



Eastern Community Legal Centre Inc.

46th Annual General Meeting

3.00pm, Thursday November 26th, 2020
via Zoom Videoconferencing

MINUTES

In Attendance

See list at back.

ECLC Staff in Attendance

See list at back.

1. Welcome

Chairperson, Janet Matton welcomed all to the 46th Annual General Meeting of Eastern Community Legal Centre (ECLC). Janet acknowledged the Wurundjeri People, the Traditional Owners of the land on which she spoke from, the other lands that people were gathered on and paid respects to Elders both past and present.

On behalf of ECLC, Janet also acknowledged the special guests present at the AGM, as well as members, volunteers, staff and supporters.

2. Apologies

See list at back.

3. Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country was conducted by Ms. Julie Kitto, Aboriginal Elder.

4. Acceptance of Minutes from 2019 AGM

A copy of the Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 25th November 2019 was provided to attendees.

Motion: *That the minutes of the Eastern CLC 2019 AGM be accepted as a true and accurate record.*

Moved: Jose Abalo **Seconded:** Christine Cowin

CARRIED

5. Matters arising from the minutes

No matters were raised.

6. Board Report; Janet Matton, Chairperson

Janet Matton highlighted that ECLC provides services across a broad catchment and was delighted to be able to welcome everyone to ECLC's inaugural virtual AGM.

Janet highlighted that 2020 had proven to be complex and challenging and the main priority at the start of the COVID 19 pandemic was that ECLC staff were safe. This resulted in ECLC moving to a working from home model fairly quickly and ECLC moved early to do so. Services and programs continued to be delivered virtually, with partner organisations as well as different models and techniques.

Janet acknowledged the hard work that had been done by ECLC staff and volunteers this year and extended her thanks for this superb effort, dedication and expertise.

7. Financial Report: *Luong Ta, Treasurer*

Luong Ta highlighted that despite uncertain times and a challenging year, ECLC continued to deliver essential services and remained in a stable position financially.

Luong was pleased to report that for the 2019-20 financial year, a net surplus of \$30,361. The net equity position had slightly improved plus an increase had been seen in revenue and operating expenses. These increases are in line with increased services compared to the previous year.

Motion: *That the Financial Report be received.*

Moved: *Luong Ta*

Seconded: *Christine Cowin*

CARRIED

8. Chief Executive Officer's Report

Michael Smith welcomed everyone in attendance and thanked Julie Kitto for her Welcome to Country.

Michael acknowledged the extraordinary year that was 2020 and thanked all guests as well as the guest panellists that were in attendance.

It was noted that at the AGM in 2019, ECLC invited Dylan Langley to speak about the Home Stretch Campaign. Michael acknowledged that this initiative is being funded in the 2020 State budget.

The theme of this year's AGM was highlighted as Life Changing. ECLC was still able to collaborate and provide critical services to vulnerable clients during this life changing year, but in different ways. When life changes, some communities were effected more than others, inconvenienced or their lives torn apart. ECLC had to meet all these needs.

At the start of the pandemic the centre saw an increase in tenancy, parenting and employment related inquires. As the year went on, these needs quickly escalated and an increase was seen in family violence and elder abuse issues.

The centre quickly adapted to new service models whilst assisting the community. This included:

- ICT upgrade, including the use of Zoom and a new phone number
- Strong partnerships, including the Health Justice Partnership with Eastern Health, and collaborations with local councils and Boorndawan Willam Aboriginal Healing Service
- HEAL program
- Lilydale Integrated Youth Health Hub
- Engaging Clients in Democracy project
- Matter of Respect

A special thanks was given to all ECLC staff, volunteers, managers and leaders for their professionalism, commitment and resilience to the Centre over the past year. Michael acknowledged that while volunteers were not as actively involved this year as the Centre would like, they are a valuable part of the team and it is hoped more face to face work can continue next year.

Funding partners were also acknowledged and these included state, federal and local government as well as the Legal Services Board and other partners. Without collaboration, no lives can be changed and special thanks were given to all community members, partners and organisations.

The Board was thanked for their support and guidance through this life changing year.

Michael closed by highlighting the Annual Report and the fantastic client stories. 2,400 clients were assisted this year and work was done together to change their lives. A quote from Barack Obama was given as a final remark

Change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time.

We are the ones we've been waiting for; we are they change that we seek.

