



PC Users Group ACT Incorporated

Annual General Meeting

30 September 2002

List of Members in Attendance at the
Held at the Manning Clark Theatre – Australian National University

Name	Member No.	Name	Member No.
Rodd Farr	8703072	Hugh Bambrick	9000395
Anne Greiner	900422	Ann Byrne	910240
John Hempenstall	890540	Rufus Garcia	960226
R Garcia	990135	J Bienkiewicz	201110
David Lewis	970147	Nathan Robertson	980111
Ross Hamilton	200091	Allan Mikelson	890291
Pierre de Chazal	900460	Richard Sinclair	980116
Allan Hepworth		Gordon Urquhart	920683
Wendy Anderson	980156	Leonard Parish	930047
Alan Vidler	851097	Ken Ford	980466
Robert Crafter	990118	Ted Tregillas	
Trevor Frew	881213	Allan Read	961059
Derek Jordan	920544	Peter Watney	861119
Chess Krawcyk	83121	Michael Lightfoot	850658
David Sainsbury	850938	James Barrett	
Keith Sayers	900201	Eleanor Rayment	950848
Owen Cook	930936	D J Elias	850349
P G Dillon	860298	Mike Dinn	860300
John Plumidis	970234	Steve Jenkin	950022
Graeme Evans	970096	Edward Lang	960666

Minutes of Annual General Meeting

Meeting opened by President Nathan Robertson who remained in the Chair to conduct the meeting.

1. Apologies:

Marianne van Wely
Mike Burke
Roger Penhale
Paulette Montaigne

The Meeting was attended by approximately 40 members as per attached list.

2. Minutes of the Previous Annual General Meeting:

The Secretary read the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on the 24 September 2001.

Moved Wilga Hawkins, Seconded Ted Tregillas that:

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on the 24 September 2001 be accepted as a correct record.

Carried

No matters arising from the previous Minutes.

3. Reports

A. President's Report:

The Chairman presented a Statement to Members listing all Committee members for 2002-2003 as required under Section 73(1)(c). of the Associations Incorporations Act 1991 (ACT).

The President presented his report to the meeting:

Presidents Address to AGM

Members,

It has been a busy year in the life of the PC Users Group (ACT) Incorporated. The committee, in particular the executive committee and members of the Internet Project Management Committee, have spent a large amount of time on what I term "background work" — work that members don't directly see the benefits from, but would definitely see the holes created if certain issues weren't addressed.

During this address, I intend to outline the achievements of the year, how they compare with the goals I stated at the beginning of my term in Sixteen Bits, some advice to the incoming committee to fast track their progress for the following year, and, due to being asked by a number of members, then briefly discuss my personal plans for the coming year.

Achievements for the current year

The most notable achievement of the year was our relocating of TIP equipment to TransACT house, which was done in order to be able to offer a “always-on” broadband Internet connection to our members. This move to broadband is currently in progress, and will be available to members before the end of the calendar year. A large amount of work was done by a large number of people, but I would like to single out Allan Mikkelsen for the large amount of help he has given me in the planning process, and to Iain Gould and Stephen Rothwell (who is an Australian UNIX Users Group (AUUG) member, not a PCUG member) for their individual contributions to moving us towards broadband. As a footnote, I’d like to thank the members of AUUG for their outstanding long-term contribution to TIP.

The second major achievement of the year was the hiring of a new permanent Executive Secretary. After a succession of people took the job after the departure of Petra Dwyer (who had been in the position for twelve years), the Executive of the Committee recommended the Committee hire Madeline Mould as the new Executive Secretary. Since that time, she has spent much time cleaning up our accounts, which were quite a mess before her hiring. It took Madeline two months to redo a large amount of our accounts to represent the groups position accurately, and hence the committee didn’t commit to any new large expenditures during that time. Hence, our move to TransACT was put off until such time as we could perform accurate projections on the move. Of particular note, the silliness of TIP being accounted for totally separately to PCUG has been removed, and all the accounting is done by one person, which we believe will bring our bill for next years audit down considerably.

The third achievement of the committee was the upgrading of our training facilities to now have 12 student machines, plus the demonstrator’s machine. This was needed to fill a need from a large commercial hirer, and makes our training room more attractive to future commercial hirers, and hence a more viable offering in the medium term.

