

# ANNUAL REPORT

## 2018





**Australian  
Fabians.**

## **Australian Fabians Inc.**

### **2018 NATIONAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS ANNUAL REPORTS – FINAL APPROVED**

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#### **Chair's Report:**

2018, has been a year of change with your Fabian Organisation, I started as a new national chair - I should note, that the organisation is in great shape, thanks to the work of Tim Sonnreich (Past Chair) and his team.

The new national board started the year looking in at the organisations strengths, and opportunities this process has brought together some changes:

1. A new financial system (QuickBooks) that will see better financial transparency for the organisation.
2. The Membership team have been working hard to streamlining and improve membership retention and growth
3. We have upgraded IT systems.
4. Each state branch has brought a professional live streaming camera to present all events live of FaceBook.

However we would all agree that we are at a crossroads, both as the Fabian movement and a country, and there is more work to be done in the lead up to a 2019 Election.

We are seeing, inequality reaching an all-time high – not just between the wages of the rich and everyone else, but a distinct inequality of access to housing, a good education, healthcare and many other social issues..

We are seeing a country preparing for an election on the notion of trickledown economics, where those in power are building a debate about an 80 billion dollar tax cut for the few, while the many

are expected to go with less access to important services that build a more equitable society.

We are at a crossroads. We are being asked to choose what kind of country we want to live in. This moment is not something that we should let pass us by. As members of the Fabians this is our time to strike and to strike hard.

This is why this year, your national Fabian leaders – set out a path to prepare our membership to move and to ensure that as an organisation we are focusing more on our key objectives. We set out plans to ensure that we are better able to:

1. *Contribute to progressive political thinking by generating ideas that meet the challenges of our times and to push these ideas into the public domain.*
  - *We will do this by bringing members together in a national publications and research network– from research backgrounds, universities, shop floors, workplaces, cities and towns to generate progressive ideas.*
2. *Building an active movement of people who encourage progressive political debate and reform, who are able to use their power to influence the ideas and policies of political parties, especially the Australian Labor Party.*
  - *We will do this by holding member assemblies, to map out the challenges of our time, planning and building a campaign for the next election that grows our movement and influences progressive political parties to start focusing on building better societies, not just bigger economies.*

We won't be able to achieve these tasks alone. We can only achieve these goals because of our members. The more voices we have, the more ideas we build, the bigger we can influence politics. It's simple. If you are not a member, join. If you have a progressive idea to publish about building a fairer society, join in the process.

If you are a member, keep up the work, but we are going to ask you to roll up your sleeves, to lead our movement. That starts by asking 5 people you know to join with you. Share your story, inspire them to stand with you.

In conclusion, we all know that politically, we can do better for this country. We need to focus on building better societies, and I know that, with you on our side, we can do this. Thank you.

**Billy Colless**  
**National Chair.**  
**2 February 2019**

## **Secretary's Report:**

We have had another great year rebuilding the Australian Fabians, with many great outcomes and only a few setbacks:

- Completed our AGM in Brisbane.
- Commenced the reactivation of the ACT & TAS branches with good progress being made in ACT with a new interim Executive team.
- Continued improvements to the NationBuilder web site functionality under the Directorship of Billy Colless, including the continued improvement of the automatic renewal via credit card which has greatly reduced the administrative effort required. Thanks Billy. However we need to consider continuity risk with this responsibility and get Billy some backup.
- Continued a highly active National Board with all existing nationally elected members being reelected. New Branch Directors nominated by SA and interim one for ACT matched with the stability of all existing directors being re-nominated by the other branches WA, VIC, NSW, & QLD, meant that the we moved into the next 2 years with great background knowledge and sustainability.
- Undertook Strategic Planning day in Brisbane as part of the AGM day and developed several major projects some of which have already been completed. Some are still being acted on, and due to resource issues others have been put on hold.
- Were delighted to have Eva Cox accept our Patron position following a suitable delay after Gough Whitlam's passing.
- Increased our financial membership to 850 being the second highest over the last 10 years.
- Enhanced our total Communications & Social Media network beyond our membership to record numbers including:

- Members 848
- Email subscribers 8080
- Facebook 4350
- Twitter 6200
- Total Connections 19480

The greatest number recorded in our part records is 4,000 in 2014. Congratulations to all concerned.

