

## Member Questions

This year, 11 questions were received from the members prior to the AGM. A handful of questions were also raised by the members at the AGM. These questions covered the following areas:

- Branding
- Keeping Members Connected
- Value of Membership
- Expansion of membership and purpose
- Communications
- Club Allowances and Grants
- Member cards; and
- Chatswood Office.

### *Branding*

The Chair confirmed with the members that **the War Widows NSW brand will continue until there are no more war widows**. There is no intention to replace it. The Board approved the development of a second brand to connect with those who do not identify as war widows but whom we can and do support. War Widows NSW will own the second brand.

The second brand under development, will be used to attract new members who do not identify as war widows or who are not war widows.

### *Membership and Purpose change*

As members are aware, the Company is both a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee and a charity. Our charitable purpose need to aligns with advancing social or public welfare. We hold direct grant recipient and public benevolent institute status by virtue of being a charity. These 'statuses' enable us to qualify for tax concessions, charitable grants and funding.

The charitable nature of the organisation also means that members can access the programs and services offered by the organisation. Generally, members of a not-for-profit company **cannot benefit** from their membership, **however** where the benefits provided by an organisation are incidental or ancillary to the purpose, then the provision of services and support to members is allowed.

Under the law, activities of an organisation like AWWNSW must be directed toward advancing the charitable purpose as opposed to advancing members' interests. Not-for-profit companies must keep their membership open to all of those who support the objects of the Company and not restrict it to just those who receive services.

The changes made to the constitution in 2020 and 2021 ensured that we continue to have the ability to support members despite the continuing reduction in the number of war widows. The changes safeguarded the future and the legacy of the organisation helping us to continue to demonstrate its public benefit despite the rapid decline in the numbers of war widows.

For us to retain our charitable status into the future and continue to provide for our members, it is important to have a broad charitable purpose. Expanding the purpose is already facilitating the improvement and expansion of programs and services; the strengthening of the voices of members; and continue the legacy of this enduring and well-respected organisation. For current members of the organisation, the expansion to the objects does not affect services and support available.

The expansion will allow us to continue to operate and serve war widows. The resolution in 2021 to expand the charitable purpose was passed by a 96.25% majority.

### *Keeping Members Connected*

The past two years have been a challenge for so many of us. COVID-19 interrupted our lives and we had to rethink how to connect with family and friends. We understand that the last couple of years have been tough, and a feeling of isolation are common.

During the Pandemic, there were no social or guild clubs meeting to connect friends and widows together. The staff from the Office could not visit as restrictions were in place and limited all our movements. We know this impacted on our members mental health.

In a two-year period, many of our members also faced floods, fires and the drought. The office staff made over 1200 calls to you to ensure you were okay and were safe. This year we will continue to have a strong focus on reconnecting with our members both in the city and regional areas.

We will continue to make calls to check on our members via our friendship line but will visit all the clubs before December 2022 to hear your feedback and ideas you have to connect and received the support you require. Look out for the dates when we will visit your area. We also will continue our bimonthly Town hall meetings via zoom.

### *Communications*

Firstly, it is important that you know, we are not using digital media as our primary form of communication with you all. We are aware of the limitations with this form of communication for a number of members.

The communication needs of our members are broad. We communicate in a variety of ways that are not digital including:

- Quarterly digest
- Annual reports
- Member letters
- Monthly Newsletters
- Articles in Vett Affairs Newspaper
- Through club coordinators; and
- Through friendship line volunteers.

Of course, more can be and will be done throughout the next 12 months, including regional visits and forums, new paper articles, radio communications, and communication through other veteran and associations publications. Keeping regional members engaged is critical for us with more than half of our members living rurally. We are also open to other ideas and welcome those from these members or those connected to these members.

### *Value of membership*

Becoming a financial member of AWWNSW is about being part of the organisation, having a say in its future and operations and contributing to raising the voices of widows, women and families united by defence service. To become a financial member is to have a stake in our incredible organisation - the only organisation within the veteran community that has been built by widows, women and veterans' families for widows. The following is attached to the payment of member fees:

- Votes at the AGM.
- 4x digests a year (costing the organisation approx. \$25/member/year).
- Audio digest for those with vision trouble (costing approx. \$120/member/ year).
- Monthly newsletters.
- Member card and badges.

- \$50 in club allowances/ financial member/ year. These that offset the costs of food and transport/ outings.
- Access to the transport policy, offsetting the cost to attend our events for those with mobility limitations (costing the organization \$25,000 annually).
- Free access and catering at our events including the AGM, Field of Remembrance, War Widows Walk and Picnic.

Members can also access our charitable programs, services and communications products including:

- Connection to other widows through the friendship line, social and guild clubs
- Access to online health and wellbeing programs
- Access to forums such as town hall meetings
- Individual advocacy with stated and federal governments to ensure access to entitle services occur.

### *Club Allowances and Grants*

Clubs receive two types of allowances/ club annually. Clubs no longer have to choose between the food and entertainment allowance and the transport allowance, both are available to clubs. The Food and Entertainment allowance is currently set at \$25 per financial member. Financial members who are part of more than one club need to chose which club will have the benefit of their allowance. The allowance is currently capped at 33 members/ club. The members at the AGM asked for this to be reviewed as the reasoning is unclear and it disadvantages larger clubs. This was noted and will be included in the Guild and Social Club Guideline review. This review will be undertaken this year.

A question was also asked about club Grants, the CEO confirmed that all grant funds have been allocated to Guild and Social Clubs.

### *Member Cards*

Member Cards are currently being printed and will be sent out to members when received.

### *Chatswood Office*

The results of the survey regarding the Chatswood Office include:

- The survey showed overwhelming support (74%) for collocation with other veteran-based organisations with the potential for multiple efficiencies to be found.
- The office location is a challenge due to the size of Sydney. Most respondents indicated a preference for a location that is closer to where they live.
- Generally, respondents liked the proximity of the office to public transport, shopping centres and amenities.
- Generally, respondents felt the office space needed cosmetic improvement to make it a space that is more welcoming and aesthetically pleasing.
- Most respondents felt that the purpose of the office was to:
  - provide a space for the work to get done through paid staff and volunteers; and
  - provide a place for members to attend, holding meetings and gatherings and create relationships with each other and the staff.

The most common reason cited for leaving the Chatswood Office was cost of the lease. Indicating that currently it was difficult for members to see value for money.

Based on member feedback, the Board decided to repurpose the Chatswood Office and tasked the CEO and her team to turn the office into a multi-purpose space for staff to work and members to gather connect and run small events. We will be sure to let you know when it is ready!

**Please know that there is no intention to close the Sydney office.**