

**Soma Blue Mountains Inc.  
Annual General Meeting 2015  
Chairman's Report**

**1. Your committee members**

David Miles (ex officio), Stuart Brooking (Chairman), Lisa Harding (Vice Chairman), Warwick Coghlan (Treasurer), Eleanor Allison (Secretary), Tim Coghlan, Bruce Coomer, Jabin Dekeiser, Jeff Konemann.

**2. Overview**

The past year has seen a consolidation of the activities of the committee following our first full year with our new constitution. We have put in place procedures and ways of operating now which stand us in good stead for fulfilling our duties. There continues to be a good spirit in the committee as we seek to keep discovering our role and work to build the life of Soma Blue Mountains.

**3. Legalities**

We have maintained appropriate insurances and licences, paid our taxes and operated our accounts according to the constitution and the relevant laws, to the best of our understanding.

We do not run any child related activities and hence the legalities around such activity do not apply currently. We do however consider it appropriate to lift the competence of our congregation in the formal care of children. While the committee has made attempts to attract someone to lead us in the area of monitoring and training we have been largely unsuccessful. This will continue to be an aim in the coming year.

**4. Committee methods**

We meet on the second Tuesday of each month (except January) to work through the business matters. Each meeting we review our financial accounts, receive a report from the pastor and progress the various matters we have generated.

We deliberately seek to listen to committee members who have a different perspective than the one being presented in a discussion. This acknowledges that we are better as a group than we are as individuals.

We seek to delegate both responsibility and power to individuals or groups and call them to account rather than decide every detail.

We also seek to place the needs of mission at the forefront of our deliberations and to guard against centralising our church activities unnecessarily. We want freedom for our church members to live life with those around them and not be burdened by feeding the centre.

We have a dynamic list of topics that we cycle through over the year in order to ensure we get the relevant reports and to make sure we don't 'forget' something of importance.

## 5. Committee Activity

**Committee self-review** – Last year in December we did a review of our operations as a way of self-critiquing. Bruce Coomer led us following a survey of the committee members. He will lead us again at the next meeting to ensure we seek to improve our way of operating.

**Membership Fees** – We determined to lower the cost of membership of Soma Blue Mountains Inc. from \$50 etc to the lowest allowed amount of \$2 pa. The financial contribution still becomes a trigger for ‘opting in’ but is not a barrier (either conceptual or financial) for anyone.

**Uniting Church Building** – We have been fortunate through the year to be able to hire the Springwood Uniting Church Building. At a low cost we have a facility that offers us many options for space and fellowship activities associated with the gathering. We also changed the times of the gathering through the year to 5pm on Sunday to cater for young families. These changes seem to have gone smoothly.

**Pastoral Issues** – Throughout the year our church has had major pastoral issues that have had to be dealt with. These have not been primarily the responsibility of the committee as they have belonged to the Eldership (Stuart and Dave) and the ad hoc group assisting them (Lisa Harding, Wendy Konemann and Glenda Miles). We have been grateful for the assistance in all this by Kerry Newmarch who has guided the ad hoc group. There have been some minor financial implications such as covering some counselling costs which the committee has approved.

**Bread and Wine Church** – SBM had been instrumental in helping this new church at Leura get off the ground by supporting Michael Hargraves financially. While growth has been slow it has been pleasing to see the small number of people connect and grow in their faith. In close conversation with Dave Miles and with B&W church we shifted our support, formally, to the church rather than with Michael, and reduced the amount of support. We also contributed though consulting to the operations and management via Dave and Bruce Coomer. We decided to finish our financial contributions in September hoping that it has got to a place where it can operate independently. We remain in fellowship through Soma Australia.

**Internships** – Our deliberations clarified the value of encouraging some of our church members to take up internships to work alongside Dave. We clarified that the primary role was to provide training in particular ministry skills and to help explore potential calling to further study and ministry. We also determined that the funding for such positions would be raised through special appeals and limited to whatever funds could be raised. In this way the committee would avoid an unpredictable financial obligation. We were pleased to facilitate Jasper de Keizer as an intern and have encouraged Dave to explore other potential people for next year.

**Soma Australia** – We have continued to encourage Dave Miles in his leadership role within the missional community movement in Australia. We see that his gifting includes helping build up a movement of missional-community-focussed churches in our nation. Furthermore we know that by having more such churches which are discovering how to live out the vision will be an encouragement to our ministry in the Blue Mountains. Dave’s recent trip to the Soma Conference in Prague was part of this wider vision and ministry which we encourage.

## 6. Financial operations

Through a reduction in expenses (Pastor's salary) and limitation of our commitment to Bread and Wine Church we have been able to stabilise our income and expenditure and give a greater predictability to our financial position. We are grateful to David for allowing us to reduce his stipend to achieve this stability.

Our aim however is not just to provide stability as we also want to provide opportunities for new initiatives in ministry. Such new things will have special appeals to church members to encourage the gift and joy of giving.

We are grateful for the work that Warwick does as Treasurer and for the assistance that Jessica Coghlan gives him in the bookkeeping. We are also grateful for the review of our finances done again by Bob Martyn who is a member of Winmalee Anglican Church. While not technically an audit his review gives us some further confidence that we adhere to an appropriate standard in handling funds.

We are in a slightly better position than last year which had just a wafer thin reserve of \$300. We finished this year with over \$4,500. It would be good to lift the reserves to a figure around, say, 3 months of operating expenses (\$20,000) just to provide a buffer in case of any major interruptions to income. We are not however planning to move to such a place quickly.

## 7. Pastor

We are grateful to God for David Miles' contribution to the church more widely, but also to the committee meetings. We are often encouraged by the reports he brings about the ministry in one aspect or other of our church. We continue to work out with Dave how the principles of SBM should apply in different aspects of the ministry and appreciate his enthusiasm for leading us in our quest to be on mission in this part of God's world.

We are grateful too to both Dave and Glenda for the hospitality they show in their home. It is an obvious generosity and a great benefit to our church.

## 8. Prayer

I am grateful for the ministry of the committee. As we begin a new year, with some new members please pray for wisdom for the members. A good functioning committee is part of the necessary infrastructure of our church which allows the majority of people to get on with the ministries the Lord has called them to.

In Christ's service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Stuart Brooking', is written on a light-colored background.

Rev Stuart Brooking, Chairman