The last achievement was that the committee considered how to better promote the group to the general public. It was decided that one large problem was the level of awareness, and hence we have started looking at ways to increase public awareness. The first push was the production of the “PCUG Coffee Mugs”, which it was hoped that members would take their mugs to their workplace, and colleagues would notice them as they held conversations with them in hallways and offices. Secondly, there has been an effort to get free radio announcements of our main meetings, and we have looked at various opportunities of promoting the group in the local newspapers.

Achievements vs. Goals

The first goal I put forward was the upgrading of TIP services to make it a competitive offering once again, such that we would retain our current members, and attract new members. Much work has been done in the past three months to achieve this, and the moving of our equipment to TransACT House was an important milestone in this quest.

Broadband, as I discussed earlier, will be offered in the coming months, and we started to offer domain hosting to members as well. There needs to be a shift in direction in the latter offering — I believe that dropping our pricing on our domain hosting offering will make it more competitive, and help to retain members and attract new members. We also need to be more open to ideas for extending our TIP services to members, and openly encourage members to come up with ideas, and implement them, without tying them down with negative politicking. Overall, I think we are most of the way to achieving this goal.

The second goal was to explore the continued viability of the Sixteen Bits journal, and to come up with ways to reform the processes and content of Sixteen Bits to better serve the members. Several ideas were tabled. The first, made early in the term of the committee, was to change the processes that are currently used in the production of Sixteen Bits by introducing a “content editor” — a person whose job is to plan for what content will be in the journal months in front of production, and find and follow-up on people to produce the required content, producing a journal with a unique theme each month. This way, we believe most members will find at least one issue to be “exactly what they joined for”, rather than articles randomly hitting interest areas for them. Another idea is for a monthly newsletter to appear on the pcug.org.au website two in every three months, with Sixteen Bits being produced every third month, which would lighten the load on the volunteers who produce it, and significantly lower the costs of the group. As you would appreciate, there has been much discussion on this topic during the year, but no direct action. I expect the new committee to commit to one or both of these paths, and for the reworked processes to be put in place early in the next calendar year. Overall, there hasn't been a lot of progress on the Sixteen Bits front.

Third goal — training. We need to lift the number of people attending our training courses, as I believe it is a real benefit to members, and one that most aren't aware of. In reality, we have two problems to solve in this area. First is promotion — many of our members don't read what our course offerings are. Second is an understanding of what they want — a number of attempts have been made to find this out in recent years, but none have been all that successful. On the positive side, we did find a new volunteer to take on the Training Manager duties. Terry Giesecke has taken this duty, and is currently struggling to find volunteers to teach the courses that are wanted by the membership, which are mainly basic Windows, Office and Internet related courses. Overall, the committee needs to figure out how to better promote these courses to the members such that we get more members attending those courses

The fourth goal was raising the numbers attending the monthly meetings, and to be honest we never really got around to addressing this in full. Like training, we have a promotion problem here as well — how to make sure members are aware of the meeting, what the topic of the meeting is, and when and where it is. Realistically, we should be getting at least two hundred people to meetings.

The fifth goal was to increase the number of Special Interest Groups we have, and to increase the numbers of members who attend these meetings. These serve a very similar purpose to the main monthly meetings, in that they are really representative of the core values of the group — “users helping users”. The community feeling within these SIGs is directly related to the high member retention rate of those who attend such meetings

regularly, and hence the more members who attend such “community” gatherings, the more members the group will retain. However, like the main meetings, the committee never got around to addressing the issue of how to raise attendance numbers in Special Interest Groups.

In summary, of the five goals I laid out, we are most of the way to achieving the first, at least part way to achieving the second, and didn’t address the last three. Maybe this was due to the size of the issues that we were addressing, but I think the quest to achieve the five stated goals must be continued by the incoming committee.

Advice to Next Years Committee

The first piece of advice I have to the new committee is to seek an immediate review of the rules of our organization. In particular, I firmly believe that the size of the current committee is unworkable, and it needs to be reduced to eight from fourteen. I have been a committee member for three years now, and it has always amazed me how long it takes a large committee to make a decision about anything. It should never be underestimated how long it takes for our committee to make non-trivial decisions. Some members in particular have a habit of making “drawing out committee meetings” their only real contribution to the committee.