- Produced some 10 FabianTV productions of our most successful events providing all members with access without having to travel to the event. We have also completed several live Facebook links and podcasts for several events.
- Continued our efforts on recruiting younger Fabians, reducing our age profile, balancing our gender mix with some moderate successes, however enticing Young Fabians is our key weakness, comparing 2014 with 2018. In future we will be able to report on all these factors monthly.

○ Year	2014	2018
○ Number of Members	850	848
○ Average Age	65.2 yrs.	54.2yrs.
○ Gender Male / Female %	72 / 28	67/33
○ Young Fabians (<30) -	78#	95#

For other information see the Membership Officers report

- Modernized the National Financial reporting system through the adoption of QuickBooks and added the facility of on the spot credit transfers ( Pay Wave) at events.
- Produced 12 monthly Equality newsletters. Thanks to the wonderful efforts of Victoria Fielding & Billy Colless with help from all the active branches.
- Produced 4 Fabian Booklets including one for the National ALP conference in Adelaide in November which also included a Fabian fringe event.
- Completed all regulatory reporting requirements to CAV and ASIC.

## Activities Undertaken in 2018

Events/Branch	VIC	NSW	QLD	ACT	SA	WA	TAS	NT	NAT
Events	10	4	4	0	2	3	0	0	1
Dinners	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	NA
AGM's	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1
Exec Meeting	10	4	4	2	1	8	0	0	14
Plan Days	4	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1
Publications	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Totals	27	12	12	3	4	14	0	0	18

I refer all readers to the individual branch reports for 2018 that will be circulated to branch members separately via email.

- On the downside we have:
  - Made inadequate use of our volunteer register
  - Not reduced our age profile sufficiently nor attracted the number of Young Fabians we had planned to.
  - Been less successful in reactivating the TAS branch.

## Future Strategic Directions

I see the key issues for us to be:

- We should look at our financial arrangements and review the ways in which we manage the branch / national requirements in a more cost and time effective manner by making upgrade to QuickBooks.
- We need to revisit the constitution and update those items that warrant a more modern approach including membership approval and other issues.
- Become more active politically by ranking the party policies in terms of a Fabian Equality Rating (FER) for upcoming elections.

## Conclusions & Acknowledgements:

The Australian Fabian are rebuilding and are operating nationally with the growing our total contacts with a younger age profile, and improved gender balance all focused on promoting greater equality within our Australian Society.

Like all volunteer organisations we are heavily dependent on a small number of people. I would like to thank all the National Board members and Branch Executives for their support and hard work.

I would especially like to thank the National Chairman Billy Colless the Treasurer Jill Byrne, Membership Officer Pauline Gambley and her team, Publications Director Victoria Fielding (now Deputy Chair) and the Web & IT Director Billy Colless for their wonderful efforts and great support.

Regards in equality

**Roger Byrne**  
**National Secretary**  
**2 February 2019**

## **Treasurers Report:**

### **National Treasurers Report for 2018 Financial (Calendar) Year**

The National Accounts (Including branches) for the 2018 Financial Year and the official statement for our regulators (CAV & ASIC) are attached:

I ask you to read these in association with the following comments.

- The National accounts have been produced using QuickBooks for the first time. The transition has not been without its issues which were predominantly due to:
  - The basic version of QuickBooks being used.
  - The complexity of the income generating mechanisms and the way they individually deal with GST.
  - The multiple accounts (11) incurring fees and associated time as well as official / legal signatory issues.
  - A separate report is being considered by the Board to overcome these issues.

- Membership income improved by some 25% to \$26,874 but was again below budget being impacted on by poor renewal rates and the reduced fees for new members. The 2019 budget requires that we correct this and look at a further 25% improvement over the 2018 year. This will require the membership target numbers being achieved.
- Total income rose to due to the very successful annual dinner programs that are really doing well for those branches operating them.
- There was a small profit of \$ 5,626 which was far better than the budgeted deficit due to the increase in overall income and the reduction in most discretionary expenditure items.
- The transfer of all accounts (National & Branch) to the 'Commbiz System is working most effectively for both branches and national with all accounts being paid on time once they have been received by the Treasurer.
- All BAS statements have been completed on time.
- Although all branch accounting is now being carried out by the National Treasurer, there is a need to abandon branch accounts and record the accounts separately as part of an improved QuickBooks version. See separate report on this aspect.

