

DISCUSSION PAPER ON SPOCA FIVE YEAR PLAN

The purpose of this paper is to provide a basis for seeking input from the SPOCA community on the directions and activities of the Association over the next 5 years.

BACKGROUND

The Committee Meeting on 17 July 2019 endorsed a proposal to develop a five-year plan to guide our policy and initiatives during the 2020-2024 period. The Committee decided that the plan would include but not be limited to the following items:

- custodianship of memorabilia;
- the St Patrick's Jesuit College Scholarship at the ACU;
- support for our two Partnership Schools;
- relationships with alumni of other secondary colleges;
- the timing of the inevitable SPOCA wind-back.

OUTLINE

This paper will cover the following areas:

1. the profile of the Patrician community;
2. SPOCA's current budget and assets;
3. current activities of the SPOCA Committee;
4. the extent of member engagement;
5. the initial objectives of SPOCA with an assessment of their current relevance and whether they should be expanded or contracted
6. an assessment of potential new activities that should be considered against an updated set of objectives
7. the expected timing of, and process for the wind-back of SPOCA, including a residual minimum set of activities.
8. a process to obtain input from the Patrician community (this is the most important part of this review);
9. a timetable for obtaining Committee endorsement of a Five-Year Plan.

1. PROFILE OF SPOCA

Association membership profile

The Association has 400 former students on our data base which holds email and postal addresses for about 260 former students and postal addresses only for the other 140.

The age profile of members on the database is:

- 6 (4%) - are over 90
- 87 (22%) - are 81 -90
- 169 (42%) - are 71 -80
- 129 (32%) - are 70 or under.

About 90 % of the group aged 70 or under were in Intermediate, Leaving or Matriculation when the school closed.

Other characteristics of the Patrician community that have relevance to this review are:

-based on postal addresses recorded for 84 % of the Patricians on our database 81 % of Patricians reside in metropolitan Melbourne and 11% in Regional Victoria with the rest either interstate or overseas.

-our best estimate is that our data base covers 65% of Patricians still alive, based on an actuarial estimate that approximately 600 from class lists of 1200 students would be alive today. (Most of the missing 200 were SPC students in the 1960s.) Strategies to increase the number in the data base have not been very productive to date, which is not surprising given the data above.

-the Patrician community is a very diverse group in terms of where they live, careers, income levels, the level of commitment to the Catholic Church, values and interests. The two characteristics that most, but not all, have in common these days is that they have retired from full time work and are over 70, or close to being so.

- a significant number are in the 65-75 age group – many have reasonable health, considerable skills and organizational capacity, as well as being retired from full time work.

Budget

The current SPOCA income, leaving aside the Scholarship funding drive, has averaged approximately \$10 k pa over recent years and the Committee's broad objective is to maintain a surplus at that level. Expenditure is mainly directed to supporting the mission activities of the Jesuits.

Other Assets

Data Base

SPOCA maintains a data base covering names, dates at St Pat's, email and postal addresses and mobile no's – the extent of data held on each Patrician varies.

SPOCA Room

Thanks to the generosity of the Associate Vice Chancellor in charge of the ACU Melbourne Campus, we have dedicated use of a room at the ACU Cathedral Hall. The Room is currently used mainly for Committee Meetings, display of memorabilia and special occasions such as Open Day Melbourne but it can be used for other SPOCA activities

Memorabilia

There are about 240 items (excluding duplicates) on the SPOCA Catalogue that are mainly housed in the Xavier Archives (135), the APSJ Province Archives (90) and 15 at St Ignatius Athelstone.

St Patrick's Jesuit College – ACU Scholarship

The Scholarship Fund currently stands at about \$115,000 (provided by 55 donors) which is held and managed on our behalf by the ACU.

COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Committee currently comprises a President, Secretary, Treasurer, 2 Vice Presidents and 4 Committee Members. Most members attended the college for at least part of the last decade of its existence. Two members have been on the Committee for over 50 years – remarkable achievements by Gavin Wayland and Michael Head.

Outlined below are the main matters which are on the Committee's current agenda:

-Functions

The committee organizes an AGM/Mass/Breakfast /Lunch in the early part of the year and a dinner towards the end of each year. It also organizes functions to celebrate special occasions; the most recent being the 50 Year Anniversary of the closure of our college last year. It participates actively in the annual Anzac Day Mass together with the Old Xavierians Association in the Xavier Chapel.

-Memorabilia Collection

A lot of work has gone into transferring the bulk of the Association's memorabilia to the Xavier College archive over the last two years.

-Scholarship

We established a scholarship with the ACU last year. This involved a significant time commitment, most of which fell to members of the Committee but some assistance was provided by other Patricians.