Hence, my second suggestion to them is to not automatically co-opt members to the committee unless they are sure they will make an active and noticeable contribution to some aspect of the group. Furthermore, members of the committee who insist on drawing out relatively simple processes with unneeded sub-committees and other bureaucratic sillinesses and offer no real positive stimulus to the organization and its members, should be removed from their position.

Third suggestion: Make changes one at a time. In a conversation with a fellow committee member in the last week, I explained my philosophy on achieving change within our organization, the way in which our organization has been run in the past four months. It consists of two groups of people: “core” and “maintainers”. The members of the “core” meet, discuss a venture on which the group might go on, and plan it, implement it to their liking, then hand it to a “maintainer”. The maintainer is shown exactly how to keep the activity going, and what are the “secrets” that the core has learnt about the activity. For example, consider the goal of “improving monthly meetings”. The core would pick that up, and name a goal — for example, get two hundred attendees consistently. After they have a formula for doing that, they hand the activity off to the maintainer who can simply continue to operate the plan. Then the core can move onto the next major issue. This year, the core has been the executive. I believe in coming years under such a scheme, the core can be the whole committee only if the number of committee members is substantially reduced.

My Personal Plans for the Upcoming Year

Ahead of me this calendar year, I have a significant piece of work due in late November. From this day forward, much of my time will be spent on that work. After that, I will have a brief holiday over the Christmas period, and then find myself employment. The major reason I’m not standing for President this year, as I outlined in July to the current committee, is that where I will be next year is unknown at this point.

However, as Immediate Past President I am automatically given a seat on the new committee, if I wish to take it. I will take up my position on the committee if the conditions are right, as I outlined earlier. In any case, I will continue to serve as a TIP administrator, Internet Project Management Committee member, and possibly in other roles too.

Conclusion

The upcoming year is the most critical yet. We need to ensure that we retain the members we have, and return to growing the organization. As such, we need a small number of hard working and productive people on the committee, who can do more than talk about plans, but actually implement them. To this end, we need to revise some of the rules of the group, particularly with relation to dropping the number of committee members to eight — four executive, four general committee members.

We need to address our core activities — this years committee addressed TIP related issues, and partly addressed issues with our journal, Sixteen Bits. The work on our core activities should continue to be addressed by our committee — growing our training, Special Interest Groups and Main Meeting attendances should be high priorities.

Lastly, I'd like to thank two people who have made my job as President much easier than it would otherwise have been. During the year, I have had periods through which I have been unavailable or very busy, for example over the last three months I have been organising the move to TransACT. During these times, Peter Ortner and Anne Greiner have taken over responsibilities I had to the members of this organization when asked, and I thank them for doing that for me.

Thank you, and best wishes for the next year.

Nathan Robertson

President, PC Users Group (ACT) Incorporated.

Presentation of Accounts

The audited financial accounts for PC Users Group for the year ended 30 June 2002 were made available at the PC User Centre on the 24 September 2002 and here at this meeting for perusal by members.

Treasurer Ross Hamilton thanked the committee for co-opting him to the position of Treasurer. He also introduced to the meeting Mr Barrett of auditors Walter and Turnbull.

General Comments:

He asked all members to be serious about financial issues. The auditor's qualifications attached to the report are not a reflection on any particular person.

As the organisation undertakes accrual accounting, depreciation and amortisation has decreased from \$ 56543 in 2000 – 2001 to \$ 37400 in 2001 – 2002.

This represents a reduction in losses of \$ 19143.

Operational profit/ loss has changed from +\$ 13543 in 2000 – 2001 to

a loss of \$ 12597 in 2001 -2002. This difference reflects the aging of equipment and a decrease in income from TIP operations of approximately \$ 56000. The group needs to investigate why this has occurred.

The Treasurer recommended:

1. The Training Room PCs be upgraded.
2. Review of all operations to increase efficiency.
3. Promote membership recruitment.
4. Promote Domain Hosting.

