

THE VICTORIAN DRAMA LEAGUE INC.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

meeting held at Ross House and via Zoom on Saturday March 2, 2024, commencing at 10.30am

MINUTES

WELCOME - President Susan Rundle

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

PRESENT

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS:

Susan Rundle, Deborah Fabbro, Alison Campbell Rate, Keith Hutton, Andrew McAliece, LB Bradley, Andrew Ferguson, Richard Burman, Bruce Hardie, Jennifer Paragreen, Monica Greenwood, Dexter Bourke

COMPANY REPRESENTATIVES:

Andrew Ferguson (Malvern TC), Christine Nilsson (Eltham TC), Dexter Bourke (1812)

OBSERVERS: (NON-FINANCIAL ATTENDEES – NO VOTING RIGHTS) – nil.

APOLOGIES

Diana Burleigh, Dru Bartlett, Geoff Kidd, MOARTZ, Cheryl Threadgold, Michael Mace.

PROXIES

received from -	in favour of -
Michael Mace	Deborah Fabbro

MINUTES of the previous AGM - these were distributed after the previous AGM and made available at the time of the 2024 Notice of Meeting.

Moved Alison Campbell Rate and Seconded LB Bradley. Carried.

Discussion arising – nil.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (attached below)

Moved SR and Seconded Dexter Bourke, Carried.

Discussion arising –

- *The Secretary - offered a vote of thanks to Susan for her leadership.*
- *Dexter Bourke – as a new member, expressed appreciation of what he has experienced of The VDL so far.*
- *Monica Greenwood - looking forward to the Members Connect website project going forward.*
- *Andrew Ferguson - expressed thanks on behalf of Malvern TC to The VDL committee for ongoing work and support of companies.*

TREASURER'S REPORT including STATEMENT OF PROFIT AND LOSS

Moved DF and Seconded Richard Burman, Carried.

Discussion arising –

- *The Treasurer - increasing individual membership is key to vitality of organisation, financially as well as in terms of individual engagement.*

- *Monica Greenwood – question re whether there are many pro rata join-ups during the year. The Treasurer replied that these vary – eg PRGs come and go. Hopefully the member connect website project will increase individual membership.*
- *LB noted low cost of lease at Ross House and asked if this is likely to go up soon. The Treasurer confirmed that nothing is flagged at present, usually reviewed in October. Also noted that as we are a library this attracts a further Library Concession Consideration.*

ELECTIONS

The Secretary read the nominations received for the following positions:

- *President - Susan Rundle (proposed by Gabrielle Llewellyn, seconded by Rosey Cullinan)*
- *Vice President – Andrew McAliece (proposed by Andrew McAliece, seconded by Alison Campbell Rate)*
- *Secretary – Alison Campbell Rate (proposed by Alison Campbell Rate, seconded by Andrew Ferguson)*
- *Treasurer – Deborah Fabbro (proposed by Michael Mace, seconded by Brad Lowry for Brighton TC)*
- *Ordinary Members (max. 4)*
 - *Keith Hutton (proposed by Keith Hutton, seconded by Stephanie King)*
 - *LB Bradley (proposed by LB Bradley, seconded by Susan Rundle)*
 - *Steve Saul (proposed by Steve Saul, seconded by Alison Campbell Rate)*
 - *vacancy*

As there were no other nominations, the committee was formed as above, noting there is a vacancy which could be filled by secondment if committee so decides.

OTHER BUSINESS – nil

CLOSE OF OFFICIAL BUSINESS followed by an opportunity for general discussion –

Andrew Ferguson introduced discussion around difficulties facing some companies re their theatre leases and how The VDL could assist. Mordialloc Theatre Company's current problem with Kingston Council was noted as example.

- suggestions and points raised:

- form working group to compile data from companies about the various lease arrangements in place and prepare a suite of info and a training opportunity for companies covering things such as -
 - how to build relationships with local councils to promote community theatre
 - links between community theatre and community well-being especially for healthy aging, combatting loneliness, promoting social connection
 - how to tackle grants processes
 - lobbying local councillors at the time of elections
- Andrew Ferguson and Monica Greenwood indicated interest in being part of a working group. Suggest approaching Mordialloc for a rep.
- Deborah Fabbro - noted that different councils have different priorities, some don't understand what community theatre is.
- Dexter Bourke – noted that the Knox Arts and Culture committee is active in supporting local groups including offering grants.
- Deborah Fabbro – noted that Bayside council have a similar program.
- Bruce Hardie – noted that companies need to deal at the councillor level not the administrator level.

