and training sessions. This is a model most desired and recommended by both Swimming Victoria and Swimming Australia. This model operates successfully in many of our neighbouring clubs and centres. This would alleviate the club's problem of lack of pool time, as the centre already offers an extensive morning and evening squad program. We would no longer need to employ a coach or pay for lane hire and lifeguards. With adjustments to the existing program and with the addition of a knowledgeable and enthusiastic head coach we proposed that Sunbury would soon be operating and offering a very effective and more affordable service to the community. Hopefully the two clubs could put aside their differences and together get on with the job of supporting the needs of Sunbury's competitive swimmers.

With Swimming Victoria facilitating discussions we had a reasonably productive and worthwhile meeting with council. We were heard, and even though no promises were made, and unlike past attempts, the door wasn't completely closed on us. A new 50m indoor pool is planned for Broadmeadows and that seems to be the Council's greatest priority at the moment. When asked by Swimming Victoria whether Hume had a strategy in place for aquatics, the answer was no. Yet they are currently working on a Leisure strategy to take Hume City Council into the next five years.

We were invited to attend a workshop where clubs representing all different sports were given the opportunity to have a say, and were questioned as to how we thought Hume was performing in catering for leisure and in what ways we thought things could be improved. That opened up discussions for us very nicely. They were oblivious to our situation and concerned to hear what was going on at the aquatic centre. So now we have the Coordinator of Open Space and Recreation Planning aware of us and promising to look into things. The seed was planted! They suggested that perhaps it was necessary for aquatics to have a strategic plan of it's, very own. What a good idea! So let's all cross our fingers that our knocking at their door will finally be taken seriously and things will begin to change. Meanwhile Swimming Victoria has not left us out in the cold. They have given us an action plan, one which they recommend we follow to help us overcome the issues that surround swimming in Sunbury.

I spoke with Andrea of the Aqua Wolves a couple of weeks ago just to sound her out about once again considering a merger of the two clubs. This is at the top of our Swimming Victoria to do list. She wasn't at all interested if it involved our two club's coaches having to work together. As a merger would need some compromise from both sides and Andrea seemingly not willing to budge, I took it back to the committee that we would have to follow Swimming Victoria's plan B and that is what we were all set to do until last week when Bernie presented the club with her resignation as coach of our club. After so many loyal and dedicated years as the coach of SASC, she is stepping down and looking forward to the new direction she has chosen to take in her life. We thank Bernie for all she has done during her long association with the club and wish her all the very best for the future.

I appreciate that this news has come as a shock to many of you, as it did me, but we need to look at this as the club's time to regroup and rebuild and not one of despair. Bernie has offered to stay with us until we are able to secure a new coach. An advertisement for the position has been placed on the ASCTA website and will also be put in the local papers over the coming weeks. We will be endeavouring to make this the smoothest transition possible. Swimming Victoria is behind us all the way and has assured us of their support and guidance. With Swimming Victoria facilitating discussions we hope to meet with Aqua Wolves to see if any resolution or compromise can be made with them.

We need to go forward and make best of the opportunities which are presented to us. Yes, there is much to be done, but we have a direction and I hope that during this time of change and rebuilding you will all stick by the club and if everyone is willing to lend a hand to help I have no doubt that SASC will continue to make a splash in the pool for many years to come.

It has been a challenging year and I have learnt much during my time as President. I look forward to seeing the results of the challenges ahead. I cannot finish without thanking Diane for the support she has been to me. Without her we wouldn't have been able to accomplish all that we have. Thank you Diane.

Regards

Glenys Achter

President