The shift to TransACT as service provider is now in place and this should assist the income base.

In reply to the question of why the auditor's fees had trebled the Treasurer replied that the auditors had carried out accounting as well as auditing work across two charts of accounts. 34 accounting adjustments were made before the annual tax return was able to be calculated.

In response to the question of consideration of calling for tenders to carry out the annual audit the Treasurer replied that this had been discussed by the Committee. From the floor David Lewis remarked that changing auditors each year results in the loss of continuity resulting in time lost by both parties. It was asserted that the members appoint the auditor for the following financial year at the Annual General Meeting. The Treasurer remarked that these processes need to be reviewed by the incoming committee.

From the floor Rod Farr asserted that in the statement of cash flows, pages 5 and 6 of the Financial Report, there was a net decrease in cash, which represented a decrease in the membership base – the equivalent of a \$ 49000 loss. He requested that a response to this assertion be published in Sixteen Bits.

From the floor Chess Krawcyk remarked that PCUG will be broke in twelve months and that quick action needs to be taken to institute cost effective systems.

From the floor Roger Penhale requested information about any action taken to cut costs of magazine production. He was advised that a sub-committee had been formed to re-evaluate the magazine and plan cost reductions. A suggestion from the floor was to publish the magazine on the web – perhaps half of the membership could receive it by this media. Chess Krawcyk proposed that the committee present a budget which includes maintenance of equipment and the membership base and that the accounts as presented not be accepted on the basis that there has not been a budget presented.

This motion was not seconded and was not put to the vote.

Further discussions centred around how to increase income.

One suggestion was to keep TIP accounts separate. It was pointed out that this is already in operation.

To the question regarding the costs associated with the training room and whether this exceeded \$ 21000 per annum the response was that it needed to be used for commercial hire to reduce costs.

Based on present trends in one year's time Nathan Robertson said that a lot depends on success of the Broadband venture. Further, he suggested that a short term answer was to increase membership fees by \$ 5.

Mark Dinn suggested that placing the magazine on the web is a sound argument. He proposed that the annual production expenditure be limited to \$25000 per annum and that the incoming Committee note this suggestion. Carried by a show of hands.

Gordon Urquahart requested that members e-mail the Committee with ideas regarding the publication of Sixteen Bits.

Moved Ross Hamilton Seconded Eleanor Rayment
That the Financial Report for 2002 be accepted.
Carried

Appointment of Auditor

Moved Ross Hamilton Seconded Trevor Frew

That Walter and Turnbull be retained as auditor for 2002 – 2003.

There were questions from the floor regarding the quality of the audit.

Peter Watney proposed that the original motion be put to the meeting.
The motion was then put to the meeting. Carried

Peter Barrett of auditors Walter and Turnbull responded that accounting procedures used in the audit are well documented.

Election Of Returning Officer

No Returning Officer was required as there were no contestants for the positions on the Committee.

Election of Committee for 2002 – 2003.

Of the nominations received three were withdrawn and two were declared invalid.

All valid nominations for positions were accepted.

Elected Unopposed:

President: Vacant
Secretary: Vacant
Treasurer: Vacant
Vice-President: David Lewis
General Committee: John Bienkiewicz

Graeme Evans
Eleanor Rayment

Discussions centred around the method of appointing committee members to fill vacancies on the new executive and committee. The membership should be given adequate time to consider nominations and the position of President should be filled quickly.

David Lewis responded that a meeting of the present committee members would be held on the following Monday evening and information would be placed on Newsgroups to allow members to nominate for vacant positions. He emphasised that it is the prerogative of the committee to invite and/ or consider nominations to fill vacancies from those members already elected or those who join the committee.

The question was put from the floor as to the reason that those nominations declared invalid originally could not then re-nominate forthwith. The Chairman ruled that under the Rules governing the conduct of business the invalid nominations could not now be declared valid.

Discussion ensued as to whether a committee meeting could be called immediately. David Lewis referred to Clause 16.B and 17.3 which precludes such action. Furthermore, the committee is not effective until the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting. No discussions can take place at the end of this meeting or until the committee has actually held a meeting.

Further discussion centred around opportunities for members to vote for a President.

Meeting Closed at 9.25 pm..