Member Connect plans – Bruce Hardie spoke to progress so far. This is a website function to connect member companies with individual members for direct audition and tech notifications. Members can select whether or not to receive notifications from their member portal. Future development could include filters for location, reaching out to future directors, etc. Deborah Fabbro reminded the meeting that a paid ad in *Follow Spot* is also possible! Bruce will prepare some info for the monthly member letter, *Follow Spot*.

Play sets - Richard Burman asked do we have many play sets for Play Reading Groups, particularly for large cast or did most go with the cull a few years back?

Deborah Fabbro - many old sets were culled but we still have many titles on the shelves and she buys in new sets that are suitable for PRGs. Newer plays don't tend to have large casts, however.

U3As were discussed as some have big memberships incl for their PRGs. Not every U3A has a PRG. We have in the past promoted our library to U3As, but they come and go. Andrew Ferguson - has connection with Melbourne City U3A.

Bronwyn Grannall from KUCOM Theatre Mackay joined the meeting a little late but was welcomed into the last part of this discussion.

The Secretary reminded those present that company news and stories are welcome in *Follow Spot*.

MEETING CLOSE – 11.40am

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - THE VICTORIAN DRAMA LEAGUE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 2nd March 2024.

2023 has been a positive year for the Victorian Drama League. The impact of COVID has lessened considerably and while there is still some way to go for some, it is good to see a number of member companies returning to pre-Covid audience numbers. The Awards night was positively received and as always, it was a pleasure to catch up with everyone and celebrate with the worthy nominees and winners. It was also a pleasure to welcome and introduce our Patron, Mr John Wood, to everyone who attended.

Membership:

The Victorian Drama League membership in 2023 has remained fairly stable. While company membership has dropped a little, play reading groups and individual membership has increased and interstate company membership remains the same, compared with 2022. The VDL Treasurer, Deborah Fabbro, will provide a more detailed view within her financial report to follow.

IT Projects:

During 2023, The Victorian Drama League has applied and been successful in accessing through its eligibility as a not-for-profit organisation, the free use of Microsoft 365 Business Suite. While we need to apply for this each year, this provides The VDL:

- Accessibility for 10 users
- Outlook Email

- One Drive, and SharePoint storage - which importantly ensures all VDL documents, reports, minutes, policies and procedures, etc, are retained on a central database and accessible for all current and future committee members
- Microsoft Teams for online meetings and workshops
- Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint etc.

The other IT project that the VDL Committee has been working on, led by Bruce Hardie, is a way for individual members to receive notifications when Theatre Companies are looking for actors, FOH, stage managers, tech staff, etc. This “Members Connect”, which will be through your member profile on The VDL Website, will allow individual members to update their profiles and receive email notifications to match what interests you. More information will come out in the next Follow Spot e-newsletter, but it is anticipated to ‘go live’ in the next 4 weeks.

Workshops:

The Victorian Drama League has continued to host online workshops during 2023. Participation by members shows that this is valued, as it allows participation from regional Victoria and Interstate members also.

In 2023 we hosted 5 workshops in total:

1. **Companies Connect** - this is held annually and provides an opportunity for Theatre Companies to meet online, discuss what’s working, challenges and share solutions. The key topic discussed in 2023 was the challenge for those companies not having their access to their own theatre and how most councils or venues are now charging commercial hire rates which is unsustainable for not-for-profit community theatre groups. Research and gathering of information has commenced and will be something The VDL will aim to work to support its Member Companies to lobby the Council and Local Government for some support in this area.
2. **Theatre Company Governance** - Peter Newling once again led us through the ins and outs of our responsibilities as committee members running community not for profit groups - great for those new to a committee or those in need of a refresher.
3. **Getting the most out of Social Media** for Community Theatre Companies was run by Liana Skewes from Ballarat National Theatre Company. Liana shared her invaluable insights into how to get the most out of Facebook and other social media platforms. She also put us on to the useful tip that as not-for-profit organisations, Community Theatre Companies advertise through the **Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW)** for free.
4. **Cast Welfare and Intimacy Onstage** – John Murphy and Clair Abagia led a workshop on how best to introduce and implement intimacy guidelines to ensure all are comfortable and safe when staging productions that include intimate or sensitive content during rehearsal and on stage.

