

PROBUS 5 MINUTE TALK

By Sue Ward – 16 April 2024

This year this Mona Vale Probus is having its 28th birthday. The first meeting was on 16 April in 1996 which allows us to celebrate our birthday on the actual day. So this one is very special. I was there and that makes me a proud foundation member. We were the first mixed gender club on the peninsula, hence our title Combined. Three more members here today were there on that day and I'll say more about them later. Those 28 years have seen large changes, development and growth – that growth being very strong in the ability to make new (and often long-term) friends and form alliances at a stage of life where it is not always so easy.

It's very difficult to cover 28 years in a 5-minute talk and there are so many people to mention and stories to tell, but can't in the time. I'll have to find another time to spill those beans! So I'll just give snippets of ideas and will focus on specific things that make our club so successful. During that 28 years I have served 11 years on the emerging committees – 3 as membership, 2 as VP and three two year terms as President (2004/5, 2014/15 and 2018/19) and a year as ambassador. and what an honour and privilege that has been. I'm also a proud Life Member.

One of the first things I did was to register us as an incorporated body which meant that members were protected, should any financial crisis befall us - Club members would only be responsible for the cost of their membership – which then was \$10 I guess today it would be \$55.

We quickly realised that our members were extremely interesting people and a good way to share common experiences was by asking them to talk for 5 minutes. So we started Star of the Month which was the forerunner to 5 minute speaker. And how many great conversations has that started during the morning tea break.

This is the biggest club on the northern beaches and we have always maintained our membership numbers. At one stage we had a waiting list of over 20 people I think some had been listed for 2 years. and I felt this was neither reasonable nor fair So just scrapped the ceiling and said welcome.

We started off with the usual meeting format – minutes, lots of motions and seconds etc, but We were the first to undertake so many different activities. This meant that the first half of the meeting was needed to discuss what was in the future – a much more interesting and useful exercise than reading the stuff of the past. We preferred to look ahead, and members could read the minutes on their new devices. Then post meeting lunches started at Narrabeen Hotel and continued much larger after our move to Pittwater RSL with up to 80 staying and firming their friendships. Another offshoot is that smaller groups of people have found common interests and further that by doing things together outside Probus activities – that’s what it’s all about – friendships and fellowship. This club demonstrates that extremely well.

The main reason this club works so well is because we have teams that work together. I remember one president’s report from me listed 39 people volunteering to do stuff. We established only 4 elected positions with all others working as sub-committees./focus groups This means no-one is burdened with responsibility but shares it with others. The clubs that fail have people rusted on in elected positions which they own and which no one wants to take over so there are no new ideas and they die out. When I look around I see so many who have taken on things. Every President since me well knows the term Succession Planning.

The wonderful thing about our club is that every idea is taken on board and mostly they work. Surprisingly the wine tasting club didn’t last! And people are committed. The number of activities we do and the fact that we thrived during COVID is a testament to that.

Did you know we published a book... Tidbits and Tales. This came about because on outings people used to stand in front of the jams chutneys etc and talk nostalgically about their mothers’/grandmothers’ (even though recipes. It was the Xmas present of the year – a bargain at \$20.

When I joined in 1996 I had worked overseas for most of my working life and really had no friends here. Over my years In Probus (even though I had several overseas placements) I feel I belong, I am known, I am welcome and I have been able to

contribute. I've seen so many new places. And I have many friends. I am home here. What more could anyone want.

Now about the other three foundation members I mentioned. John and Barbara Sinclair and Maureen Robinson. (Sadly we lost Cec just a short time ago) I'm sure they won't mind my mentioning it but we three ladies are all 88 years old. In two years our club will be 30. We will be 90 which means that we will all have spent one third of our lives involved with Mona Vale Probus. Now ain't that something! How many Probuses can boast a statistic like that? So ladies, keep breathing! And Happy Birthday Mona Vale Combined Probus.