Presidential Address 2017

27 September 2017   by Anthony Glenn <aglenn@pcug.org.au>

Financial Results

Your committee is continuously worried about the PCUG's financial health. It is most important that the PCUG does not run out of money, because that would force our closure.

I am relieved to be able to report that the PCUG has managed to operate in the black for the last few months. This reverses a very worrying situation where our finances were deteriorating. This good result may or may not continue. However, I think I can say that we are financially safe for the moment.

Our accounts for the year are available on our website.

PCUG Committee

The PCUG committee has met monthly during the period to ensure the PCUG's wheels keep turning. Bert Blink applied his skills as a secretary to keep us on track with the tasks we undertook. Philip Veerman, with assistance from Lisa Montgomery and Bert, ensured that our financial records were in good order. Meanwhile, Gary Potts continued his book-keeping role to record payments from members, and to update our membership records. Allan Mikkelsen and John Saxon updated the website to reflect the fact that the senior's concession rate was changed from persons over sixty to holders of a Senior's card.

The PCUG committee was successful in its application to the ACT government for a 2016-17 Participation (Digital Communities) Grant. The grant is for $1,500 to assist with the training room. The plan is to buy a big-screen TV to replace the rather dim and small projector picture, used by course leaders.

Trivia Night

The recent PCUG Trivia Quiz Night was a huge success due to the wonderful work put in by Committee member Eileen Dunstone and her superb husband Greg. My sincere thanks to them. Thanks also to the kind commercial sponsors that Eileen was able to persuade to donate prizes. Everybody had a good time, especially those smarties on Table 1. The night raised in excess of $1,600 to be used in improving the training room.

PCUG SIGs

SIGs are "Special Interest Groups", supported by the PCUG. Many SIGs continue to operate regularly, with details on our website.

The PCUG Coffee & Chat SIG was was established in 1994, and is a long-running SIG, despite that fact that some do not even consider it to be a PCUG SIG. The

SIG meets weekly, alternating between northside (Jamison Southern Cross Club) and southside (Irish Club). 20 to 30 members show up each week.

There is also the beginner's computer chat group that meets monthly on the northside (U3A Cook) on the 1st Thursday of the month, and on the southside (Irish Club) on the 2nd Thursday.

The Linux Learners' SIG meets monthly on the southside (Burns Club), on the 1st Thursday, and on the northside (Jamison Southern Cross Club) on the 3rd Thursday. There also exists the more advanced Canberra Linux Users Group, which meets monthly at ANU, but that is not one of our SIGs.

The Investment SIG, our longest-running SIG, meets at the Belconnen Soccer Club, McKellar, on the 4th Wednesday of each month.

Members who wish to set up a SIG are asked to contact or e-mail the committee. The PCUG will support the setting up of the SIG.

Training Room

Our wonderful training room, right here in this building, in Room 35, is doing just what it is intended to do, letting us put on training courses. It lets us have equipment permanently set up and properly administered so that students and course leaders can have computers that "just work". That is a huge help to students' learning effectively. We are always on the lookout for more people willing to use the room productively. For example, with the help of more volunteers, it could be used to provide one-on-one help to members. Please feel free to come up with something.

There are 12 student PCs and a trainer's PC, all on a gigabit network with internet access. All PCs run Windows 10, kept updated every day. This is to give us the best possible defence against those internet bad guys out there.

The PCUG has been approached by the Australian National Seniors northside branch to assist its members who are digitally challenged. Initial indications are that there will be thirty students in 2017 to attend the ABC Course.

The PCUG has also been approached by the Good Things Foundation. They will be conducting the "Be Connected" program for government, to support older Australians with digital literacy. "Be Connected" has replaced the old "Broadband For Seniors". An information workshop is to be held on 31 October 2017.

Many thanks to all the loyal members who helped do the move from Cook to here. Also, many thanks to Mike Cassidy and Roger Quarterman for their excellent courses, and the many helpers who assist students during the lessons. Eileen Dunstone is doing a course on Facebook. Courses from other course leaders are most welcome.

If anybody would like to see our training room, right now, it happens that I have my key with me, so please come and see me after the meeting.

Main Monthly Meeting

Your committee recognises that members liked the main monthly meetings that we used to hold. We attempted to get MMMs going again by appointing an MMM sub-committee. Unfortunately, all the members of the sub-committee found themselves too busy on other, generally family-related, things. So the MMMs got neglected. This is not a good situation. We desperately need volunteers for this sub-committee. The main PCUG Committee cannot do everything. People, please step forward.

64 Bits

We used to have a regular newsletter sent out to members, called "64 Bits". Alas, that has also fallen by the wayside, for lack of an editor. However, "64 Bits" is at least partially replaced by regular "all members" emails sent out to everybody. We would like to have a volunteer for editor of 64 Bits. Anybody who has enthusiasm plus the ability to spell and use good grammar would do.

Marketing

The PCUG suffers from obscurity. Many members of the public could benefit from our various services, if they only knew of our existence. We need to drastically improve our visibility to the general public. We need good leaflets for the PCUG in general, plus extra leaflets advertising our various training courses. We need plastic holders for the leaflets. Then we need to get those leaflets out to computer-related organisations, such as computer shops. We need a properly functioning system for the resupply of leaflets, when somebody runs out.

Your committee would like to establish a Marketing sub-committee. Alas, we do not have volunteers.

Help Directory

Years ago, we had a list of volunteers who would help other members with various defined subjects. The volunteers were listed in the "Help Directory", which was published in our journal, "Sixteen Bits". Alas, the help directory is long gone.

On our 1800 number, there is a "technical assistance" selection, which gets you to me. Provided I am available to answer, I can then help members. There are also people who answer queries on the Coffee and Chat mailing list. This is helpful, but maybe not as good as the old help directory.

It would be nice to bring back a revived help directory. It could be a significant member benefit, encouraging people to be members. There needs to be

someone to manage it properly. Once again, I am calling for a volunteer. What do you think?

Future Directions

We aim to be responsive to the wishes of members, so if there is anything that members feel we should be doing or not doing, then your committee would welcome your input. It is easy to propose new activities, but not so easy to find someone willing to take the task on.

Volunteers

Many thanks to Philip Veerman for organising a new Volunteer of the Year plaque. Our new plaque was necessary because the old one had filled up, over the years. Both of our Volunteer of the Year plaques are currently hanging on the wall of our training room as an encouragement for people to volunteer to help the PCUG.

Your committee has decided that once someone has received the Volunteer of the Year award, then they are ineligible to receive it a second time. Steady effort over years is what tends to be recognised. Alas, there was no new person considered worthy of the Volunteer of the Year award this year, so there is no Volunteer of the Year for 2017. Apologies to anybody who feels they have been unfairly overlooked. Please feel free to make your case to me.

This is a symptom of a problem we have had for quite a few years. There is a relatively small group of members who work away, keeping the PCUG going, but new people are thin on the ground. I urge all you members, particularly if you are not in full-time employment, to consider volunteering. Please, we need you.

Conclusion

Thank you members for listening to my report, I hope it was not too long. Please feel free to talk to me after the meeting, if there is anything you want to discuss.