5. **Approach to Auditions** for both Directors and Actors – run by an expert panel comprising Justin Stephens, Natasha Boyd and Peter Newling. These three talented Directors shared their insights and approaches on how to get the best out of auditions, whether you are casting or wanting to be cast.

Note that the slides and/or notes from workshops remain available for members to access on The VDL Website under Member Portal.

The VDL will continue to host workshops each year and encourage our members to participate and provide any suggestions for future. This will be kicked off with ***Companies Connect*** being held on April 19, 2024.

Annual Awards Adjudication Model

2023 saw the introduction of a slightly different adjudication model – going from 3 adjudicators across all entries, to 6 adjudicators divided into two teams to view either Comedy or Drama entries. This has been a highly positive change for all involved, halving the workload and time commitment by the adjudicators and the administrator. This model also allows adjudicators to participate in award entry productions as an actor or director, as long it's not the category they are adjudicating. The online system, where adjudicators upload their scores, ensures there is no collaboration between the adjudicators or committee members, as it is all calculated within the system.

We sincerely thank our 2023 Adjudicators: Neil Barnett, Tamara Dahmen and Jennifer Paragreen (Comedy) and LB Bradley, Alan Burrows and Terese Maurici (Drama), as well as our reserves, Keith Hutton and John Bishop, who only needed to attend 1 production each as a result of the new model.

We also say a huge thank you to our retiring adjudicators: Jennifer Paragreen, Terese Maurici and Tamara Dahmen.

We welcome our returning and new Adjudicators for 2024 – **Comedy Team:** Alan Burrows, Dexter Bourke, Glenda May; **Drama Team:** Neil Barnett, LB Bradley and Zina Carman. Reserve adjudicator: Keith Hutton

Thank You

The Victorian Drama League, like all our Community Theatre Companies, is run totally by volunteers – volunteers who are passionate and generous in sharing their skills, time and energy. Along with our adjudicators, who all give their time voluntarily, I would like to formally acknowledge our 2023 volunteers as follows:

Library – Fay Bock, Bob Bramble, David Dodd, Michael Mace, Deborah Fabbro, Genevieve Ryan

Reviews Coordinator – Zina Carman

Reviewers - Ken Barnes, Richard Burman, Roderick Chappel, Bruce Cochrane, David Collins, Cate Dowling-Trask, Deborah Fabbro, Andrew Gemmell, Damian Jones, Christopher McAleice, Rod Nash, Genevieve Ryan, Jill Watson.

Reviewers Proofreader - Carol Shelbourn

Awards Adjudication Coordinator – Tony Clayton

Awards Event Coordination – Alison Campbell Rate, Deborah Fabbro, Monica Greenwood, Susan Rundle

Awards Program – Damien Valuta

Website – Steve Saul, Alison Cambell Rate

Social Media – Natasha Boyd

Follow Spot Coordinator – Alison Campbell Rate

Follow Spot Proofreader – Deborah Fabbro

The VDL Committee 2023 – Susan Rundle (President), Andrew McAleice (Vice President), Alison Campbell Rate (Secretary), Deborah Fabbro (Treasurer), Tony Clayton, Bruce Hardie, LB Bradley, Keith Hutton.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Tony Clayton and Bruce Hardie, who are both stepping down from the committee this year. Tony Clayton has been a committee member since 2019 with the huge role of coordinating The VDL Awards entries for the last 4 years, while Bruce Hardie has been on the committee for since 2022 and has used his IT knowledge to assist us with exploring ways to improve and expand our offerings to our members through our website and talking 'tech talk' with the software developer(s). Both have contributed significantly to The VDL and we will miss them both.

I am happy to say that while Bruce has moved to Canberra, he will remain an Individual Member and continue to oversee the Members Connect IT project. I am equally sure Tony will remain an individual member and be around to help when needed.

Thank you to all the Committee Members, it has been a pleasure to work with you all.

I would like to thank each and everyone for their contributions in 2023, for their time, support and energy given to The VDL.

Susan Rundle
President
The Victorian Drama League