9. Formal Presentation of Annual Report

Janet Matton presented the Centre's Annual Report and thanked the team for their work on the publication.

Motion: *That the 2020 - 2021 Annual Report be received.*

Moved: Luong Ta

Seconded: Jose Abalo

CARRIED

10. Appointment of Board Members

Four nominations were formally and correctly received for the four vacancies on the Board in accordance with the Centre's Rules:

- Jose Abalo
- Christine Cowin
- Katherine Dowson
- Luong Ta

The nominees were all declared elected for a two-year term.

Janet extended her gratitude to the Board members for their active participation and help to guide the evolution and success of the Centre in the past year.

11. Concurrent Staff Presentations

ECLC staff presented four concurrent presentations:

- Cultural engagement and international students. Presented by Jacinta Maloney and Connie Chen. This discussed various projects and trends including;
 - Engaging Communities in Democracy
 - Community development and engagement, including community legal education, resource development and translations
 - Deakin Student Legal Service
 - Swinburne Student Legal Service pilot
- Elder abuse. Presented by Shahaan Murray, Nikki Harris-Allan and Jill Exon. This discussed the Elder Abuse continuum and the work across these areas.
- Family violence. Presented by Marika Manioudakis, Kate Gibson and Capella Henderson. This explored a range of response and prevention work.
- Service pathways and client trends, including mental health. Presented by Donna Askew and Chalita Ugrinovksi. This discussed making service pathways easier, the Enhanced Entry Project and the work of the Intake Team.

12. Guest Panel

Janet introduced Tabitha Lovett – CEO of the Besen Family Foundation and Board Member as moderator for the panel comprising:

- Dr Lois Peeler AM – Executive Director, Worawa Aboriginal College
- Bwe Thay – Deputy Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission
- Fiona McLeay - Victorian Legal Services Commissioner; CEO of the Victorian Legal Services Board

The guest panel were asked two key questions, leading to an insightful discussion:

- How has the year been life changing for Community, Families and Individuals?
- What is the hope for the future?

Dr Lois Peeler commenced that while this year had been disruptive, especially for Worawa College students and broader Aboriginal community, resilience was shown throughout. The students moved to remote learning,

with most choosing to head home to their communities. This meant spending 14 days in quarantine before being allowed to back into the community. The students showed an ability to adapt, especially with some students choosing to stay at Worawa. This meant learning was online for both remote and on-site students.

Dr Peeler spoke about the strong bond that was formed by the girls and the teachers who were involved in remote learning. Whilst the face to face interaction was missed, students were learning the value of resilience as well as their own strength and agility to help teachers with the curriculum delivery.

The strength shown to the commitment of education was acknowledged. Whilst a disrupted year occurred and parents may have had concerns sending their children to boarding school, Worawa College was quick to adapt and enabled ways of making connections possible. It is important for the students to be able to tell their stories and this was done through digital arts.

Education is regarded very highly in the Aboriginal community, especially as past family members often did not have access to the same level of education in their community.

Dr Peeler acknowledged this time as particularly hard for the Aboriginal Community, especially due to not being able to meet with elders and family members. It was important that the spiritual and wellbeing needs of the Aboriginal community were met during this time.

Bwe Thay discussed the importance of reaching out to community members in the East to make sure they were able to stay connected using appropriate technology. The community was in this together and figuring out how to connect was a priority. Musical concerts were arranged through the VMC and attracted about 25,000 people.

While this time definitely had its challenges, Bwe also spoke about the surprising and wonderful aspects which included more time at home through working remotely and spending more time with his children – which also included advocating for and assisting on their learning journey.

Community spirit is always strong in times of need and this was shown through the bushfires of 2019/20 and the pandemic. Diversity and friendship is a strength of being part of a community and reinforced the vision of all Australia to get through difficult times. Partnerships were formed and the generosity of Australian community did not go unnoticed.

Bwe mentioned the impact that government had on local communities and with more remote opportunities, the engagement was appreciated. It is hoped that this can continue as restrictions are easing. There is always room for improvement and contributions to society can only be further enriched.

Leadership and responsibilities were often taken on by familiar people within the community, but during this time everyone showed aspects of leadership and responsibility. This brings communities together and builds a stronger base for years to come.

Fiona McLeay noted that this year was like no other and the Legal Services Board was also challenged. During the early days of the pandemic, strength, resilience and creativity was shown specially to enable community members to be supported.