-SPC Notables initiative

This was initiated by the Committee and whilst it will continue to involve the Committee, most of the work is currently done by Paul McColl who is not a Committee member.

-Relationship with Cathedral

SPOCA continues to engage with the Cathedral on issues related to St Patrick's College, including maintenance of the SPC plaque and the Tower.

-Jesuit Missions

SPOCA provides support each year to the Jesuit Mission activities.

-SPJC Room

The Committee has established a Project to set up the room provided to us by the ACU. The project is being managed by a Committee member (Kevin Lane) but with significant input from other Patricians.

-SPC Reflections Project

This project involved the production in 2019 of an audio–visual history of the college. It was suggested and delivered by Steve Bowmen with considerable support from Jim Smith. It includes interviews with a number of Patricians about their experience at the college, historical footage of school activities and recordings of the SPC school song.

-SPOCA Website

Responsibility for maintaining and managing / promoting content for the SPOCA webpages rests with a member of the Committee (Paul Buttigieg). The webpages are hosted on the Xavier College website (stpats.xavier.vic.edu.au)

-Partner Schools

The Committee has established relationships with two Jesuit Partnership schools; Saint Ignatius Geelong and Loyola College Watsonia. The main activity is to provide book-prizes and to attend their annual presentations. This work falls to members of the Committee.

2. ENGAGEMENT WITH PATRICIANS

-ACTIVITIES ORGANISED BY SPOCA

The AGM predictably attracts minimal attendance, normally less than 20. Interest in the annual dinner has been gradually declining although the last dinner saw a modest increase with 60 members attending.

The anniversary celebration in 2019 for the 50th anniversary of the closure of the college was attended by about 50 Patricians and friends.

-OTHER SPC ACTIVITIES

Some year-level functions have been held over the years the most recent being the 50-year reunions of the 1966, 1967 and 1968 matriculation classes held over the last four years. Whilst the Committee was aware of these functions and individual Committee members provided some support, they were organised by Patricians not on the Committee, with the lead organisers including Bill Dowling, Kevin Lane, Vin Martin, Michael Cavanagh, Paul McColl, Damien Hynes and Jim Smith. The 2018 function was attended by over 50 and about 35 attended the follow up function in 2019.

We are aware that there are other relatively small groups of Patricians who get together periodically. We are not however aware of how many of these groups exist – quite possibly a lot more than we might think.

3. SPOCA's FORMAL OBJECTIVES

This section outlines the initial objectives of the Associations which predate the closure of the school. Brief comments are provided against each objective as to its current relevance and the extent to which SPOCA's current activities support the objective.

A. To hold reunions of the old boys of the College

This objective remains relevant. The Committee's focus has at least in recent times been on organizing the Annual Dinner and arranging events to celebrate special occasions/ anniversaries. An issue for consideration is whether the Committee should be fostering year or period reunions.

B. To keep the old boys in touch with one another

The main Committee initiatives which support this objective are the functions organised by the Committee, regular newsletters put out by the President and ad hoc communications on specific initiatives such as the Scholarship and the SPOCA website. We could consider whether we should do more particularly in relation to the website and what initiatives could be fostered by the Committee to provide greater opportunities to increase the level of interaction with and between old boys.

C. To promote the welfare of older students of SPC.

Whilst this objective is probably more relevant now than it has ever been, given the age profile of the group, it is not clear how the current Committee activities supports this objective. It is considered that this is one objective that should receive particular focus in this review.

D. To foster and cherish the tie of affection for the old school.

It is suggested that individual attitudes to our old school were generally set a long time ago. The Scholarship initiative was aimed in part at encouraging Patricians to feel good about the school. There does seem to be widespread albeit not universal affection among Patricians about the school, which is in contrast to the feeling that many have these days about the Catholic Church. Pursuing initiatives which would have widespread interest and be valued by Patricians should have a positive impact on how Patricians see SPOCA.

E. To publish either alone or conjointly with the school authorities a magazine which shall foster the love for the school and be a means of keeping old boys in touch with each other.

This objective is obviously in need of rewriting and should focus on the communication element—we should continue to modernize and supplement the Presidents Newsletter.

Overall, the objectives have held their relevance over a long period of time for the Association. It is not considered at least at this point in the review that we need to be adding any new objectives although they do need to be updated and some changes made in the emphasis given in some areas. More recently as adopted by the SPOCA Committee in June 2017 for example, the context and objectives for the year were as follows:

- Patricians are the beneficiaries of the earliest works of the Irish Jesuits in Australia and St Patricks College is their oldest school. We were the source of over 250 priests and many notable civic, sporting and arts leaders. We have provided ongoing support for the work of Jesuit Mission in India and elsewhere since the 1951. Although our school closed nearly 50 years ago, alumni contacts are still maintained between many of the 400 members of SPOCA.
- The roles of SPOCA continue to be fellowship among alumni members, custodianship of the memory of the college and support for the works of

the Australian Jesuit Province. The objectives and responsibilities for endorsed in 2017 are attached.