The Australian Fabians accounts are in very good shape and when we consider the sums held in branch and national accounts amounting to approx. \$77,345 as opposed to \$75,875 in 2017,

However with our proposed programs & projects as passed in the 2019 budget it is important that we restore our membership income to the target level to \$35,000 if possible.

**Jill Byrne CPA**  
**National Treasurer**  
**10 Feb 2019**

*PS You may not be aware but Jill has informed AFI that she will not be continuing in this role and we thank her sincerely for her efforts of the last 5 years and wish her all the best her full retirement and grand-mother duties. Until she came on the scene we had no real transparent accounts nor reporting functions and now we can hand this role over to someone with all the necessary tools in place. Thanks Jill  
Billy Colless / Roger Byrne*

## **Membership Officers Report:**

***We have had a steady year of membership administration activity at the Australian Fabians.***

We have particularly focussed on ensuring that members' payments and records are up-to-date and that any individual payment issues are resolved promptly as well as reviewing the way in which a data is reported to the Board. A new system of membership data analytics and reporting will be introduced in 2019 in a concerted effort to reduce the number of volunteer hours spent on this process.

### **A New Membership team**

The former combined role of Secretary and Membership Officer was devolved in 2018 to the Membership Secretary (Pauline Gambley) and a Membership Officer (Kevin Conway). Kevin, with the assistance of Meagan Poad in Victoria and Phil O'Donaghue in Western Australia, has spent many hours contacting members all around the country to help keep our membership information up-to-date and we truly are most obliged to them.

It is a timely reminder for us all about the long and involved, volunteer hours spent in previous years by National Secretaries who were also the Membership Officers, exemplified most recently by our current National Secretary Roger Byrne. We owe them all a great deal of thanks for undertaking what can be a very tedious task.

**We continue to streamline our membership system and back-of-house processes.**

1. We have continued to offer Individual (\$45), Concession (\$25) and Special (\$100) memberships in 2018, via Automatic Subscription or Annual Year Payment. We have also offered discounts in 2018, and encourage direct donations.
2. We are working to reduce long term, the number of membership types on offer in 2019, to just Individual, Concession & Life memberships. We hope to accomplish this by March 2019 via automatic subscription only, with the grandfathering of existing Annual Year style payments by exception via a written application to the Membership Secretary.
3. The Membership Team will continue to contact individual members by email and/or phone to update Credit Card, Contact or Bank Details as necessary.

### **Member Assistance**

We understand that 'things happen' and that from time to time members may find themselves unable to renew their membership. Please contact us at [membership@fabian.org.au](mailto:membership@fabian.org.au) should this be the case, we can discuss a waiver of fees for the year.

### **Members Website and Event Ticket Purchases**

The Australian Fabians website at [fabians.org.au](http://fabians.org.au) has started to undergo some minor changes. e.g. The 'orange' background colour on the website's pages has changed to white to offer an enhanced reading experience. Members and their guests may continue to directly RSVP for events advertised on the website and pay by credit card. We are also now offering members EFT & PayWave at 'the door' at Fabians events. These One-stop payment facilities mean that that as a non-DGR status Not-For-Profit we can report both member and non-member income to the ATO. (Note that in the absence of DGR status, non-member income is taxable).

### **Membership data**

Our membership as at 31 December 2018 membership was 848 compared to 850 at 31 December 2017 - renewal follow-ups were delayed into August.

The following figures include Automatic Subscribers and Annual Year Payers which are split overall 82% to 18% making an enormous increase in administration efficiency.

Individual Members	420
Concession	228
Life Members	12
New Members	179
Special	9
TOTAL	848

### **Membership Networks**

The National Membership Network commenced meeting mid-year with a Zoom Conference Call co-chaired by our Patron Eva Cox and Chair Billy Colless. We expect to hold further video-style catch-ups in 2019 along with regular National and Branch membership team representative's video meetings.

**Pauline Gambley**  
**Membership Secretary**  
**13 February 2019**