The legal profession is trained in risk response and problem spotting. Due to the nature of a pandemic, it was anticipated that the legal profession may struggle due to the high risk level. However, the profession proved to be more resilient than first thought and quickly provided support to vulnerable community members.

Surprisingly, access to justice was not really impacted during the pandemic, with lawyers continuing to renew their practising certificates and new lawyers joining the profession.

Fiona's insights for the future relate to lawyers taking more initiative and getting better at offering legal help online as well as the balance of helping vulnerable clients face-to-face. She acknowledged that there are still areas where the profession needs to change and this includes seeing more women in senior roles, managing sexual harassment and becoming more diverse.

Community members are shifting their views on lawyers and this is due to the Royal Commission driving discussion within the community. There is hope and a building block for the future.

Tabitha thanked the panellists for speaking on the positives of the COVID-19 pandemic and insightful perspectives on the future.

13. Breakout Roundtables

An opportunity for participants to share and explore Life Changing from different perspectives.

14. General Business and Questions

Dilnaz Billimoria who is a valued community volunteer congratulated ECLC on their great work in the Inner and Outer East. Dilnaz always gets pleasure when hearing about ECLC at community events and is proud to be a volunteer. She also paid tribute to the board and its members, who should be proud to be part of a wonderful organisation.

15. Thanks and Close

Janet closed the meeting at 4.40pm and thanked everyone in attendance, especially the guest speakers.

Janet thanked the Board, staff and volunteers for their ongoing dedication, passion and enthusiasm and to all who made the AGM a success today.

In Attendance

Andres Lomp, Barbara Crisp, Bree Morrison, Bree Morrison, Bwe Thay, Christine Cowin, Christine Mathieson, Cr Anna Chen, Cr Sorina Grasso, Cr Susan Laukens, Cr Rob Steane, Dilnaz Billimoria, Edward Thomson, Fiona McLeay, Gaby Thomson, Gaya Subramaniam, Grant Meyer, Guy Masters, Heidi Tucker, Hilton Miller, Jackie Orwin, Jamie Edge, Janet Matton, Jeanette McRae, Jose Abalo, Julie Coombes, Kevin Treacey, Lara Clark, Linda Hancock, Linden Smith, Lois Peeler OAM, Luong Ta, Melissa Reid, Nildhara Gadani, Peter Noble, Peter Ruzyla, Saarah Ozeer, Samantha Watson, Shoeb Janoowalla, Sia Tsolos, Sue Gold, Sue Sestan, Sui Ting Tse, Suzy Stojanovic, Tabtiha Lovett, Tammy Atkins, Tina Billson, Tony Monley OAM, Tracey Blythe

Staff in Attendance

Amanda McAnuff, Anita Koochew, Belinda Lo, Capella Henderson, Connie Chen, Diana Thomas, Donna Askew, Emma Costa, Emma Pryce-Baxter, Fiona Link-Freeman, Gergis Ayoub, Hester Chee, Holly Cussigh, Holly Phillips-Kliska, Huong Tran, Iresha Buthgamuwa, Jacinta Maloney, Jenny Stewart, Jill Exon, Josie Kirk, Kapia Manukau, Kate Gibson, Kathy Barnett, Kathy Pullman, Katrina Barrett, Katrina Markwick, Marika Manioudakis, Mawite Bawi, Mdu Radebe, Megan Ross, Michael Smith, Naomi Hynes, Nhu Ngoc Tran, Nikki Harris-Allan, Paul Were, Pavel Sraj, Rebecca Grinblat, Rina McInnes, Ruth Howland, Samantha Liddy, Sammy Dixon, Shahaan Murray, Shasheema Ruwanpathirana, Sonia Jolley, Stephanie Streets, Susan Amos, Trish Cameron, Vivian Rea and Emma O'Brien (minutes)

Apologies

Barbara Crisp, Bridget Vallance MP, Carmel Guerra, Hon Daniel Andrews MP, Dustin Halse MP, Erskine Rodan, Hon Jennifer Coate AO, Jenny Scicluna, Judith Voce, Kay Hackworth, Cr. Prue Cutts, Cr. Richard Higgins, Roz Williams, Cr. Sharon Ellis, Tanya Scicluna, Tom Conley, Hon Tony Smith MP.