4 A NEW DIRECTION FOR SPOCA

While much of SPOCA's current activities and foci should and will continue, there are three factors at play which provide opportunities for SPOCA to embark on new directions

- a) Much of the good work done by SPOCA, aside from the organisation of functions, has tended to be externally focused and/or is probably of marginal interest to many Patricians. While the Association has been going through a very busy three-year period which has been demanding on the Committee, many initiatives have or will be moving from implementation to maintenance mode. These include:
 - the ACU Scholarship;
 - development and implementation of a long-term plan for our memorabilia;
 - the SPJC Room;
 - fostering our relationship with the ACU including providing the resourcing for the Open House Initiative at Cathedral Hall;
 - fostering our relationship with the Jesuit Partner Schools;
 - the SPC 'Reflections' Video;
 - fostering the relationship with OXA.

- b) SPOCA members are an aging group who individually face an increasing number of health and other challenges

- c) SPOCA members generally have more free time than at any other time in their lives.

It is suggested that as the sun slowly but surely will set on our Association, we should consider turning out attention fairly and squarely onto the needs and interests of the wider Patrician community. This significant change in direction could be achieved by tackling initiatives of the following types:

*Pastoral Care Role

As our group ages, Patricians will increasingly face all sorts of life challenges. Many members will be well supported by family and friends but there will inevitably be some who are not getting the help they need and therefore may struggle. Providing a limited pastoral care service has the potential to make a real difference to the lives of Patricians in this group. Developing this idea could involve establishing a team with appropriate expertise to explore the range of issues involved, including:

- what exactly could SPOCA offer? Would it for example be simply a service to provide companionship for men who are isolated, maintaining contact through visits or something more?
- how would we connect with them and/ or they with us?
- would we run the risk of taking on something that we are not in a position to resource?
- what are the risks involved in providing such a service?
- do we have someone within the Patrician community who would be prepared to take the lead role in developing a proposal?
- are there positive examples available from other school alumni groups?

Fostering Patrician Activity Groups

This could involve SPOCA sponsoring /encouraging the establishment of activity-based interest-groups for Patricians such as :

- Golf
- Walking
- Cards eg Solo, Bridge
- Book Club
- Lunch or Afternoon Tea groups
- Ignatian Spirituality/ Christian meditation

Any such activity groups would need a small group to explore the feasibility and a leader. The SPCJ Room at Cathedral Hall would provide a very suitable central venue for some groups.

*The Annual Dinner

Given the reducing interest in this function it is considered that we should use the consultation process for the review to seek some structured feedback on the format of the dinner.

*Class/Period Reunions

The experience of the recent reunions of the Matriculation classes of 1966, 1967 and 1968 and their follow-up functions would suggest that:

- there is a strong level of interest in such reunions: last years get together attracted over 55 old boys and this year the number was down, as expected, but still quite strong 35. In both years there were quite a few apologies who would have attended but had prior commitments and the group included a number of old boys from the year above as well as the year below.

It is not suggested that the SPOCA Committee should take on the role of organising these events. The Committee can play a manageable role by:

- gathering information on when these events have been held;
- having an item on a meeting agenda to discuss whether in the light of the information obtained, it be appropriate to consider holding reunions that year for specific classes or periods;
- if so, organise a discussion with relevant key players in that year or period to encourage them to form an organizing group.

The difficulties and resourcing involved in resourcing pastoral care and/or activity groups should not be underestimated. Their feasibility would depend on how much support they receive from the Patrician community – without such support, they would flounder. The consultation process should give some indication of whether our Patrician community is interested enough to get involved. These are initiatives that will require a level of engagement with our alumni that currently doesn't exist

TIMING OF SPOCA'S WINDUP/TRANSITION

This is not a pressing issue for SPOCA at this point. We will reach that point when we no longer have the resources to continue the Association and/or where the work we are doing no longer justifies the Association continuing. We are certainly not at that point yet and we do not expect to reach that point within the next 5 years.

THE NEXT STEPS

This discussion paper will be distributed to members by 25 February 2020 and Patricians are invited to provide comments, written or verbal.

Opportunities will be provided for Patricians to participate in group discussions sessions in the SPJC Room at the ACU campus in Fitzroy during March.

Consultation with member will be completed by 1 April 2020.

Recommendations for revised objectives and new activities will be considered at the SPOCA Committee meeting to be held in mid-April 2020. Members will be advised of the outcomes of the review after that meeting.

SPOCA Committee
February 2020