

Presidential Musings September 2021

David Stonier-Gibson

This may be the last PC Update you read before submitting your proxy votes for the November AGM. That meeting will be online only, so votes will have to be done by email or snail mail. You should already have received an email notice about all that a week or two ago. If you missed it it's all here:

<https://www.melbpc.org.au/committee/committee-documents/2021-agm-notices/>

Proposed rules change

We (committee) have drafted a small but significant change to the Rules of Association for you to vote on. Essentially we are formally broadening the purpose of the club from PC-centric to technology in general. While it changes nothing in practice, it simply acknowledges the process that is taking place, and must take place for Melb PC to survive and prosper for many, many years to come.

Proposed membership fee increase

Membership fees have not increased for 6 years, but our costs have been rising inexorably. While Covid has reduced the cost of hall hire for non-Moorabbin SIGs, every other cost has gone up. The people we lease the big office printer/copier/scanner from even increased the contract payments well beyond CPI in the middle of Covid, when the printer was getting virtually no use. If I told you what I honestly think of BBC Digital and their business methods they would sue me. The 5-year contract is watertight, so we can't get out of it. It expires next September and needless to say I would not expect the committee to renew again.

Owners' Corporation fees at Moorabbin have gone up 37% to \$22K.

Membership fee income has declined by \$47K over the last 3 years.

We have had no monthly raffle income for ages.

Overall we have gone backwards by over \$24K this last year.

In the longer term my vision is that by transforming the club into something attractive to younger people, with equipment/tool library, maker space and other offerings (all suggestions welcome!), that we can derive extra income from those facilities. Maker spaces elsewhere typically cost more per month than we charge per year. I hasten to add that existing members will not see fee increases due to those initiatives. But it's been a little bit hard to do much towards that during Covid!

So it brings me no pleasure to ask you vote in support of a modest increase in membership fees.

Some more general stuff

Overall I see Melb PC as a club that, thanks to the heydays of being a dial up ISP, is asset rich but cash flow challenged. We have about \$500K in the bank, we own our premises, informally valued pre-Covid at ~\$1.3M. But we lose some money every year, at an accelerating rate - \$24K this last year. But right now, with Covid, the value of Moorabbin is likely greatly reduced. Heck, office space in the CBD is going begging at the moment!

When I was brought onto the committee in 2017, and given the marketing "portfolio", I did a presentation with the following graphic (I had been told we would hit rock bottom in 2023, which was grossly pessimistic!). Remarkably, when I called for a show of hands for one future or the other, one committee

member voted for entropy.

So it seems to me the path to long term survival is to exploit our natural advantages - our premises and our cash. Hence the drive to make Moorabbin more exciting, to set up Maker Spaces for a younger audience, to create a Library of Things. That said, the committee and I remain fully committed to providing for the needs of members who only ever attend non-Moorabbin SIGs. The transformations I aspire to will be gradual, and in addition to the more traditional activities such as iHelp.

Speaking of iHelp: If you are able and willing to make a contribution to helping out with supporting other members, please let the iHelp team know - iHelp@melbpc.org.au